

GEORGIA COUNTRY GENDER ASSESSMENT 2016

The State of Gender Equality in Georgia

CONTEXT

After a decade of strong economic progress, Georgia was heavily affected by the global financial crisis in 2008-09. Between 2010 and 2014, the economy rebounded rapidly. Annual growth averaged 6.9 percent, service delivery and infrastructure improved, and the poverty rate fell from 42.7 to 32.3 percent. Yet, this growth did not translate in to greater economic opportunity or participation in decision-making for women.

Despite concrete governmental actions to prevent gender-based discrimination and provide women with equal rights under the law, gender inequality is still visible in many outcomes in Georgia. Supporting the equality of women and men is a smart development strategy for the country: the potential gains of closing the existing gaps are important not only for women and their families, but for the whole economy.

CHALLENGES

Gender inequality remains a challenge in Georgia. The Georgia Country Gender Assessment (CGA) reviews the state of equality between men and women in areas of demography, human capital, economic opportunity, as well as voice and agency.

Demography

Women make up about 52 percent of the population in Georgia. Women-headed households are common in Georgia: Nearly 27 percent of the population and 30 percent among the poorest 40 percent live in households headed by a woman.

The wide variation in demographic composition across different age groups in Georgia is striking. There are twice as many women as men over the age of 65. This may be due to male migration and lower life expectancy for men. Imbalances also are evident at the bottom of the population pyramid: for every 100 girls born in Georgia, 112 boys are born –although not as high as the neighboring South



Caucasus countries, still one of the one of the highest sex ratios at birth in the world. This high sex ratio results from parental preference for sons in a context of declining family sizes and perceptions of economic uncertainty. Availability of prenatal sex-selection technology has facilitated this demographic trend.

These skewed sex ratios at birth has led to “missing girls” -a lower number of girls in a generation whose absence poses significant demographic (exacerbating fertility slowdown) and social challenges. Policy efforts must encompass the several fronts which shape the underlying preference for sons, from influencing norms to promoting the value of girls and ensuring equal access to opportunities.

Human Capital

Women in Georgia have longer life expectancy than men – 78 years compared to 71 years for men. Georgian men are at a greater risk of developing diabetes, heart disease and other complications. Men are also at a greater risk of death due to violence, injuries, and the effects of prolonged use of alcohol and tobacco.

Moreover, women have seen improvements in maternal and child health outcomes, antenatal care, adolescent fertility rates and contraceptive use.

In education, women also show a slight advantage. Primary school enrollment is high among both girls and boys. Girls

consistently outperform boys in reading, mathematics and science, and they are more likely than boys to enroll in tertiary education.

There is a significant divide in selection of areas of study in tertiary education. Men are more likely to major in engineering, manufacturing, agriculture or services. Women tend to graduate in the arts, humanities, education or healthcare. This segregation in fields of study reflects gender norms that define appropriate activities for men and women, and contributes to the concentration of women in certain sectors of the labor force.

Economic Opportunity

About 61 percent of women ages 15-64 participate in the labor market compared to 79 percent of men. This gap implies underutilization of the available human capital and misallocation of entrepreneurial talent. If working-age women who currently do not participate in the labor market were to do so at the same rates as men, it is estimated that there would be a gain in economic output equivalent to 11.3 percent of Georgia's GDP. The gap men and women's participation in the labor force is highest in the 15 -34 age group when many women are focused on caring for young children. The presence of children under 14 years of age in a household lowers the probability of female labor force participation by 30 percent and increases the probability of male labor force participation by 12 percent. In older age groups (above age 45) there are actually more women than men in the labor force, yet labor force participation drops sharply for both men and women as they approach the age of pension eligibility – 60 for women and 65 for men.

Women are less likely to be employers than men. Almost two thirds of women are self-employed and over half of women who are employed work in the agriculture sector. A third of all agriculture holdings are owned and managed by women.

In addition to agriculture, women are overrepresented in education, health care and social work, which are viewed as better suited for women who need to balance household work with paid employment. This concentration of women in certain sectors plays a role in the gender wage gap which was 37 percent in 2014.

Women in Georgia are more likely than men to experience long-term unemployment. In recent years also more women are leaving the country to search for employment making up about half of all labor migrants from Georgia to Western

Europe, Greece and Turkey.

Women are underrepresented in entrepreneurship and it would be important to understand reasons. Access to credit is reported to be a constraint by Georgian entrepreneurs but there appears to be no significant difference by gender. There could be gender differences in assets accumulated in practice even though women and men have equal inheritance and ownership rights.

Voice & Agency

Women's share of leadership roles in the public and private sector is still limited. In 2015, women held only 11 percent of positions in parliament, 10 to 12 percentage points lower than the average in low- and middle-income countries. However, since 2000, Georgia has made progress increasing the number of women as managers, executives, senior officials and legislators. In the Constitutional Court in 2016, three out of nine judges are women.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Progress has been made through changes in legislation, but gender inequality still persists in many areas. Targeted policy efforts could make a difference.

Potential policy actions supported by evidence include:

- Invest in well-designed mass media campaigns: Address distorted gender norms and preferences. Promote the value of girls, equal access to economic opportunities, and shared responsibility for child care.
- Provide better childcare options: Improve quality and convenience of childcare programs. Expand maternity leave to parental leave schemes that allow fathers to share responsibility for newborn care.
- Remove barriers for women to participate in paid work: Facilitate the school-to-work transition, and encourage women to participate in sectors that are projected to grow, for example in science, technology, engineering and math. Equalize pension-age eligibility among men and women to reduce women's early departure from the labor force.
- Tackle urban unemployment: Invest in active labor market programs. Provide job-search assistance, training and counseling for the long-term unemployed (most of whom are women).
- Offer business-oriented education and vocational training: Improve women's involvement in entrepreneurial activities.