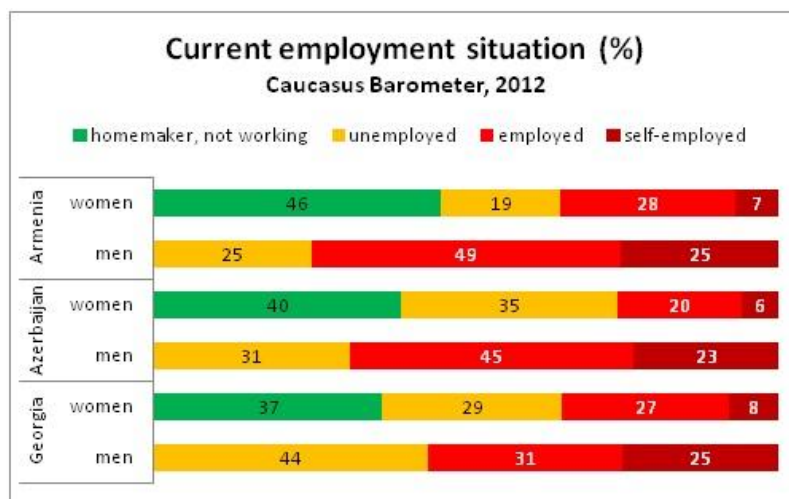


Gender inequality in the South Caucasus

Societies in the South Caucasus are conservative with respect to gender roles within and outside the family. This conservatism also affects men and women in the labour market which is now facing many problems in the region, including high unemployment and low wages (see our [previous blog](#) on this topic). The realm of paid work has been subject to substantial gender inequality both in terms of labour force participation and the employment profile in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. The situation, however, seems to be changing within some areas. According to the 2012/2013 Wages and Equitable Growth report by the International Labour Organization (ILO), wage gaps between genders in the region have declined over the past few years. Other disparities are still apparent, such as the paid-versus-unpaid work ratio. Time-use data collected by the National Statistical Service of Armenia in 2008 (thus far the only country in the South Caucasus where such a study was conducted) show significant differences in the time-spent patterns of men and women, one of them being a grossly uneven share of domestic work.

According to the CB 2012, 35% of women in Armenia, 26% in Azerbaijan and 35% in Georgia are working – either as employees, or self-employed (excluding pensioners, students and disabled, who remain outside of the labour force). Around twice as many men in Armenia (74%), in Azerbaijan (68%), and in Georgia (56%) have paid jobs.



In the South Caucasus, women's participation in the labour force is substantially lower than men's, but the realm of unpaid work remains a female domain. The virtually non-regulated sphere of domestic activities remains subject to great gender inequality. For example, [time-use data](#) collected in 2008 by the National Statistical Service of the Republic of Armenia (ARMSTAT) on a representative sample of the Armenian population tracked class and gender differences in lifestyles and behaviour. The data covers all activities taken up over the day (recorded in a time-use diary form) and shows substantial disparities in the way men and women spend their time over the average weekdays. This includes their participation rates in paid employment and unpaid (mostly domestic) work.

Figure 1: How men in Armenia spend time during the weekdays

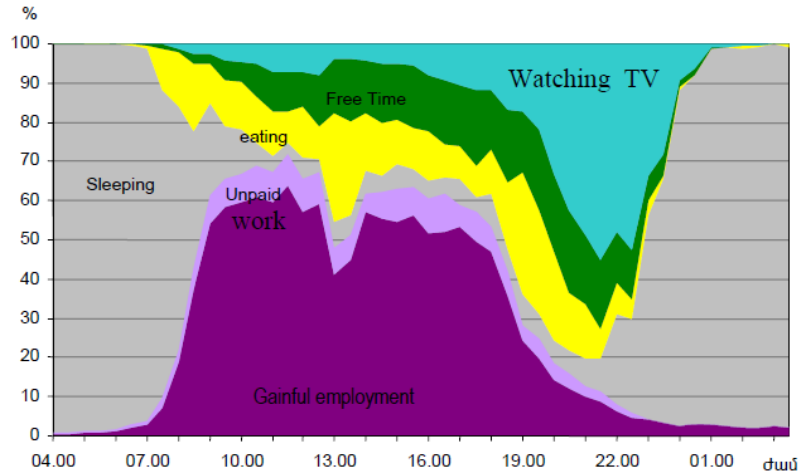
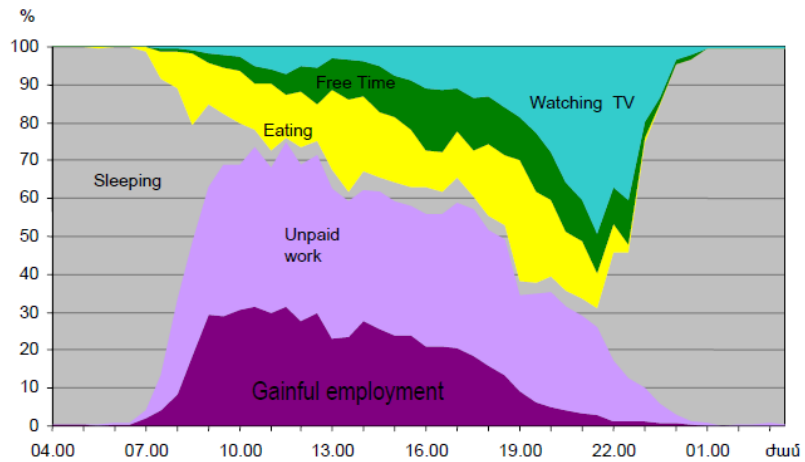


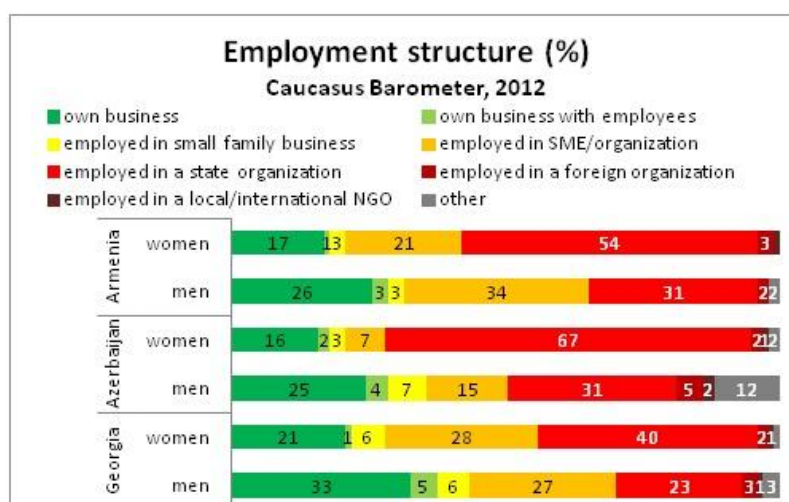
Figure 2: How women in Armenia spend time during the weekdays



Source: Armstat/ National Statistical Service of the Republic of Armenia) Report on Time Use Sample Survey in the Republic of Armenia, 2008.

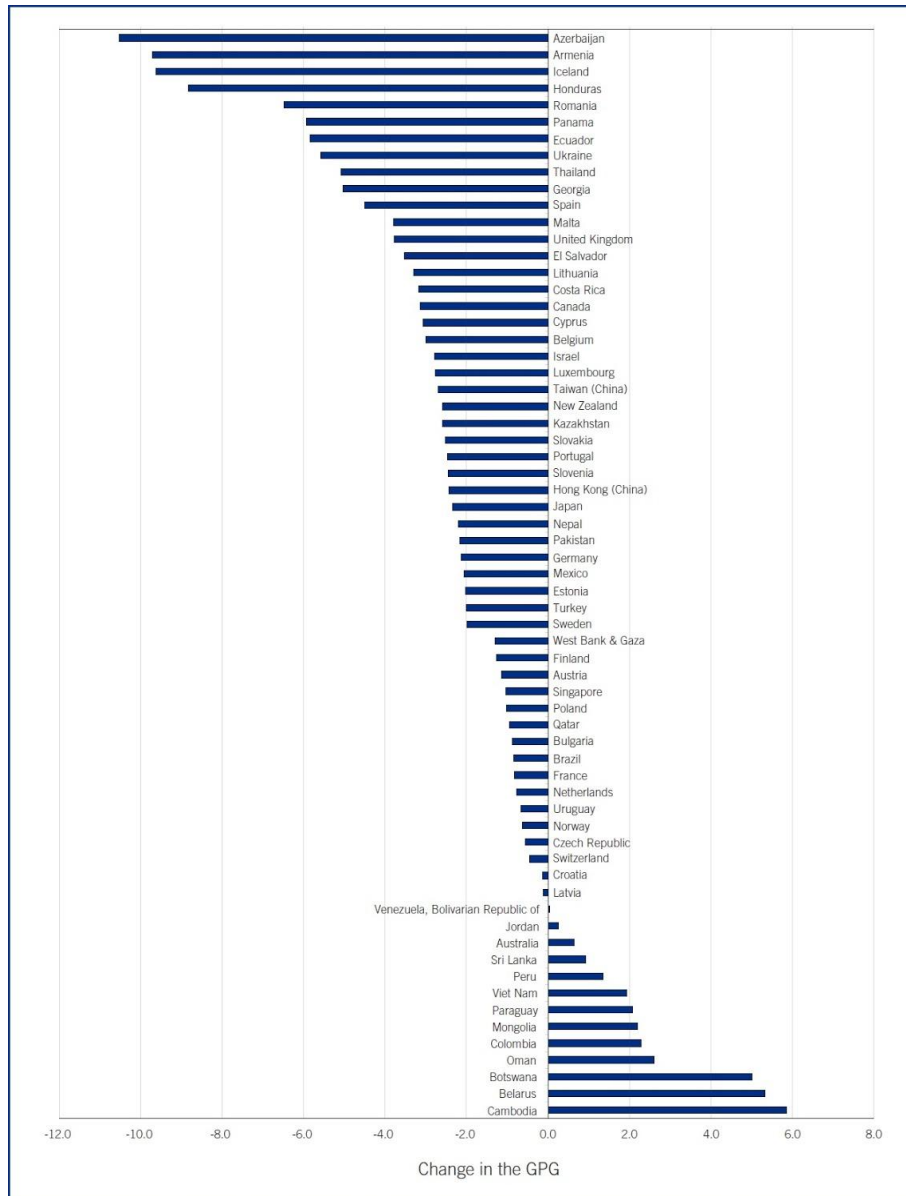
Lower involvement in paid work comes together with a substantial share of unpaid domestic labour being done by women. This work is not accounted for in official statistics, yet it is an important aspect of the labour market.

The very structure of female employment in the region is also substantially different from that of men. Women are most likely to work in state-owned organizations, especially in the case of Azerbaijan, while men are more likely to be self-employed. The number of men working in small or medium enterprises (SME) and similar size organizations are also higher than for women, except for in Georgia where they are close to equal.



Differences between genders in the labour market also have far-reaching consequences for the financial resources available to women. In general, women earn less than men, but the gender pay gap (i.e. the difference between the average wage of men and the average wage of women) is decreasing according to the ILO's 2012/2013 report, [Wages and Equitable Growth](#). Change in the gap is the average of the gap between 2008 and 2011 minus the average of the gap between 1997 and 2007. The decrease in the pay gap between these two time periods in the South Caucasus has been one of the highest in the world. Azerbaijan ranks first among a list of 52 countries with the highest decrease in gender pay gap. Armenia ranks second and Georgia ranks tenth. Despite the positive trend, this decrease might be due to deterioration in the situation for men in the labour market rather than due to an improvement in the position of women. In light of the employment problems in the region, the former is highly plausible. Nonetheless, in terms of relative values, the trend is unambiguous.

Figure 3: Gender pay gap (GPG), 1999–2007 and 2008–2011



Note: The gender pay gap (GPG) is defined as $GPG = ((Em - Ew) / Em) * 100$, where Em stands for the average wage of men and Ew is the average wage of women (see ILO, 2012b). The change in the GPG is defined as the average of the GPG between 2008 and 11 minus the average of the GPG between 1997 and 2007. Data are not available for all countries for all years; averages for the two periods are calculated using the data available for each country during both periods.

Source: International Labour Organisation 2012/2013 report on Wages and Equitable Growth.

To a certain extent GPG across the region is also reflected in the CB 2012 data on the subjective perception of fairness of compensation for work between men and women. Low compensation seems to be the prime reason for dissatisfaction regardless of gender. Most people are dissatisfied in Armenia and Georgia which have the lowest wages. 75% of women in Armenia and 53% of women in Georgia claim their compensation is not fair. The respective numbers are 62% for men in Armenia and 46% for men in Georgia. Women in Armenia and Georgia are only slightly more likely than men to believe their compensation is not fair. The situation in Azerbaijan is just opposite – a slightly higher percentage of women (93%) than men (88%) say they are satisfied with their

remuneration. It is important to point out that average wages in Azerbaijan are also substantially higher than in Armenia and Georgia, especially as Azerbaijan is a middle-income country.

Compared to men, the number of women having a paid job is still relatively low in the South Caucasus, and most of the domestic (unpaid) work is done by women. Yet, the GPG has decreased over time, possibly also due to fewer men having well-paid jobs because of the difficult economic times.