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FROM INACTIVITY TO PRODUCTIVITY:

THE ECONOMIC IMPACT OF INTEGRATING WOMEN INTO THE LABOUR MARKET

AN ANALYTICAL REPORT ON THE POTENTIAL ECONOMIC IMPACT OF INTEGRATING UNEMPLOYED AND ECONOMICALLY INACTIVE WOMEN INTO THE LABOUR MARKET

The study was conducted by a team of women researchers in collaboration with the international charitable foundation Ukrainian Women's Fund, the NGO Vox Ukraine, and the research agency Info Sapiens.

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GLOSSARY

Term	Definition	Source
"Greedy work" concept	A type of work organisation in which income and career advancement depend disproportionately on excessively long working hours and the worker's constant availability, rather than solely on productivity.	Goldin, 2021
"Motherhood penalty"	A phenomenon whereby women's earnings decline after childbirth due to career interruptions, skills depreciation, and employers' negative expectations (for example, regarding women's reduced ability to work overtime, lower productivity, or more limited career mobility).	Budig & England, 2001
Care work	Activities related to caring for children, older persons, and other individuals requiring care.	ILOSTAT
Economically active population (labour force)	Persons who, during a specified period, supply labour to the labour market. The labour force comprises both employed and unemployed persons.	State Statistics Service of Ukraine
Economically inactive population	Persons who do not have a job and are not seeking employment and therefore cannot be classified as employed or unemployed.	State Statistics Service of Ukraine
Employees (hired workers)	Persons who have entered into a written or oral employment agreement (contract) with the administration of an enterprise, institution, organisation, or with an individual regarding the conditions and remuneration of their work activity.	State Statistics Service of Ukraine
Employment	Economic activity undertaken by citizens to satisfy personal and societal needs and which, as a rule, generates income in monetary or other form.	State Statistics Service of Ukraine
Gender employment gap	An indicator measuring the difference between the employment rates of men and women.	Eurostat
Gender quotas	A tool for achieving gender-balanced participation and representation by establishing a minimum of a proportion or a number of seats or positions to be occupied by representatives of a particular sex or of each sex.	European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE)

Term	Definition	Source
Gender segregation in the labour market	The concentration of women and men in different sectors, occupations, or levels of employment.	European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE)
Glass ceiling	A set of visible and invisible barriers that prevent women from attaining senior leadership positions.	Bastida Domínguez et al., 2019
Glass cliff	The appointment of women to leadership positions during periods of heightened risk, placing additional pressure on them and increasing the likelihood of reputational damage compared with their male counterparts.	Ryan et al., 2016
Horizontal segregation	The concentration of women and men across different sectors of the economy or occupations, resulting in their uneven distribution across types of economic activity.	European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE)
Internally displaced person (IDP)	A person who is lawfully present in the territory of Ukraine and was forced to leave their place of residence because of armed conflict, temporary occupation, violence, human rights violations, natural or man-made emergencies.	Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine
Labour market	A key component of the economy encompassing the supply of and demand for labour: all employed persons, all persons seeking employment, and available job vacancies offered by employers.	Eurostat
Labour shortage	A situation in which the demand for labour exceeds its supply.	OECD
Male-dominated occupations	Occupations in which men account for at least 75% of total employment in at least 25% of countries for which reliable statistical data are available.	ILO, 2026
Non-employed population	Persons, generally aged 15–70 years, who during the reference week were either unemployed or economically inactive.	State Statistics Service of Ukraine
Persons in employment	Persons, generally aged 15 years and over, who during a reference period (for example, one week) performed paid work or worked for profit or family gain for at least one hour.	International Labour Organization (ILO)
Sectoral employment	The distribution of the employed population across different sectors of the economy.	ILOSTAT

Term	Definition	Source
Skills shortage	A situation in which the supply of workers with the required skills is insufficient to meet employers' needs.	EURES Glossary
Spatial mismatch	A mismatch between where people live and where jobs are located, creating geographical barriers to access to employment.	Wang et al., 2022
Unemployed persons	Individuals who do not have a job, are actively seeking employment, and can start working within the next two weeks	State Statistics Service of Ukraine
Vertical segregation	The unequal distribution of women and men across levels of responsibility and positions within specific sectors or fields.	European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE)
Working-age persons (working-age population)	Persons aged 16 and above who have not yet reached the retirement age established by law. They are divided into the economically active and economically inactive population.	Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine

KEY FINDINGS

1. Today in Ukraine 29.4% of people aged 18–65 are economically inactive, i.e. they are neither employed nor looking for a job (according to data from the sociological company Info Sapiens for March 2026). Among women, the share of the economically inactive population is higher than among men — 35.7% vs 22.6%. As a result and given that mobilisation into the Defence Forces primarily involves men, women constitute the main untapped labour reserve.
2. According to a survey conducted by Info Sapiens for this study, 73.2% of women who are not employed would like to find a job. Assuming that the population in government-controlled territories is 30 million people, this corresponds to approximately 3.5 million potential female workers.
3. Economic modelling shows that increasing the employment-to-population ratio by 1 percentage point could generate an additional 1 percentage point of GDP growth.
4. If all women who expressed a desire to find a job in our survey (73.2%, of whom 55.3% would like to find employment within a year) succeed in doing so, additional GDP growth would amount to approximately 8 percentage points in the first year, 4 percentage points in the second year, and around 1 percentage point annually over the following four years.
5. Cluster analysis showed that respondents who most likely plan to find employment are women aged 18–35, women from higher-income households, and those living in larger households — 97% of women with these characteristics intend to work in the future. Among older women, including pensioners, women living in smaller households, and those with lower household incomes, 57% plan to seek employment.
6. According to the regression analysis, women of working age, women with school-aged children, and women living in urban areas are more likely to seek employment. Internally displaced women, women living with their adult children, and women from the wealthiest households are less likely to be willing to look for a job.
7. According to the survey, most women who do not plan to seek employment cite age or health conditions as the reason, while the second most common reason is engagement in care work. These responses are consistent with the literature, which suggests that one of the key barriers to women's employment is the difficulty of combining paid work with care work (household labour).

8. Among respondents planning to enter employment, the greatest interest is in vacancies in retail and commerce (35%) and personal services (20%). A further 10.6% would like to work in education or social care provision. The least interest is shown in vacancies in the military, the defence industry, and the law enforcement system (up to 1% among those planning to seek employment).

9. Comparing current employment across sectors with the sectors preferred by surveyed women for future employment, and assuming that these sectors could absorb all interested applicants, the largest increases in the share of employed persons could occur in other (personal) services (employment growth of 166%), hospitality and restaurant services (90%), IT and media (87%), arts and sport (70%), and the financial sector (53%). The smallest increase in labour resources would occur in industry (10%), logistics (10%), and public service (civil service, the military, and law enforcement) — 7%.

10. An increase in the number of workers will contribute to higher output and service provision. The greater the contribution of labour to output in a given sector, the larger the increase will be. For example, a 5% increase in employment in the retail sector would increase output by 2.7%, whereas in the construction sector output would rise by only 0.5%.

11. Respondents planning to look for a job consider low wages to be one of the main barriers to finding employment (although their wage expectations cannot be named excessive: 26% of respondents would like to earn between UAH 20,000 and 30,000, while 33% expect more than UAH 30,000). Another major barrier is the amount of time required to commute to work. Travel time is the most important additional consideration for respondents: for 50%, it is essential that the workplace be reachable within less than an hour, while for 43% this is considered desirable. These preferences are probably linked to the need to combine paid work with domestic responsibilities. These findings are consistent with the conclusions of Hausman (1980).

12. Most respondents do not believe that a lack of substantial work experience or outdated skills would constitute a major obstacle to finding employment. Nevertheless, 61% would be willing to learn new skills free of charge, while 9.5% would even be prepared to pay for training. Among respondents willing to undertake training (nearly 71% of those wishing to find employment), 44% believe they only need to slightly update their skills, while almost a quarter would like to learn a profession from scratch. This indicates substantial demand for adult education programmes. Therefore, the recent expansion of training voucher programmes by the State Employment Service appears well justified. 15% of respondents reported that they would like to receive training directly in the workplace. Thus, internship programmes and dual education schemes could improve employers' chances to train the workers they need.

13. Among those who sought employment through the State Employment Service, almost 60% reported that this was not a useful experience, as the SES did not offer suitable vacancies. Feedback on training programmes was more positive: among those who undertook training with the support of the SES, only a third said that the training had not been useful. Only 23% of respondents had attempted to obtain a grant to start their own business. Of these, 40% received the grant, although fewer than half of them ultimately launched a business.

14. Overall, among those planning to work in the future, 8% are focused exclusively on starting their own business, 35% intend to seek only paid employment, while others are open to either option. However, we can state with a reasonable degree of confidence that only a minority of women plan to engage in entrepreneurship. Therefore, the SES should focus its efforts on employment services and training provision.

15. The State Employment Service is relatively less popular as a job-search tool than private online job platforms. Only 6% of respondents definitely plan to use its services, while 39% do not plan to do so (the remainder consider it a possibility). By comparison, 18% of respondents plan to use online job platforms (and the same share do not plan to use them). Therefore, the SES has potential to promote its services and increase their popularity. Its competitive advantage over online platforms could be a more individualised approach (for example, through the introduction of career advisers).

16. We do not observe a strong willingness among women to enter male-dominated occupations. Sixty per cent reported that they would not like to do so (primarily because they do not see themselves in such occupations). Three per cent would like to try, while the rest are undecided. Greater promotion of such occupations and related training programmes could potentially influence the views of the latter group of women.

INTRODUCTION

By the end of 2024, labour shortages had become the main challenge that Ukrainian companies face. In December 2025, 62% of Ukrainian enterprises identified this issue as significant (for comparison, 57% considered military threats to be a serious problem).

Negative trends that had existed prior to 2021, such as the decline in the working-age population and the mismatch between the skills offered by workers and those required by employers, intensified following the full-scale invasion. Additional negative factors included emigration (around 6 million Ukrainians, predominantly women and children, remain abroad) and internal displacement (internally displaced persons, on average, face greater difficulties finding employment than local residents), as well as the mobilisation of a significant share of men into the Armed Forces of Ukraine (given that in 2021 there were 8.2 million employed men aged 15–70, the mobilisation of approximately 1 million people means a 12% reduction in the workforce), alongside an increase in the care burden borne by women.

Alongside the destruction of production capacity, labour shortages reduce the production (supply) of goods and services and increase producers' costs, as employers are forced to raise wages in order to attract and retain staff. At the macroeconomic level, constraints in the supply of labour with the required skills lead to slower economic growth and higher inflation.

Under these conditions, the search for internal labour reserves becomes particularly important. One such reserve is the greater integration of women into the labour market. This is not only a matter of social equality, but also a powerful instrument for stimulating the economy. For example, in OECD countries, reducing the gender gap could add approximately 0.23% to average annual economic growth rate by 2060 (OECD, 2025). Moreover, if women's and men's participation in the labour market were equalised, global GDP could increase by 26% over the next ten years.

In 2021, women's participation in the labour force in Ukraine was lower than that of men and lower than in many EU countries (Figure 1) (data for 2021 are used because from 2022 onwards, the State Statistics Service stopped publishing data on the population and labour force).

According to the Gender Equality Index in the domain of "Work" (which assesses women's and men's access to the labour market), Ukraine scores lower than the EU average — 65.6 points vs 73.8. Therefore, the potential for greater participation and more balanced representation of women in the labour market remains far from exhausted. At the same time, given the wartime context, Ukraine requires not only greater participation of women in the labour market, but also their entry into "traditionally male" occupations in order to fill positions vacated by men who have joined the Defence Forces. Labour shortages are particularly acute in more male-dominated sectors such as industry and construction, while, in terms of occupations, the greatest shortages are observed among skilled blue-collar workers (as reported by 63% of respondents in the EBA survey).

Recently, the Ukrainian government launched a programme to train women in occupations in which they had previously been almost entirely unrepresented. In 2025, around 1,000 women participated in the programme. However, this is far from sufficient: for example, the shortage of long-haul truck drivers is estimated at 30,000–40,000. At the same time, as our survey demonstrated, only a small share of women currently wish to enter male-dominated occupations, which means that such opportunities need to be promoted more actively. A good example is the "Of Course You Can!" programme, implemented by the Ukrainian government with the support of international organisations as part of the Employment Strategy.

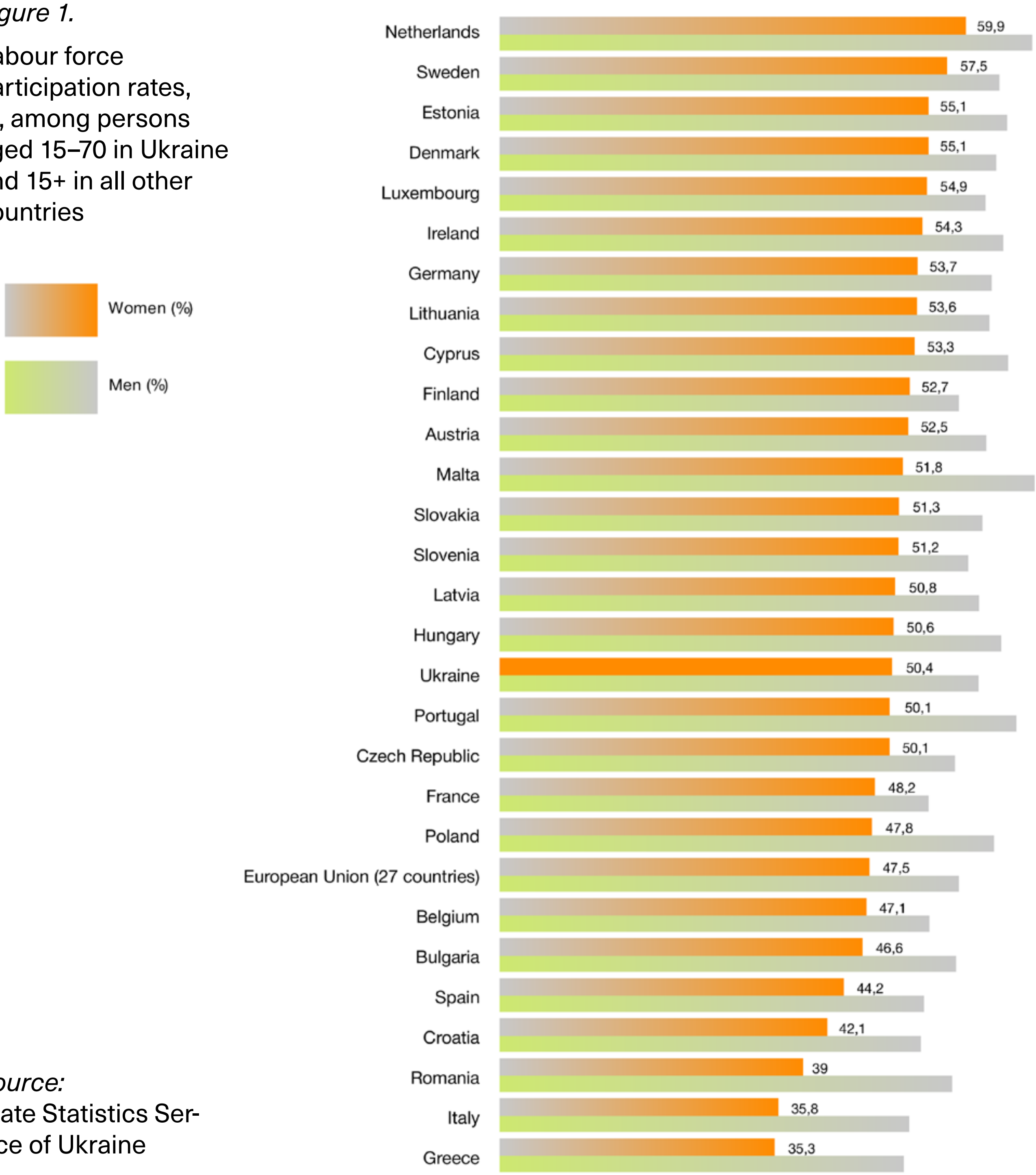
However, labour shortages are also affecting "traditionally female" sectors: according to an employer survey, 46% of healthcare institutions and 43% of educational institutions report difficulties in recruiting staff (compared with 38.5% on average).

At the same time, despite labour shortages, unemployment in Ukraine remains relatively high — 11% according to estimates by the National Bank of Ukraine (with the number of employed at 13.2–13.4 million, this means that approximately 1.5 million people are unemployed).

In addition, many people remain outside the labour force — 29.4% of the population aged 18–65 (according to Info Sapiens data for March 2026). The rate of non-participation in the labour force is significantly higher among women (35.7%) than among men (22.6%). The greatest difficulties in entering employment are experienced by people engaged in unpaid care and domestic work (predominantly women), students, and pensioners, since integrating these groups into the labour market generally requires non-standard forms of work organisation, such as flexible working hours, opportunities for part-time or remote work, access to pre-school institutions and after-school childcare, support from social workers with caring for adults, as well as specialised equipment where work requires physical strength.

Figure 1.

Labour force participation rates, %, among persons aged 15–70 in Ukraine and 15+ in all other countries



Source: State Statistics Service of Ukraine

According to ILO estimates, achieving annual GDP growth of 7% during 2025–2032 could require Ukraine to attract an additional 8.6 million workers (this estimate is based on the assumption that the war will end in 2026 and reconstruction will begin). Thus, there are suggestions to attract migrant workers into the labour market. However, if unemployed Ukrainians are provided with retraining opportunities and employment, and if economically inactive people — particularly women, the majority of whom, according to our survey, would like to work — are integrated into the labour market, the labour shortage could be substantially reduced and the problem at least partially addressed.

According to the survey we conducted in March 2026, 73% of female respondents who are either unemployed or out of the labour force plan to find employment or start their own business in the future, with more than half intending to do so within the next year. Potentially, even the integration of women alone (without taking economically inactive men into account) could increase the employment-to-population ratio by 11.7 percentage points (assuming that the population of government-controlled territories of Ukraine amounts to 30 million people, this would correspond to approximately 3.5 million additional workers). Of course, not all women wishing to enter the labour market will be able to do so. Nevertheless, our study identifies factors preventing this and formulates policy recommendations that could help reduce these barriers.

METHODOLOGY

The aim of this study is to assess the potential economic effect of expanding women's participation across sectors of Ukraine's labour market and to identify barriers to broader participation by women.

A similar CES study conducted in 2019 found that bringing approximately 3.8 million women into the labour market (that is, increasing the number of employed persons by 22% through the inclusion of economically inactive women) could increase Ukraine's GDP by 21%. That study identified care work as one of the main barriers to women's participation in the labour market and, on the employers' side, highlighted the lack of flexible working arrangements and reluctance to hire women with children. The findings of our study are broadly consistent with regard to both GDP growth and one of the key reasons for women's non-participation in the labour market.

Our study uses several methods.

First, we reviewed and synthesised the existing research literature on the impact of greater participation of women in the labour market on GDP and sectoral output, barriers to women's participation in the labour force, and policies that facilitate such participation.

Second, we reviewed Ukrainian legislation affecting female employment and identified legislative gaps requiring further attention.

Third, we estimated the impact of potential employment growth on GDP using a basic economic model that considers output as a function of capital, labour, human capital, and technology.

We then estimated the distribution of labour across sectors based on data on sectoral GDP growth and enterprise employment, and, using a survey conducted by Info Sapiens specifically for this study, assessed the potential growth of the labour force in each sector.

> The Info Sapiens survey was conducted in the second half of March 2026 using an online panel. It involved 1,050 women aged 18–65 who were either unemployed or out of the labour force. The results were weighted to 1,000 responses, and one observation was removed for technical reasons. The sample corresponds to the structure of this population group as of early 2022 (the latest point at which population data are available).
>
> Respondents answered a series of questions regarding their intentions to find employment or start their own business, their requirements for future work, their willingness to undergo training, including training for occupations not traditionally associated with women, their experience interacting with the State Employment Service, and possible barriers to labour market participation.
>
> The survey also contains demographic information about respondents (household composition and income, age, education, etc.).

Calculations of the impact of increased employment on sectoral output were implemented for us pro bono by Veronika Movchan, Academic Director at the Institute for Economic Research and Policy Consulting (IER). However, when interpreting the results of these estimates, note that there are no precise data on the number of employed people or the population size in Ukraine. Therefore, the results may vary depending on assumptions regarding the size and structure of the population, as well as the number of employed persons and their distribution across sectors.

Another part of the study is the probabilistic model (regression analysis), used to analyse factors affecting the likelihood that a woman plans to find a job, as well as the likelihood that she will expect a particular salary level. To identify the categories of women most likely to seek employment, we used K-means cluster analysis based on principal component analysis (PCA). The optimal number of groups was determined using the Elbow Method, while the robustness of the resulting structure was confirmed through hierarchical clustering using Ward's method. Thus, we divided respondents into two groups based on age, income, and employment intentions.

The combination of these methods enables us to identify sectors with the greatest potential for labour force growth and to develop policy recommendations aimed at realising this potential.

LITERATURE REVIEW

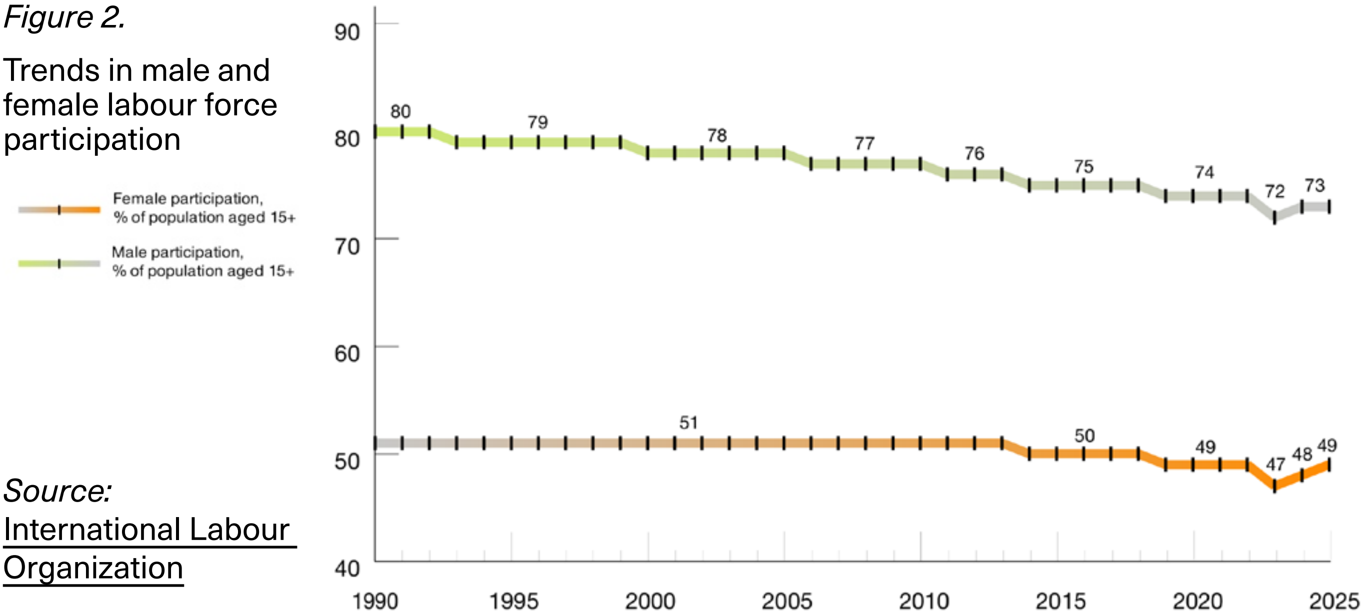
This section summarizes academic studies and analytical reports on the economic potential of integrating women into the labour market and the barriers limiting their participation.

THE IMPACT OF WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN THE LABOUR MARKET ON A COUNTRY'S ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

In the context of population ageing and labour shortages, economically inactive women represent the main internal labour reserve for the economy. The scale of this potential is considerable: according to estimates by the International Labour Organization (ILO), in 2025 the global labour force participation rate was 48.9% for women and 73.1% for men. Thus, reducing the gender gap could support economic growth dynamics by mobilising additional labour resources even in the context of ageing population.

Figure 2.

Trends in male and female labour force participation



Source: International Labour Organization

Positive effects on economic growth can be achieved through an increase in the number of workers in the economy, not necessarily through higher labour productivity (Baerlocher et al., 2020). However, the OECD study Women, Work and the Population Puzzle argues that integrating women into the labour market increases not only labour supply, but also labour productivity.

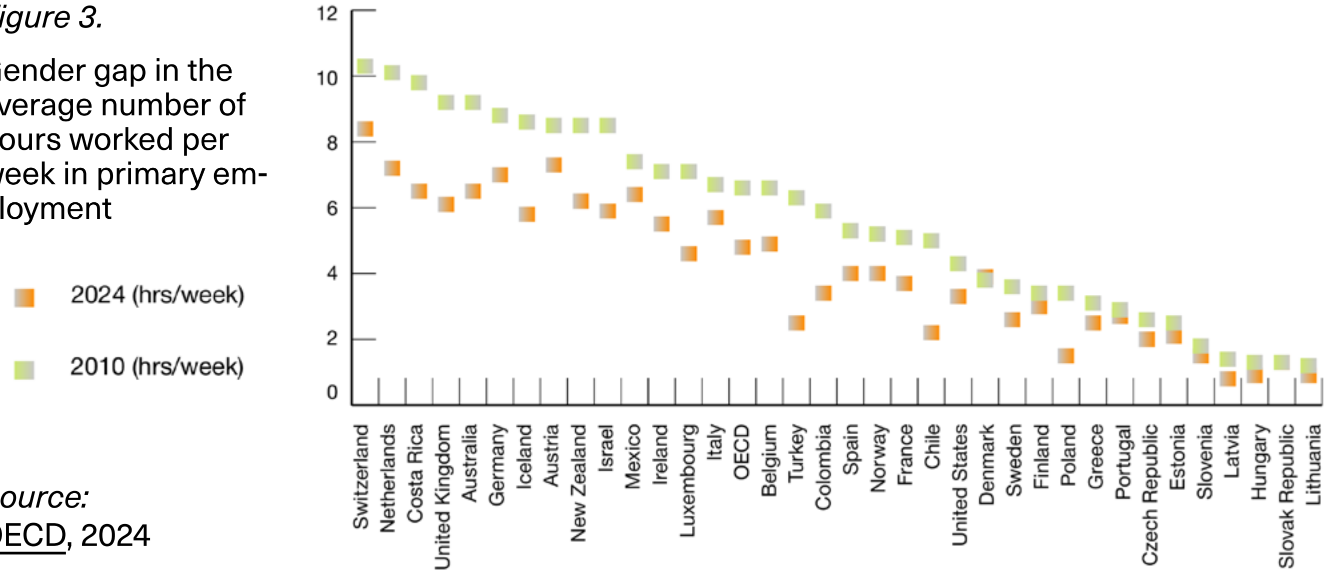
A number of studies have identified a direct impact of women's participation in the labour force on GDP. For example, Baerlocher, Parente, & Rios-Neto (2021) apply the standard Solow model, according to which a country's welfare increases when the share of the labour force relative to the population rises. However, the quantitative assessment of this effect may differ depending on the country or region. For instance, Jemiluyi & Yinusa (2021), examining Sub-Saharan African countries, estimated that a 1% increase in women's labour force participation raises the rate of economic growth by 0.021%. Meanwhile, Tsani et al. (2013), analysing Southern Mediterranean countries (Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine, Syria, Tunisia, and Türkiye), identified a much smaller effect: a 5% increase in women's labour market participation would generate cumulative regional GDP growth of approximately 1.3% over 15 years.

By contrast, in Australia, even a modest increase (2%) in women's working hours (primarily as a result of childcare reforms) could increase GDP by approximately USD 11 billion per year (about 0.8% of 2020 GDP) (Grattan Institute, 2020). Increasing women's employment to achieve gender parity in the U.S. labor market could add up to USD4.3 trillion of annual GDP growth over a decade, which would be 19% higher than projected GDP under the baseline scenario (McKinsey Global Institute, 2016). In European countries, increasing female participation to the level of males could raise GDP by 10–15% by 2050 (IMF, 2018).

The greatest potential is observed in countries with significant structural imbalances, where simultaneously equalising female labour force participation and working hours could increase GDP by 17–20% (OECD, 2023).

Figure 3.

Gender gap in the average number of hours worked per week in primary employment



Source:
OECD, 2024

The variation in these estimates is driven both by differences in calculation methodologies and by country- or region-specific characteristics (traditions, women's access to education, the presence of informal "glass ceilings", etc.). Therefore, policies aimed at promoting women's employment should be designed and implemented with due regard to the legislative and cultural context of the country, as well as the existing infrastructure. At the same time, surveys, analysis of media and social media data, focus groups, and interviews with providers of social and educational services may be used to identify the key bottlenecks to which resources should be directed first. Such an approach enables countries to transition to a model of intensive development, in which economic gains are achieved not only through job creation, but also through more efficient use of existing human capital and better alignment between women's qualifications and labour market needs.

THE IMPACT OF FEMALE LABOUR MARKET PARTICIPATION ON ECONOMIC SECTORS

Some studies found that the impact of greater participation of women differs not only across countries, but also across sectors. For example, according to the model developed by Mokni & Alruwaili (2024) for Saudi Arabia, the largest contribution to GDP growth is observed in manufacturing, construction, and agriculture. Negative effects were identified in three sectors: electricity, gas, and water supply; public services; and social and personal services (Figure 4).

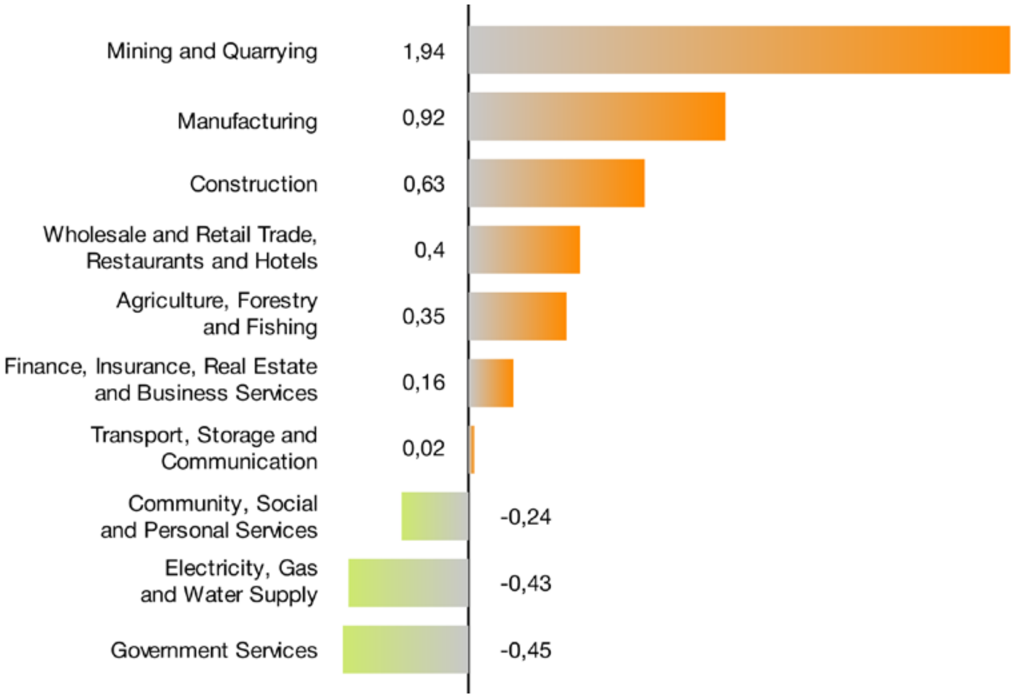
Kuldasheva & Ahmad (2025) found that women's participation in agriculture and services sector contributes significantly to economic growth in Central Asian countries, whereas women's participation in manufacturing has a negative effect. The authors attribute the latter to generally low labour productivity in manufacturing in the studied countries owing to the use of outdated technologies. Besides, women in manufacturing predominantly occupy low-skilled and low-paid positions that make only a minimal contribution to overall economic growth.

According to estimates by McKinsey Global Institute (2015), achieving gender parity in the labour market could add USD 28 trillion to annual global GDP over a ten-year period (+26%).

Unfortunately, women remain disproportionately concentrated in low value-added sectors, while their participation in high-technology industries, construction, and engineering remains limited. When women occupy positions that do not correspond to their level of education, overall productivity growth slows, making labour shortages more acute. Moreover, restrictions on women's access to leadership roles hinder innovation, which is typically driven by diversity (World Bank, 2023).

Figure 4:

Estimated impact of female labour force participation on Saudi Arabia's GDP by economic sector



Source: Mokni & Alruwaili (2024)

Even if the overall number of employed women increases, the economy still loses a significant share of potential gains due to horizontal segregation (the concentration of women in particular sectors and occupations, which tend to be less productive and lower-paid) and vertical segregation (the limited representation of women in senior, higher-paid, and managerial positions, even within the same sectors (the "glass ceiling" effect)). This segregation can be observed in different countries. For example, in Portugal, women are more likely to work in companies with lower wage levels, contributing to the gender pay gap regardless of individual qualifications (Card et al., 2015). A survey of women employees in Türkiye (Durmaz et al., 2025) working in knowledge-intensive sectors such as defence, finance, and engineering, found that women face not only barriers to entry, but also persistent doubts regarding their professional competence. This creates an environment in which women have to devote additional effort to proving their qualifications, while dealing with hostile or biased workplace practices, a lack of support, and limited opportunities for career advancement.

A similar situation can be observed in companies in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, where the lower profits of women-owned businesses are explained by their concentration in low-productivity niches, such as food processing and retail trade. However, these differences disappear when women gain access to capital-intensive sectors. For example, the study Breaking the Metal Ceiling (2015) in Uganda found that women's incomes in "traditionally male" industries were three times higher than in "typically female" sectors and were comparable to those of men.

Similar conclusions are found in sectoral reports on agriculture in Africa, where the lower productivity of female farmers is explained not by their lower capabilities, but by historically limited access to land, credit, and technology (World Bank, 2014). Once these institutional barriers are removed, women's productivity rises to the level of men's, once again confirming that macroeconomic success depends not only on the quantity, but also on the quality of women's participation.

Besides their overall impact on a country's economy, "glass ceilings" in the labour market affect individual households and societies as a whole, as households headed by women may find themselves in a more vulnerable position than families in which men are the primary earners. This has long-term consequences not only for women, but also for children raised in such households, as shown by Sharma (2023) for the United States.

BARRIERS TO FEMALE PARTICIPATION IN THE LABOUR MARKET

Barriers to women's participation in the labour market can be divided into three main groups: structural, institutional, and cultural. Structural barriers primarily include responsibilities related to caring for children and other family members. In many countries, women perform most unpaid domestic work, which significantly limits their ability to work full-time or to have a paid job at all. For example, a 2025 study found that 20% of Ukrainian women have to forgo employment because they are unable to enrol their child in kindergarten.

Institutional factors include discrimination in hiring, limited access to vocational training or retraining, as well as gender differences in wages.

Cultural factors include stereotypes regarding “female” and “male” occupations, which influence choices in education, careers, and professional development. For example, Huang & Li (2025) found that even awareness and expectations of gender inequality (rather than its actual existence) may discourage women from seeking employment. A survey of women in Australia supports this argument, showing that young women often do not view technical or manufacturing occupations as realistic options because of stereotypical perceptions that these are “male jobs”, the absence of female role models, limited awareness of career opportunities in these fields, and concerns about male-dominated working environments. Another Australian study, conducted in two predominantly male companies, demonstrated that despite the existence of a legislative framework, attitudes towards women differ substantially, meaning that gender inequality is shaped primarily by organisational culture, human resources policies, and workplace structures. Therefore, even where companies formally comply with legal requirements, women’s experiences of working in them may differ considerably.

The study by Tsani et al. (2013) on Southern Mediterranean countries found that removing barriers such as social and cultural norms or family pressure could increase women’s labour force participation by 5%.

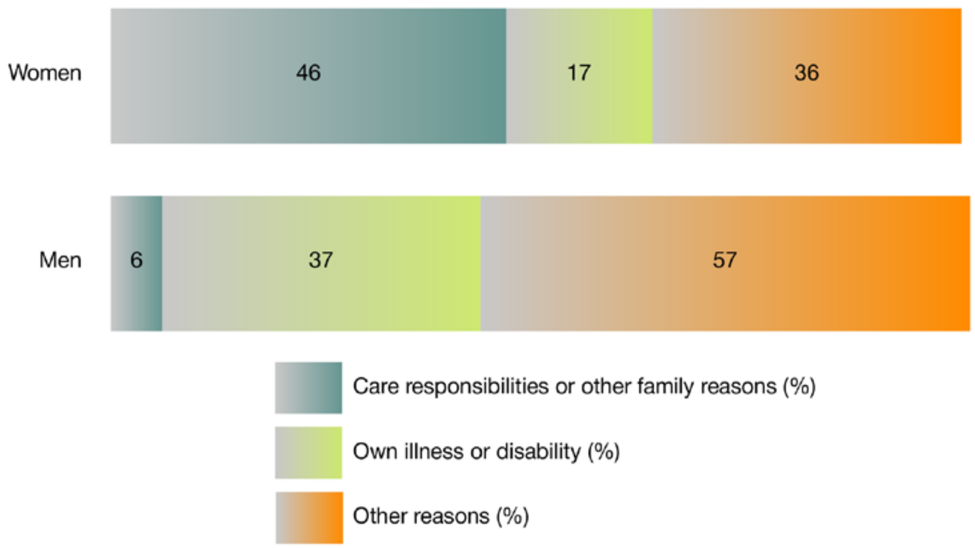
Therefore, policies aimed at increasing female participation in the labour force should take all types of barriers into account.

According to the latest World Bank data (Women, Business and the Law, 2024), the global gap in the realisation of labour rights is significantly wider than previously believed: women have only 64% of the legal opportunities available to men. The experts identified a critical lack of basic legislation protecting women in the areas of safety and entrepreneurship. Moreover, the problem is not only in the existence of laws, but also in the systems for their implementation and enforcement.

For example, just over half of the countries studied have equal pay legislation, yet fewer than one in five countries have adopted pay transparency measures or enforcement mechanisms to ensure compliance with such measures. As a result, women earn only 77 cents for every dollar earned by men. In addition, women spend on average 2.4 more hours per day on unpaid care work than men, with a significant share of this burden related to childcare responsibilities. This constitutes a fundamental structural constraint: in 128 countries worldwide (67% of the countries covered by the study), women frequently have to remain at home due to the lack of safe and high-quality childcare alternatives, while in the EU care responsibilities are the primary factor forcing women to withdraw from the labour market (Figure 5).

Figure 5.

Distribution of reasons for non-participation in the labour force among men and women (EU, 2021, ages 25–54)



Source:

Eurostat

Nobel prize laureate Claudia Goldin (2021) examined the issue of time and resource costs faced by working women, and formulated the "greedy work" concept. In highly productive sectors, where rewards are tied to irregular working hours and constant availability, women constrained by domestic responsibilities are pushed into more "linear" and lower-paid occupations. This not only deepens horizontal segregation, but also contributes to the persistent "motherhood penalty" — a phenomenon whereby women's earnings decline sharply after childbirth due to career interruptions, skills depreciation, and employers' negative expectations (for example, regarding these women's reduced ability to work overtime, lower productivity, or more limited career mobility). In addition, during periods of company crises, women are more likely to face the "glass cliff" effect — appointment to leadership positions at moments of elevated risk, creating additional pressure and increasing the likelihood of reputational damage compared to their male counterparts.

The "spatial mismatch" barrier, that is, restricted access to jobs due to territorial and logistical factors, plays an important role as well. Given that women are disproportionately engaged in unpaid labour and care work, their opportunities for professional mobility are often limited (Thompson, 1997). According to the European Institute for Gender Equality, this affects women's choice of employment arrangements and working conditions, in particular by encouraging a preference for more flexible or locally accessible jobs. This limits women's entry into large industrial or technological hubs, which are typically located in industrial zones or outside of cities.

Thus, women's decisions to enter employment are determined not only by wage levels or the availability of vacancies, but above all by how domestic labour is distributed and whether social policy and the institutional environment make it possible to combine paid work with childcare and household responsibilities (OECD 2013). For example, in Ukraine, 20% of women are forced to forego employment because they are unable to enrol their child in kindergarten.

The most effective policies for addressing such barriers are those that simultaneously support employment and reduce care burden: policies that provide accessible care services, support a more equal distribution of childcare responsibilities between parents, promote flexible forms of employment, and establish tax rules that do not reduce incentives for the second earner in a household to enter employment.

Expanding access to childcare services generally increases women's labour force participation by approximately 1 percentage point immediately, and over a five-year period the effect doubles (Women, Business and the Law, 2024). According to estimates by the European Commission (2025), expanding access to high-quality childcare services in the EU alone could increase women's employment rates sufficiently to generate an additional 1.7% increase in regional GDP. Modelling for Australia (Grattan Institute, 2020) showed that additional public spending on childcare of USD 5 billion per year could increase GDP by approximately USD 11 billion annually.

For Ukraine, the implementation of such strategies is complicated by the full-scale war. External factors not accounted for in classical models have become particularly significant: the physical destruction of care infrastructure (kindergartens, social institutions, hospitals), security risks, particularly those associated with being in crowded places, and the mass forced migration of working-age women to safer regions of Ukraine or abroad. Under these conditions, the effectiveness of traditional instruments supporting women's employment is substantially reduced, since decisions regarding labour market participation are often determined by security considerations rather than solely by the availability of social services and suitable employment opportunities.

An important institutional barrier to labour market entry is the tax burden placed on second earners (the lower-earning partner in a couple, who is usually a woman). In many OECD countries, tax systems are structured in such a way that when the second spouse enters employment, the household loses benefits or moves into a higher tax bracket. OECD research (2023) confirms that under such conditions a woman's net income after taxes and childcare costs may be close to zero, discouraging even highly qualified women from seeking employment. For example, in Belgium in 2014, the average tax rate for a second earner in a childless couple amounted to 60.2%, while a married couple with only one earner (one employed partner) had a tax rate of 40.6% (World Economic Forum, 2016).

Besides financial factors, information gaps also play an important role. According to LinkedIn Economic Graph (2025), women generally have less developed professional networks, which limits their access to career opportunities and information about vacancies. According to Mark Granovetter's theory (1973), weak social ties (acquaintances rather than close friends) are key channels for the dissemination of new information, including information about employment opportunities. Given that recruitment in sectors such as industry, transport, and construction often happens through informal, predominantly "male" networks, women may find themselves at a disadvantage already at the stage of searching for information about vacancies. It is therefore unsurprising that a recent study found that an increase in the share of women studying or working in a particular occupation raises the likelihood that other women will enter that occupation too (while men's chances do not decline).

An important barrier to labour market entry, particularly in European countries, remains the rigidity of labour legislation. Excessively strict dismissal regulations or benefits associated with childbirth often work against women at the hiring stage: employers concerned about lengthy maternity leave tend to prefer male candidates. The IMF emphasises that combining flexible forms of employment with an adequate level of social protection (the flexicurity approach) is important for increasing women's labour market participation (IMF, 2015). Such policies reduce the negative effects of career interruptions associated with childcare, mitigate discrimination at the hiring stage, and help ensure that companies no longer perceive women as a "risky asset" that is not worth "investing in".

Research shows that the potential for integrating women into different sectors is uneven. Some sectors can relatively easily adapt work arrangements to more flexible formats, whereas in others (particularly construction, transport, industry, and technical occupations) physical presence is essential due to safety requirements, specialised equipment, and the longer retraining cycle required.

Therefore, sectoral analysis is important because it makes it possible to distinguish between sectors where the integration of women is relatively fast and realistic and those where it requires much deeper institutional and educational changes. In this sense, policies aimed at expanding women's employment in general are not always effective in encouraging women's entry into "traditionally male" occupations.

The transformation of barriers in the context of armed conflicts and post-war recovery processes adds a specific dimension to the analysis of women's employment, since war radically reshapes the labour market, creating a dynamic "window of opportunity" for reconsidering social norms.

However, international experience shows that increased participation of women during such periods is often not the result of the emergence of new and attractive economic opportunities, but rather a consequence of the need to ensure the physical survival of households following the loss of income due to the injury or death of a husband. For example, in Nepal, the civil war led to a significant increase in women's employment in the agricultural sector, as this represented the most accessible survival strategy rather than a response to market demand (World Bank, 2011). A similar situation was observed in Sub-Saharan Africa, where war "pushed" women into the labour market, creating conditions for greater autonomy while at the same time confining them to low-skilled and exhausting forms of work. Analysis of the experiences of Burundi, Chad, Liberia, and Rwanda shows that despite a narrowing of the gender employment gap, conflict did not contribute to improving working conditions: in some cases, up to 96% of women remained employed in agriculture, engaged in subsistence farming without social protection (Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security, 2020).

A central challenge of the post-war period is exhaustion resulting from women bearing the primary burden not only of maintaining households physically, but also of providing emotional support to families in which men suffer from psychological trauma. Women in communities affected by civil wars spend on average eight more hours per week on domestic and paid work than women in unaffected communities (UN Women, 2012). This burden intensifies where state reforms prioritise the reconstruction of physical infrastructure over social infrastructure, as was the case in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where reductions in spending on healthcare and education increased women's care burden, effectively excluding them from the labour market.

The experience of Germany after World War II demonstrates a negative long-term consequence: women who participated in extremely demanding post-war reconstruction work were 4 percentage points less likely to be employed 20–30 years later compared to those who had not been involved in such work, which is explained by the physical and mental exhaustion resulting from labour under extreme conditions (Mevlude et al., 2011).

International experience emphasises the importance of transforming women's role from that of recipients of assistance to active agents and planners of reconstruction. The post-war period represents an ideal moment for rewriting the legal framework and strengthening women's rights, thereby creating a foundation for stable economic development (UN Women, 2012). It is important that reconstruction programmes include a mandatory component of psychosocial support and investment in the "care economy", since only the provision of basic living conditions and free time enables women to integrate successfully into the labour market.

POLICIES FOR INCREASING WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN THE LABOUR MARKET

International experience shows that growth in women's economic participation is achieved through a combination of different instruments: flexible forms of employment, the development of childcare systems, retraining programmes, measures aimed at reducing gender segregation in the labour market, and others.

One of the main factors leading to women's temporary exclusion from the labour market is the performance of care responsibilities, most commonly childcare. For example, in France, following the birth of a second child, 47% of women reduce their working hours, while after the birth of a third child 70% of women leave their job. Therefore, one of the key instruments for expanding women's economic participation is the development of policies and measures that make it possible to combine paid work with raising children.

First and foremost, this includes the development of care infrastructure: networks of affordable nurseries, including facilities for infants, 24-hour childcare centres, and similar services. For example, in Sweden every child from an early age is entitled to a place in a kindergarten regardless of the employment status or income of their parents. Responsibility for providing these places lies with municipalities, which are required to ensure sufficient capacity for children. As a result, children can attend preschool institutions from the age of one, and most remain there until starting school. These services are affordable for parents, since fees are linked to household income. In addition, the operating hours of these institutions are aligned with standard working schedules, allowing parents to combine employment with childcare responsibilities. Therefore, in 2024 the share of economically active women in Sweden was 64.5% (the fifth highest rate in Europe), while the fertility rate remained close to 1.5.

A second important issue concerns parental leave arrangements. Excessively long childcare leave may reduce the likelihood that women return to work, worsen their career prospects, and intensify skills depreciation. The experience of Germany and Austria showed that extending the duration of childcare leave negatively affected mothers' return to full-time employment. Of course, shorter leave periods are only feasible when complemented by high-quality childcare services.

Some countries have introduced "father quotas" within parental leave schemes. In the Scandinavian countries (Sweden and Denmark), part of the paid parental leave is reserved for fathers and is forfeited if not used. In Quebec (Canada), such quotas increased the likelihood of women returning to full-time employment by 5 percentage points. In Ukraine, part of childcare leave may be taken by fathers as well as by other family members; however, making such leave mandatory for men is unrealistic under wartime conditions.

Another important instrument is flexible forms of employment. Flexible working hours and remote work help women combine paid employment with family responsibilities. For Ukraine, this instrument has even greater value under wartime conditions: the possibility of remote work has enabled internally displaced persons and refugees to continue working for Ukrainian employers despite physical distance. Of course, this format is not suitable for all sectors and occupations. However, Ukrainian legislation provides opportunities for remote work, and employers should therefore consider the possibility of such arrangements, at least under force majeure circumstances (for example, when an air raid alert prevents a child from attending school or kindergarten).

To address vertical segregation, some countries apply corporate quotas for women in senior positions, while programmes aimed at increasing the share of women in "traditionally male" sectors include initiatives encouraging girls to enter STEM fields, as well as specialised retraining programmes for women wishing to move into technical and skilled worker occupations or sectors such as construction and transport.

Many countries, including Ukraine, have programmes designed to help women start their own businesses and enter technical (and generally higher-paid) occupations. As a rule, such programmes provide informational support (various training programmes and internships, guidance on legislation and procedures) or grants for business start-ups. Measures specific to Ukraine include programmes for relocating enterprises to safer regions and payments to employers for hiring internally displaced persons.

A UN Women study (2023) found that women in Ukraine face discrimination from employers (bias against women with children and reluctance to retain women's positions during maternity leave), with internally displaced women, wives of service members, and wives of former prisoners of war being particularly vulnerable. The study recommends a range of measures — from strengthening legal protections for women and developing gender-sensitive policies to expanding social services and women's entrepreneurship, as well as strengthening information policies aimed at combating discrimination.

According to a UNICEF study (2026), the greatest risk factor for women to fall into the NEET category — that is, being outside education and the labour force — is childbirth and childcare responsibilities. Additional vulnerability factors include internal displacement, poverty, health problems, and single motherhood. At the same time, such women face a number of barriers for leaving this status, ranging from bias among potential employers and the lack of flexible working arrangements to the absence of work experience, insufficient funds for training, and similar constraints. To help women move out of this status, the authors of the study suggest introducing individual career advisers (in Ukraine, this could be implemented through the State Employment Service) — people who provide comprehensive support with job search and resolving other issues that prevent women from entering the labour market (for example, restoring lost documents). Another proposal involves bringing services closer to their recipients, for example, through creation of mobile multidisciplinary teams that would provide social services and assist women in remote locations to find a job. Other recommendations include improving transport and educational infrastructure, supporting women's entrepreneurship, and promoting flexible forms of employment.

The Demographic Strategy until 2030 envisages the creation of a family-friendly environment for households with children, including the development of infrastructure for pre-school children, educational programmes for women, including entrepreneurial training, the expansion of legislative provisions for flexible working arrangements, support for families at risk of poverty, the provision of employment and workplace support services for families facing difficult life circumstances, the introduction of career advisers, and other measures.

In summary, higher participation of women in the labour market increases both GDP and labour productivity. However, the scale of this effect differs significantly across countries and sectors depending on a range of institutional (for example, women's education), infrastructural (for example, the availability of pre-school institutions), and cultural (for example, stereotypes and prejudice) factors.

REVIEW OF LEGISLATION

Women's participation in the labour market in Ukraine is shaped not only by economic and social factors, but also by the legal environment — the system of legislative provisions regulating employment conditions, occupational safety, childcare, and equal opportunities.

This section analyses the legal framework through the lens of the study's central question: which legal provisions facilitate women's access to the labour market (including in sectors where they have traditionally been underrepresented), which provisions protect women while at the same time reducing employers' incentives to hire them, and where legislation de facto restricts women's entry into the labour market.

The legal regulation of women's access to the labour market in Ukraine has a multi-level structure:

1. The Constitution of Ukraine (Articles 24, 43, 45, 46, and 51) — the highest level of Ukrainian legislation, establishing the principles of equality and the protection of motherhood;
2. International treaties, including the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and ILO Conventions No. 100 (Equal Remuneration), No. 111 (Discrimination), and No. 156 (Workers with Family Responsibilities) — establish obligations related to equality and non-discrimination;
3. The Labour Code of Ukraine sets the key rules governing relations between employers and employees;
4. The Law "On the Organisation of Labour Relations under Martial Law" defines the rules under which the labour market operates during wartime. It temporarily overrules the Labour Code norms;
5. Specialised laws (on employment, equal rights, remuneration, leave, occupational safety, and social insurance) regulate specific aspects of employment in more detail;
6. Secondary legislation (Cabinet of Ministers resolutions and ministerial orders) specifies and implements legislative provisions.

Brief overview of the main labour laws:

The Labour Code of Ukraine establishes the general conditions governing employment, occupational safety, and guarantees for certain categories of employees. Chapter XII, "Women's Labour" (Articles 174–186-1), contains a number of protective provisions and restrictions (for example, the prohibition on involving pregnant women and women with children under the age of three in night work, overtime work, or work on holidays), as well as guarantees (for example, employers cannot refuse to hire women or reduce their wages based on pregnancy or the presence of children under three). Despite the outdated Soviet foundations of the Labour Code, it is constantly updated and remains in force. A draft new Labour Code, currently registered in the Verkhovna Rada, is aimed at making labour protection clauses more flexible and employees' rights more gender neutral. The major difference between the draft and the current Labour Code is a shift from the logic of the "special protection of women" to the logic of the "equal rights of both parents." In particular, the draft introduces a new four-month paid parental leave entitlement (two months for each parent), makes remote work for pregnant women a legal right rather than subject to employer's approval, and transforms the prohibition on dismissing mothers with children under the age of three into a prohibition on dismissing either the mother or the father of a child under the age of 1.5 years.

The Law "On Employment of the Population" regulates access to the labour market. It defines rights relating to job search, state support for unemployed, retraining programmes, and the employment of certain categories of the population (including single mothers — Article 14). Thus, the Labour Code and the Law on Employment complement each another: the former applies from the moment an employment contract is concluded, while the latter regulates what happens before that, i.e. entry into the labour market. Both contain provisions prohibiting discrimination.

The prohibition of discrimination is further reinforced by the Law "On Ensuring Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men". It applies to all spheres, including labour relations, and supplements prohibition of discrimination foreseen by the Labour Code (Article 17). Where the Labour Code establishes specific labour standards, this law creates a general anti-discrimination framework and defines the institutional mechanism — the system of agencies responsible for gender equality issues.

The Law "On the Organisation of Labour Relations under Martial Law" (No. 2136) is a temporary legal act that during the martial law overturns provisions of the Labour Code. It suspended some protective restrictions applying to women. For example, the law provides that during martial law women (except for pregnant women and women with children under the age of one) may, with their consent, be employed in heavy work and work involving harmful or hazardous conditions.

LEGISLATION THAT EXPANDED WOMEN'S ACCESS TO THE LABOUR MARKET

During 2016–2024, Ukraine introduced a number of legislative changes that formally expanded women's access to the labour market. These changes primarily concerned sectors with traditionally low levels of female representation.

Cancelling the list of occupations prohibited for women. For decades, an order of the Ministry of Health (1993), containing a list of heavy and hazardous occupations prohibited for women, restricted women's access to more than 450 occupations ranging from mining to transport. Although its declared purpose was protection of reproductive health, in practice it was often used as an excuse for not hiring women into skilled worker positions even when they had no motherhood plans. In 2017, this list was cancelled. General prohibitions were replaced with a model based on individual risk assessment: employers are now required to conduct workplace assessments and may engage women in hazardous work only after obtaining informed consent and after a medical examination.

At the same time, the Labour Code (Article 174) retains the prohibition on underground work for women, linked to ILO Convention No. 45 (Underground Work (Women) Convention), which Ukraine denounced in 2024. At present, the Law "On the Organisation of Labour Relations under Martial Law" has suspended the application of this provision, while the draft new Labour Code does not contain it.

Upon cancelling the list of prohibited occupations, in 2025, the State Employment Service launched a programme to address labour shortages. The program is retraining women for "traditionally male" occupations (machine operators, heating plant operators, tractor drivers, drivers, etc.). For example, among the 300 graduates of the "ProfTech" programme of the Kyiv School of Economics, nearly one third were women who acquired vocational skills that are now in high demand, such as machine operation, welding, electronics assembly, etc.

Women's participation in the Armed Forces and law enforcement agencies. Ukraine joined UN Security Council Resolution 1325 "Women, Peace and Security" in 2016 and has been implementing its clause on ensuring equal access for women to military and peacekeeping missions through National Action Plans for its implementation (2016–2020 and 2021–2025, with a new plan until 2030 approved in February 2026). 2018 amendments introduced to the Law "On Military Duty and Military Service" (Part 12, Article 1) established that women perform military service obligations on an equal basis with men.

On the eve of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the Ministry of Defence approved a *list of 14 specialisations and 7 related professions after mastering which women are subject to military registration* (including IT and cybersecurity, chemistry and biotechnology, psychology and social work, finance and management, etc.), as well as a *list of professions and specialisations related to military specialties* (more than 70 professions). Women that have these qualifications may voluntarily register for military service on the basis of the legislation on women's military registration, which has been in force since 2022. In peacetime, recruitment to the Armed Forces of Ukraine is voluntary, while under the martial law women with qualifications in medicine and pharmacology may be conscripted into service.

In 2026, nearly 75,000 women were serving in the Armed Forces of Ukraine, approximately 20% more than in 2022.

At present, Parliament is considering the draft law aimed at strengthening the social protection of female service members. The draft proposes introducing a five-day working week with two days off for pregnant service members and permitting their involvement in 24-hour duties, garrison duties, combat duty, and operational assignments only with their consent and subject to recommendations from the medical service. Where the duties associated with a position are dangerous or incompatible with health protection requirements, the commander would be obliged to transfer the pregnant service member to another unit where she could perform safe duties (currently service members often continue performing standard duties until the seventh month of pregnancy). The draft law also proposes to prohibit transferring of women with children under the age of three and single-parent service members with children under the age of 14 without their consent. However, the practical feasibility of implementing these provisions during wartime remains an open question.

Gender quotas. One of the mechanisms used to increase women's participation in different spheres is the introduction of quotas. The Electoral Code of Ukraine (2019) introduced a mandatory gender quota in electoral lists of political parties: each group of five candidates on an electoral list must include at least two candidates of each sex, effectively requiring at least 40% women on party lists. For communities with fewer than 10,000 voters, the quota is set at 30%.

Moreover, the Law "On Political Parties" provides financial incentives for parties which have no more than two thirds of MPs of one sex.

Besides electoral quotas, Ukrainian government tries to extend the principle of gender representation to the corporate sector, primarily to the supervisory boards of state-owned and municipal enterprises. This issue has become particularly relevant in the context of European integration: the EU Directive "Women on Boards" recommends that Member States ensure that women account for at least 40% of non-executive directors in large publicly listed companies by 2026. In 2019 and 2020, MPs registered draft laws proposing a 40% quota for each sex on the supervisory boards of state-owned enterprises. This rule supposed to be a temporary measure until 2030. In 2024, a similar draft law was submitted to Parliament; however, none of these initiatives has been adopted yet.

Flexible forms of employment. In 2021, Parliament adopted the law regulating remote work arrangements. The amendments legally established employees' right to work outside the office, including from home, and obliged employers either to provide the equipment necessary for such work or to compensate related expenses. In 2022, the Verkhovna Rada adopted amendments regulating the work of freelancers, strengthening the legal protection of self-employed individuals who provide services without formal employment (for example, under contractual arrangements). These changes are particularly important for women with young children, since remote and flexible forms of employment help combine paid work with caregiving responsibilities.

LEGISLATION THAT MAY ACTUALLY RESTRICT WOMEN'S ACCESS TO THE LABOUR MARKET DESPITE GOOD INTENTIONS

Labour legislation that provides unequal protection to employees of a particular sex may lead employers to avoid hiring the "more protected" category of workers, at least for formal positions. This is one of the key mechanisms sustaining gender segregation in the labour market.

Anti-discrimination provisions. The Labour Code prohibits refusing employment or reducing wages because of pregnancy or having children.

However, this provision primarily protects women who are already employed. It does not resolve the key problem of implicit discrimination during job search, whereas an employer, anticipating that a woman may have children in the future, may choose not to hire her in order to avoid future obligations arising from protective labour legislation.

In practice, a woman who is not hired because of her age, young children, or an expected pregnancy has no effective legal instruments for proving that she was not hired because of that rather than due to a lack of skills or experience, since she has no opportunity to compare her qualifications with those of other candidates in order to expose discrimination.

The scale of hidden discrimination is confirmed by recent research. According to data from Work.ua (March 2026), 25% of women have experienced discrimination related to motherhood — most often not in the form of a rejection after an interview, but through inappropriate questions about plans to have children, pressure related to frequent sick leave or attempts to force them to resign. The discrimination may be even less visible. Thus, women's salary expectations are on average 17% lower than those of men (UAH 25,000 vs UAH 30,000).

> Article 184. Guarantees during hiring and a ban to dismiss pregnant women and women with children
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> It is prohibited to refuse employment to women or reduce their wages due to pregnancy or the presence of children under the age of three, and in the case of single mothers due to the presence of a child under fourteen or a child with a disability.
>
> If such women are not hired, an employer is obliged to provide the reasons for refusal in writing. A refusal to hire may be challenged in court.
>
> Firing at the employer's initiative of pregnant women and women with children under three (or under six if home care is required — Article 179), as well as single mothers with a child under fourteen or a child with a disability, is prohibited except for cases of complete liquidation of an enterprise, institution, or organisation. In these cases, firing is permitted but a woman must be hired again. These women must also be hired after their fixed-term employment contract expires. Until they are employed, they retain their average salary, but for no longer than three months from the expiry date of the fixed-term employment contract. (Labour Code of Ukraine)
>
> *In other words, while the employer is searching for a new position for the woman, he must pay her average salary, but no longer than three months. If the employer fails to find a new job for her, he stops paying her salary but still has to find her a new job, although there is no effective enforcement mechanism for this, which makes the guarantee not fully practical.*

According to the Head of the OLX Jobs, about 39% of women with young children face discrimination when looking for a job due to employers' bias against mothers, a lack of flexible working arrangements, and the need to choose between career and family responsibilities. In March 2026, labour market expert and board member of the Association of Career Consultants of Ukraine Tetiana Pashkina stated: "Women have always faced prejudice because of maternity leave, children, sick leave, or all of these factors combined."

Since 2022, amendments to the Law on Advertising have come into force introducing a fine of UAH 86,470 (10 minimum wages) for discriminatory wording in job advertisements, such as “looking for a girl under 30”. However, discrimination during recruitment remains largely overlooked.

Protective restrictions. The Labour Code (Article 175) prohibits women to work at night except in spheres where this is necessary. For this provision to become practical, the Cabinet of Ministers must approve a list of such spheres or criteria defining the necessity. However, no such list has been approved, meaning that in peacetime the provision cannot be properly applied. Employers in manufacturing, transport, and technical industries have often used this legal uncertainty as an argument to not hire women since they cannot work at night. Under martial law, the Law No. 2136 this clause: women (except pregnant women and mothers of children under one) may work at night under their written consent. However, once martial law is lifted, the prohibition will be reinstated together with the legal uncertainty surrounding the exceptions, unless by that time the Cabinet of Ministers approves the relevant list of professions or the new Labour Code replaces this provision with a gender neutral rule.

The Labour Code (Articles 176–177) prohibits pregnant women and women with children under three from performing night work, overtime work, or business travel. Women with children 3-14, or with a child with a disability, may be engaged in such work only under their written consent. These provisions are intended to protect women from excessive workloads, but for employers they create operational constraints that complicate planning.

According to the EBA survey (2025), 63% of companies experience critical labour shortages, especially of skilled workers involved in production. In these very spheres protective provisions of the Labour Code the most significantly complicate female access.

The Labour Code contains several clauses regulating the working conditions of mothers in manufacturing. Thus, Article 178 obliges employers to transfer pregnant women to lighter work while preserving their average earnings. The same applies to women with children under three if they can no longer perform their duties. Women with children under 1.5 years are entitled (Article 183) to additional breastfeeding breaks of no less than 30 minutes at least every three hours (or no less than one hour if there are two or more children). These breaks are counted as working time and are paid. Such provisions increase employers’ costs and create organisational difficulties for enterprises, especially those where production process cannot be interrupted.

Childcare responsibilities. The Labour Code (Article 179) foresees several types of leave related to childbirth and childcare. First, there is paid maternity leave (sick leave related to pregnancy and childbirth), lasting either 126 or 140 days depending on the circumstances. Since 2023, pregnant women, with doctors’ allowance, can decide when to begin prenatal leave and transfer the unused portion to the postnatal period. Maternity benefits are 100% of average wage regardless of insurance record (Article 18 of the Law on Mandatory State Social Insurance).

Second, there is unpaid childcare leave until the child is three (or six under some health conditions). Until 2021, the Labour Code (Article 179) formulated this entitlement as the right of women: leave was granted "at the request of the woman." Fathers, grandparents or other relatives could use such leave only as secondary beneficiaries when the mother was not taking it. Law No. 1401-IX (2021) changed the formulation to "at the request of a mother or a father of a child", thus establishing equal entitlement to leave for both parents: they may now decide which of them will use it. The same law introduced a new form of leave — a one-time paid paternity leave of 14 calendar days after a child is born.

Traditionally (largely because of lower wages), it is women who take unpaid three-year childcare leave. This creates a vicious cycle: absence from the labour market leads to less work experience and skills depreciation, which results in lower wages compared to men of the same age and educational level. In addition, during childcare leave employers bear administrative and organisational costs associated with finding temporary employees and preserving the employee's position. This is particularly burdensome for small and medium-sized enterprises, which, according to UNDP estimates, provide 74% of all jobs in Ukraine. Such costs are primarily associated with women, reducing their attractiveness in the labour market. Expanding opportunities for both fathers and mothers to take the childcare leave can help correct this bias.

LEGISLATION THAT DOES NOT RESOLVE EXISTING PROBLEMS

The gender pay gap. The Law "On Labour Remuneration" (Article 21) and the Law "On Ensuring Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men" (Article 17) oblige employers to ensure equal pay for women and men with the same qualifications that work in the same conditions. EU Directive 2023/970 on pay transparency requires equal pay for work of "equal value," i.e. positions with different titles but requiring comparable levels of knowledge, effort, and responsibility. To assess the value of work, the Directive establishes four criteria: skills, effort, responsibility, and working conditions.

Under the Directive, companies with more than 100 employees are required to report on the gender pay gap, whereas Ukrainian legislation has no such requirement. The annual "Labour Market Barometer" study by GRC.ua (2026) found that three quarters of companies do not systematically monitor issues of gender equality in wages. At the same time, 22% of employers acknowledged that women typically agree to salaries 11–20% lower than those accepted by men for the same amount of work.

At the time the Strategy for Reducing the Gender Pay Gap was adopted in 2023, the gap was 18.6% (although according to research by the Institute for Demography of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine based on Pension Fund data for 2023, the actual gap may be as high as 41.4%, primarily among female employees aged 19–29). This is higher than the EU average (11.1% in 2024). The Strategy aims to reduce the gap to 13.6% by 2030.

The gender pay gap varies across sectors and is significantly higher than the average in sectors that are "non-traditional" for women. According to the State Statistics Service, women in industry earn 25% less than men; in arts, sports, and entertainment — 33% less; and in the financial sector — 31.5% less. These data are aggregated, making it impossible to distinguish to what extent they reflect unequal pay for equal work as opposed to horizontal and vertical segregation within these sectors. However, the inequality is definitely there.

Combining care work with employment. Through indirect provisions, legislation establishes that children under seven cannot be left unattended.

> Cabinet of Ministers Resolution No. 585 of 1 June 2020 "On Ensuring Social Protection for Children in Difficult Life Circumstances" defines several situations as threatening a child's safety and calling for intervention by social services. These include leaving a child under seven inside without supervision by a person aged fourteen or older and leaving a child under ten outdoors for more than thirty minutes without appropriate clothing taking into account the weather. In such cases, parents may be liable under Article 184 of the Code on Administrative Offences (failure to fulfil parental responsibilities) or Article 135 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine (leaving in danger), depending on the consequences.
>
> Thus, Resolution No. 585 does formally establish that "children under X years old may not be left unattended" but it defines circumstances under which social service has to intervene. Formally, leaving a child older than seven without supervision does not constitute an offence. However, this does imply absence of liability: Article 135 of the Criminal Code applies regardless of the child's age if parents leave a child in a life-threatening situation. For example, in 2025, a court fined a mother after her underage daughter ran away from home for ten days. In 2021, police wrote a record against the mother of an eight-year-old boy who had left the apartment alone looking for his mother, even though his father had been at home at the time. The report was issued to the mother because she came to pick up the child. Thus, while no formal age prohibition exists, the risk of criminal liability remains if leaving a child of any age unattended results in a real threat to the child's life or health.

A large share of women remains outside the labour force because of not enough places in kindergartens. Although the new Law "On Pre-School Education" (2024) allows round-the-clock childcare for children whose parents have non-standard working schedules, in practice kindergartens offering 24-hour care are mostly private (municipal kindergartens may lack resources to pay the staff for night shifts). This significantly reduces employment opportunities for women with pre-school-aged children in sectors that have severe labour shortages and offer relatively high wages, such as energy, transport, and construction.

INCOMPLETE REFORMS

Relaxation of protective clauses. Law No. 2136 temporarily (until the end of martial law) removed or relaxed most "protective" restrictions applying to women. It allowed women with children under three to work at night under their consent (previously this had been absolutely prohibited), cancelled the one-hour reduction of night shifts, and permitted women to perform underground and overtime work according to with their employment contracts. Pregnant women and women with children under one may be engaged in night work only under their consent.

On the one hand, these changes expand women's opportunities to obtain employment in sectors where formal restrictions previously existed. On the other hand, the mobilisation of men has increased the number of families in which women are sole or primary caregivers, thus increasing their burden. Research by the "Gender in Detail" project points to a significant increase in the burden borne by women whose husbands serve in the Defence Forces or those who work in the State Emergency Service or the education sector. These women simultaneously experience growing workloads in paid employment and an increased volume of unpaid care work.

Draft Labour Code. The draft Labour Code of Ukraine will replace the current Labour Code with a more modern model of labour relations aligned with EU standards. Its main objective with respect to gender equality is a shift from protective provisions formulated exclusively for women towards gender neutral rights for both parents, while also establishing flexible forms of employment as a legislative standard. The draft has a number of clauses affecting female participation in the labour market:

- New paid parental leave (Article 150 of the draft): four months of paid parental leave for parents of a child (two months for each parent), which may be used until the child reaches the age of eight. This leave would be provided in addition to the existing unpaid childcare leave until the child reaches three or six.
- Special guarantees for pregnant women (*not gender-neutral but* physiologically *necessary*): the right to remote work or flexible working arrangements for pregnant women without loss of employee status.
- Protection against dismissal: prohibition on dismissing parents with children under 1.5 years or with a child with a disability. Note that the current Labour Code (Article 184) prohibits dismissal only of women with children under three (under six if medically justified). The draft narrows the age threshold but extends protection to both parents.

SUMMARY

Over the past decade, women's formal access to the labour market has expanded significantly due to cancelling of the list of prohibited professions, opening of military occupations to women, and the introduction of gender quotas in electoral lists. The State Employment Service's programme for retraining women is an example of practical application of these opportunities.

At the same time, protective provisions create a systemic disincentive for employers. Legal uncertainty surrounding night work, the absence of compensation for lengthy childcare leave, and operational constraints associated with employing women with children make women "costlier" candidates in sectors with shift-based work schedules. The draft new Labour Code partly addresses this asymmetry through gender-neutral provisions on childcare and protection against dismissal for both parents. However, it does not resolve the key issue: the absence of compensation mechanisms for employers in cases of prolonged leave.

The anti-discrimination protection mechanism remains imperfect. Prohibitions on discrimination exist, and fines for discriminatory job advertisements exist, but there is no effective mechanism for proving discrimination during recruitment where it is not explicitly articulated. However, this is not solely a Ukrainian problem. Most EU countries lack instruments helping applicants to prove hidden discrimination in recruitment processes. Some states, such as Belgium and the Netherlands, have experimented with discrimination testing (sending identical CVs from candidates of different sexes) or using "mystery applicants" (social inspectors posing as jobseekers with certain characteristics in order to observe whether employers reject their applications on those grounds). However, this approach is primarily a research tool rather than a legal mechanism.

The fair pay principle exists in Ukrainian legislation, but without mandatory reporting and enforcement mechanisms it remains on paper.

At the same time, the underdeveloped network of pre-school institutions and the de facto assignment of caregiving responsibilities to mothers represent extra-legal barriers that cannot be resolved through legislative changes alone. As many as 67.5% of women outside the labour market are engaged primarily in domestic work and childcare. At the same time, the share of women who are the main breadwinners in their households increased during the war from 7% to 23% (as of 2026). Combined with care responsibilities, this creates a double burden for women.

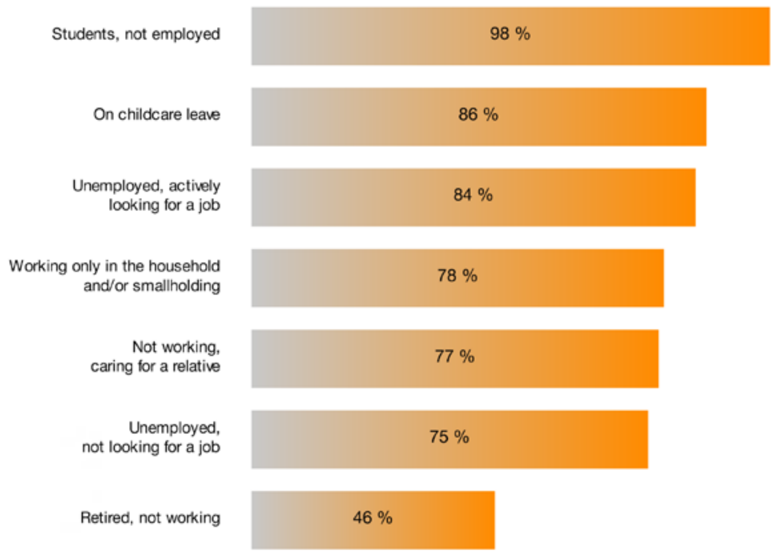
Martial law has opened new opportunities, but it has not resolved systemic problems. The temporary relaxation of restrictions under the Law "On the Organisation of Labour Relations under Martial Law" formally expanded employers' ability to engage women in night and overtime work in sectors where absolute prohibitions had previously existed. However, there is no quantitative data on which of these opportunities were used in practice or whether they affected women's employment levels in the relevant sectors. Once martial law is lifted, legal barriers will return in their previous form unless the new Labour Code has been adopted by that time. A systemic response to labour market challenges requires continuous changes in legislation, infrastructure, and employment models.

RESULTS OF THE SOCIOLOGICAL SURVEY

A survey conducted for us by the polling company Info Sapiens during the second half of March 2026 showed that the overwhelming majority of unemployed and economically inactive women would like to enter the labour market. However, pensioners are least likely planning to look for a job Figure 6).

Figure 6.

Share of women who plan to look for a job in the future among women who are unemployed or of labour force, by category



Note: Women who identified themselves as "Unemployed, not looking for a job" in response to another survey question nevertheless reported plans to look for a job in the future. Therefore, this response category should be interpreted not according to the ILO definition, which presumes readiness to start work within the next two weeks, but in a broader sense.

Cluster analysis confirmed these findings by dividing respondents into two large groups (Table 1). Women in the first group are more likely to be older (35–65 years old) and divorced. This group is characterised by lower household income and smaller household size (80% of households in this group have three or fewer people). Only 57% of respondents in this group plan to find a job or start their own business in the future. Women in the second group were more likely to be younger (18–35 years old), to have higher household income, and to belong to larger households (more than 80% of women in this group are from households with three or more people). They are also more likely to be married or on childcare leave. Among respondents in this group, 97% plan look for a job in the future.

Table 1. Distribution of respondents across clusters

	Cluster 1 (43%)	Cluster 2 (57%)
Age	36-65	18-35
Household income	Lower	Higher
Household composition	Fewer household members (median=2)	More household members (median=3)
Status	Pensioners, divorced	On childcare leave, married
IDPs	15%	9%
Share of cluster planning to look for a job	57%	97%

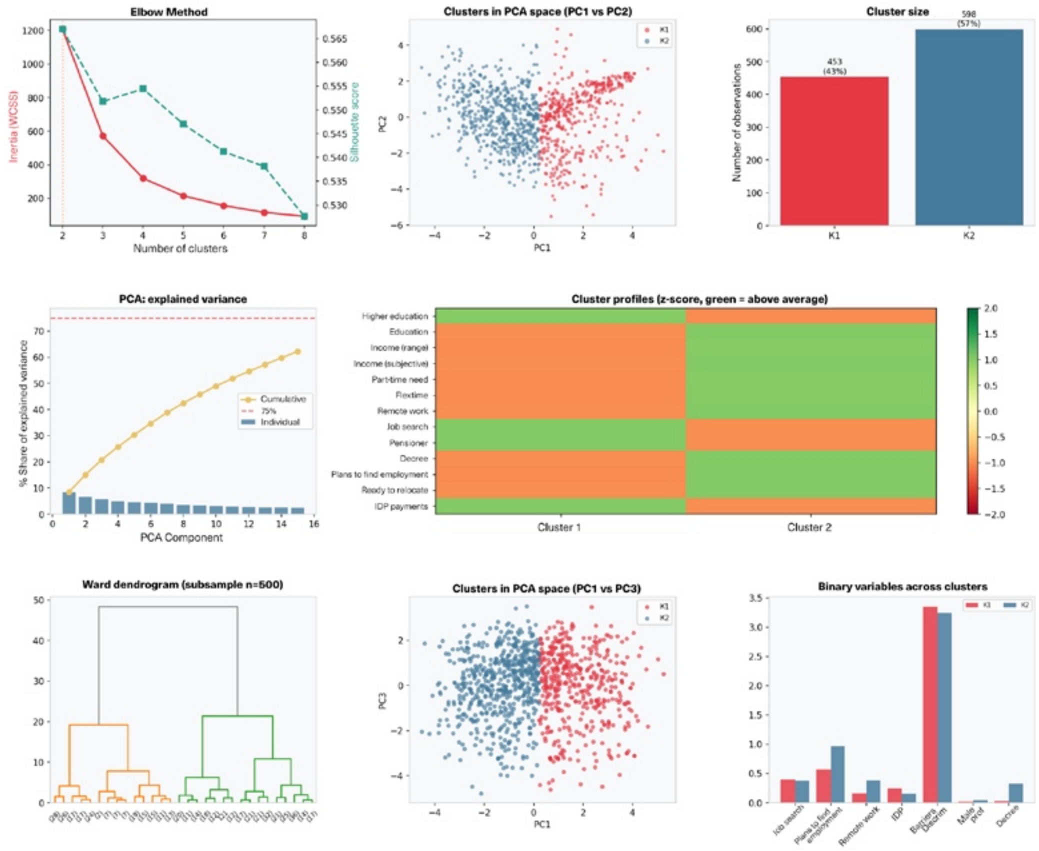
Note: The table presents the dominant characteristics defining the profile of each cluster. The listed features are those that most clearly distinguish the groups, while other characteristics are distributed relatively evenly across the clusters and therefore are not differentiating factors.

To divide respondents into groups, we used a complex statistical approach. Since the survey included different types of questions (both yes/no questions and scales ranging from 1 to 5), we first standardised the data and then applied Principal Component Analysis (PCA). This reduced dozens of different indicators into several key factors that best explained the differences between respondents.

The grouping was implemented using the K-means method. To determine the optimal number of clusters into which the sample should be divided, we used the Elbow Method and silhouette analysis. These calculations confirmed that division into two groups was the most accurate and analytically coherent solution.

Figure 7.

Cluster analysis of non-employed women



To verify the robustness of the results, we applied hierarchical clustering (Ward's method). The fact that two different methods produced similar results confirms that the groups of women identified in our analysis (younger and more financially secure women versus older women with lower incomes) are stable and genuinely present within the population structure rather than being random groupings.

Regression analysis (Table D4 in the Annex 3) estimates which socio-demographic characteristics are most important in determining the intention to enter the labour market. Women younger than 56 are more likely willing to find a job in the future. Other factors increasing this probability are living in an urban area (although city size does not matter), as well as having school-aged children (7–17 years old).

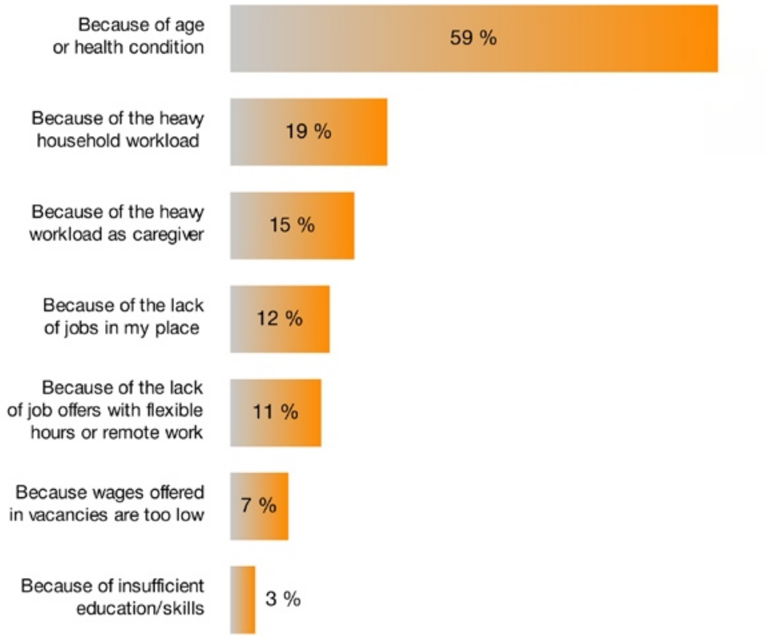
Women with no previous work experience, those who get benefits as internally displaced persons, women belonging to the highest-income category, and women living with adult children (older than 23) less likely plan to find a job. The number of children under the age of three negatively affects the likelihood that a woman plans to look for a job, while receiving child benefits has a positive effect. Thus we can infer that women with one child under three more likely plan to find a job than women with two children of this age.

Region of residence, marital status, and level of education do not affect the likelihood that a woman plans to look for a job.

Among respondents who do not plan to work at all, the largest share cited age or health status as the reason, while care responsibilities ranked second (Figure 8). Around 11–12% of respondents reported a lack of available jobs or a lack of jobs with flexible working hours, while 7% stated that employers offer low wages.

Figure 8.

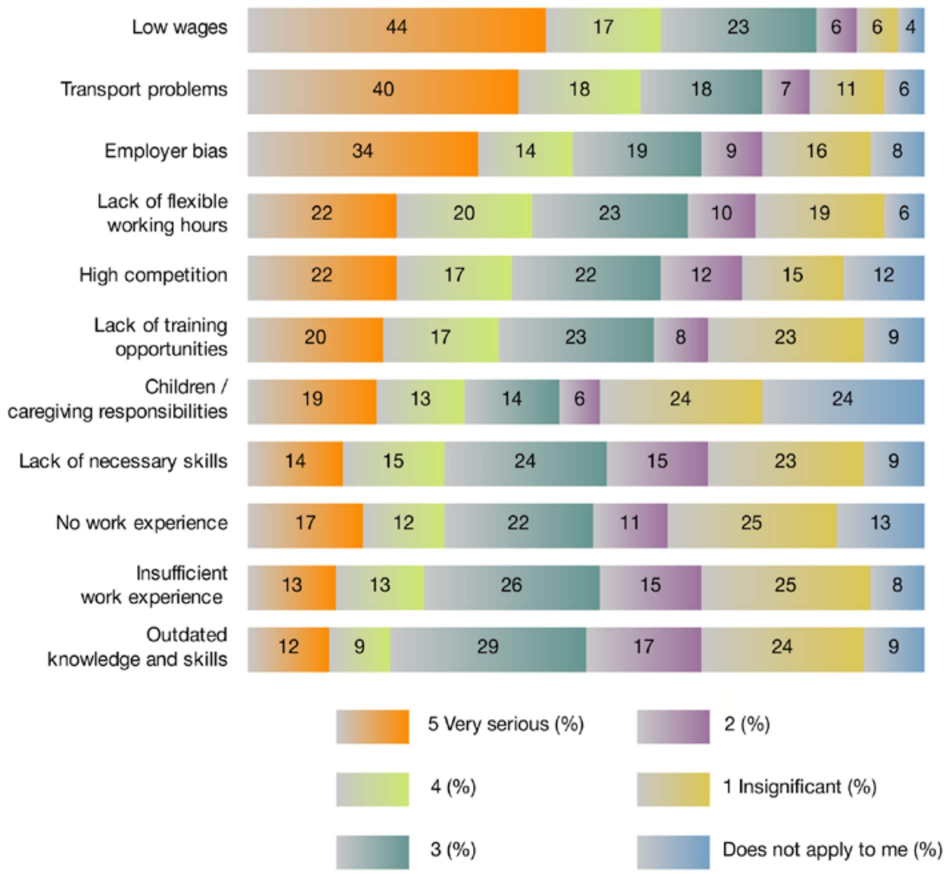
Reasons why respondents do not plan to find a job, % (multiple responses possible)



At the same time, as shown in Figure 9, at least 45% of respondents who plan to work in the future would not agree to a job with low pay (this issue is discussed in more detail below). Another major barrier would be the lack of transport to commute to work. Among respondents without children, only 19% do not plan to look for a job, compared with 28% among those who have children (the difference is statistically significant). Women with younger children somewhat less likely plan to find a job, although differences by the age or number of children are not statistically significant.

Figure 9.

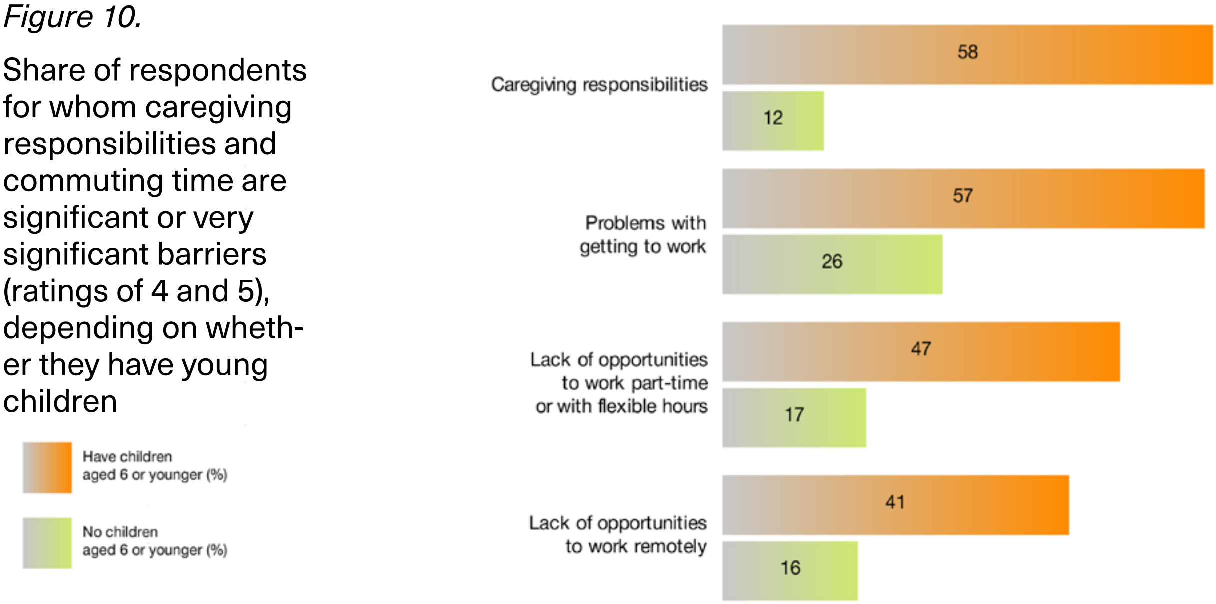
Responses to the question: “In your opinion, what obstacles are you likely to face while looking for a job? *Please rate each of them on a scale from 1 = minor obstacle to 5 = very serious obstacle”*



Note: in some lines the sum of shares does not equal to 100% due to rounding

Figure 10.

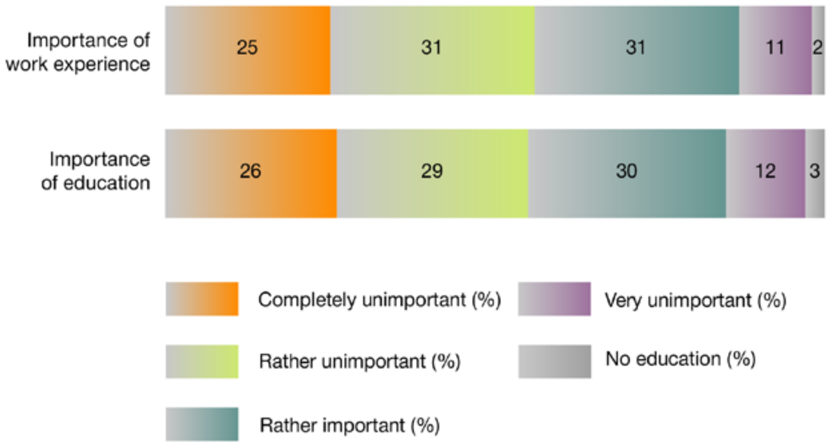
Share of respondents for whom caregiving responsibilities and commuting time are significant or very significant barriers (ratings of 4 and 5), depending on whether they have young children



Most respondents would like to work in retail or personal services (see Table 6 in the next section). At the same time, for slightly more than half of them (55%), it is not important that the job corresponds to their previous work experienc e or educational qualification (Figure 11).

Figure 11.

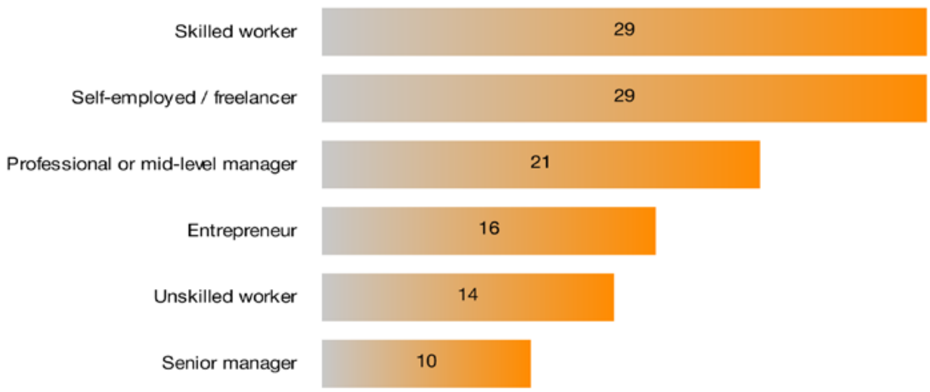
Responses to the question: "How important is it for you that a job matches your field of study or previous work experience?"



Approximately equal shares of respondents planning to find a job selected skilled worker positions and self-employment (7.5% of respondents selected both categories simultaneously) (Figure 12).

Figure 12.

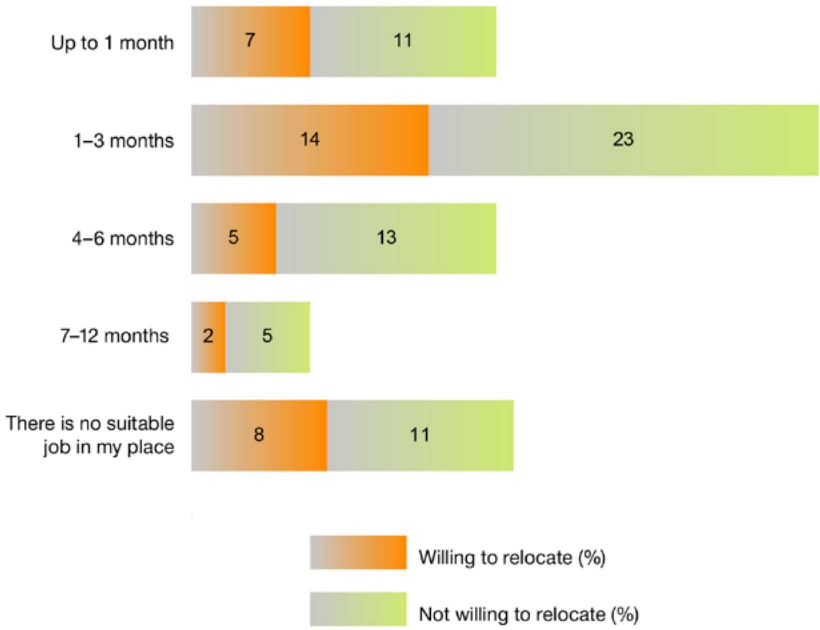
Responses to the question: "Which positions would you be willing to consider?" *Respondents could select up to three answers*



As shown in Figure 12, respondents are fairly optimistic about their chances of finding a job — most believe they would be able to do so within one to three months (which is quite realistic, given that Ukrainians spend on average 1.5–2 months searching for a job). Nineteen percent stated that there were no jobs available in their place (of these respondents, 53% lived in villages and 34% in cities). At the same time, 40% of them indicated that they would be willing to relocate for work (the shares were roughly similar in cities and villages — 43% and 42% respectively — and somewhat lower in urban-type settlements at 36%). Overall, willingness to relocate is relatively high: 36% of respondents stated that they would be willing to move to another locality for employment. Greater willingness to relocate was observed among unmarried respondents, those for whom access to childcare facilities is important, and especially those who value career development opportunities and the opportunity of international business travel. Willingness to relocate was somewhat higher among respondents who had moved to their current place of residence because of the war (these people are probably more mobile since they already experienced relocation).

Figure 13.

Responses to the question: "If you started looking for a job now, how long do you think it would take you to find one?" broken down by willingness to relocate for work *(% of all respondents who would like to find a job)*



Note: the sum of shares may not equal to 100% due to rounding errors

What requirements do respondents have for a job? Unsurprisingly (Figure 14), respondents value flexible working hours and an opportunity to work from home, and they are unwilling to spend significant time commuting. This likely explains the relatively small share of respondents willing to train for "traditionally male" occupations, since many such jobs require physical presence.

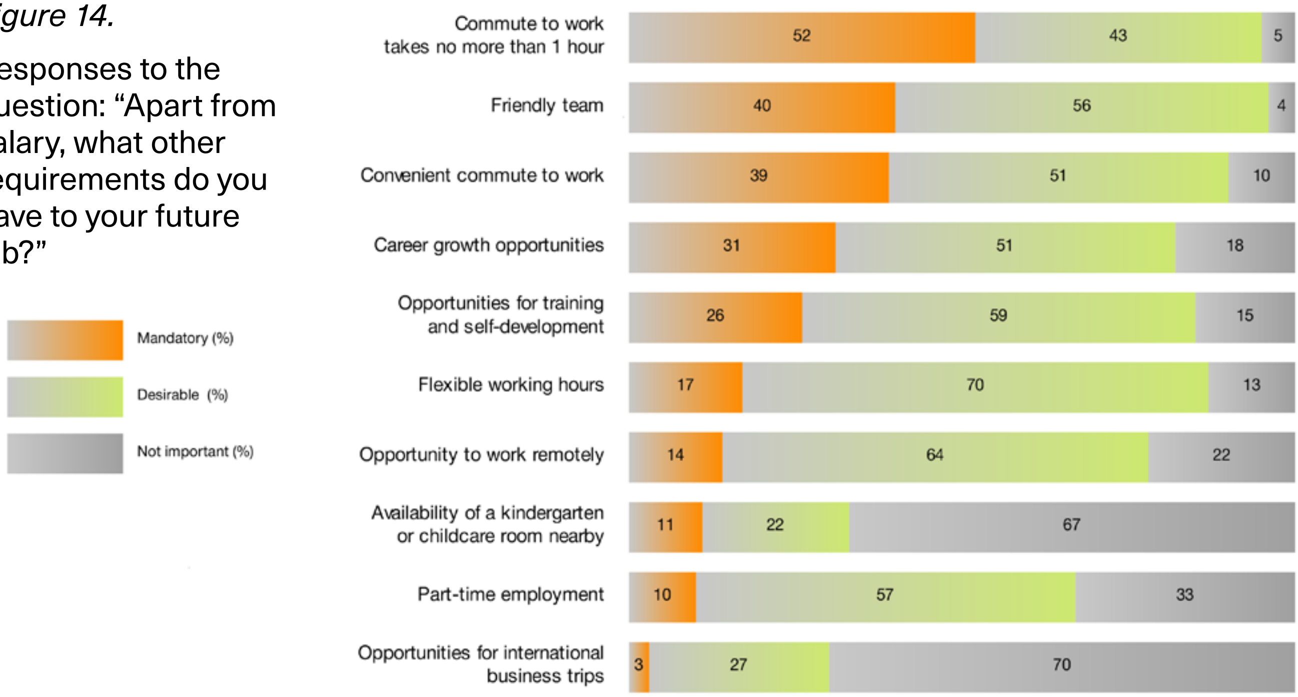
A friendly work environment is viewed as essential by 40% of respondents, while another 56% list it among desirable conditions. Taken together, this places it ahead of all other factors. For employers, this suggests that attracting workers may be simplified not only by measures requiring financial resources or changes to work processes, but also through fostering a healthy corporate culture. Opportunities for professional development are also important.

Access to a kindergarten or childcare room is not important for two thirds of respondents planning to look for a job. However, this result is largely driven by women who either do not have children or whose children are grown up. Among respondents with children aged 0–6, 31% name access to a kindergarten or childcare room as essential, while another 45% consider it desirable.

Salary expectations of women planning to look for a job are broadly in line with current labour market conditions. As shown in Figure 15, respondents' expected salaries are close to the average wage level (according to the State Statistics Service, the average monthly salary in Ukraine in February 2026 was around UAH 28,000, while in Kyiv it approached UAH 44,000). At the same time, nearly a third (30%) of respondents in the older age group (56–65 years old) were willing to consider jobs paying up to UAH 15,000.

Figure 14.

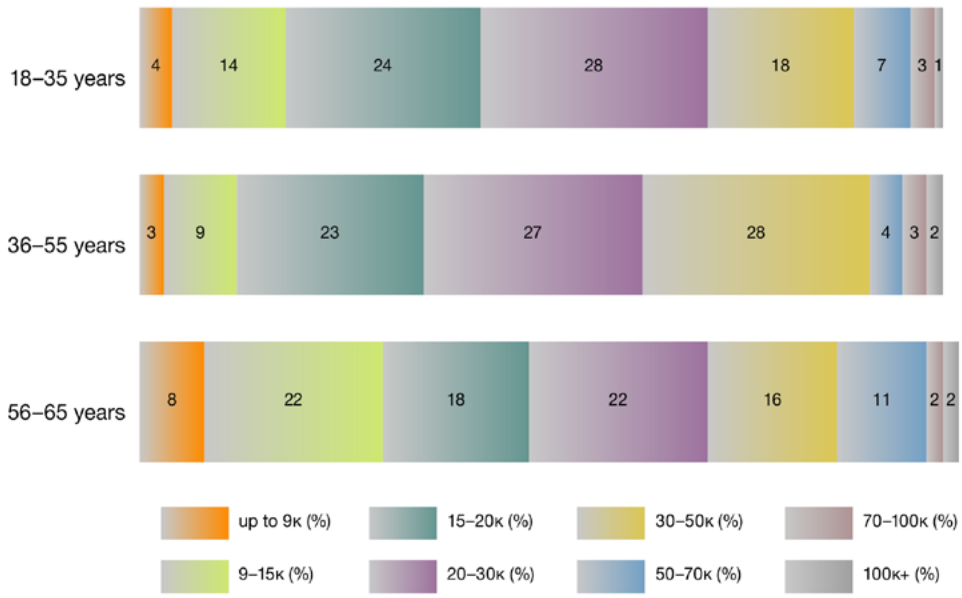
Responses to the question: "Apart from salary, what other requirements do you have to your future job?"



Note: in some lines the sum of shares does not equal to 100% due to rounding errors

Figure 15.

Responses to the question: "Please indicate your expected salary or income from entrepreneurial activity per month, net of taxes. Please state the amount for full-time work even if you would prefer to work part-time" (UAH)



Note: in some lines the sum of shares does not equal to 100% due to rounding errors

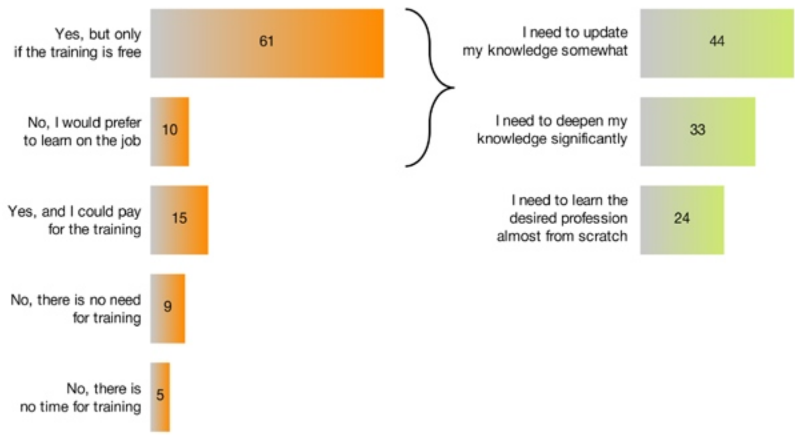
What factors influence desired salary levels, and are respondents willing to trade part of their income for amenities?

As shown by the estimates in Table D5 of Annex 3, women with higher education (BA or MA degrees), as well as those with more work experience, expect higher salaries. Respondents willing to accept skilled worker positions have lower salary expectations, while those wishing to work as managers or entrepreneurs have higher expected salary. In this model — one of a few in which regional variables are statistically significant — expected salaries in all regions are lower than in Kyiv, which reflects regional differences in average wages. Perhaps women base their expectations on the salaries of relatives or acquaintances. Respondents for whom transport accessibility, the availability of childcare facilities, or opportunities for international business travel are important, also expect higher salaries.

Most respondents are willing to undergo training in order to improve their chances of finding a job, although only 10% would be willing to pay for such training. At the same time, a relative majority of those willing to study (44%) believe that they only need a slight update of their knowledge and skills (Figure 16).

Figure 16.

Responses to the question: "Would you like to undergo training in order to improve your chances of finding a job or starting your own business?"



Forty-one per cent of respondents who would like to find a job had never contacted the State Employment Service, 36.5% had contacted it once, and the remainder had done so more than once (mostly twice; only a very small number had contacted the SES four to six times). As shown in Figure 17, most respondents either had not approached the SES for particular services or did not consider those services useful. Training programmes received the most positive evaluations, suggesting that the SES should promote its services more actively and possibly adapt them in response to clients' feedback. Nearly 60% of those who had contacted the SES replied to an open question with evaluation of SES services, and these were predominantly positive. Among negative reviews, the most common complaint (16%) was that the SES had not helped respondents find a job.

Figure 17.

Shares of respondents who contacted the SES regarding specific issues

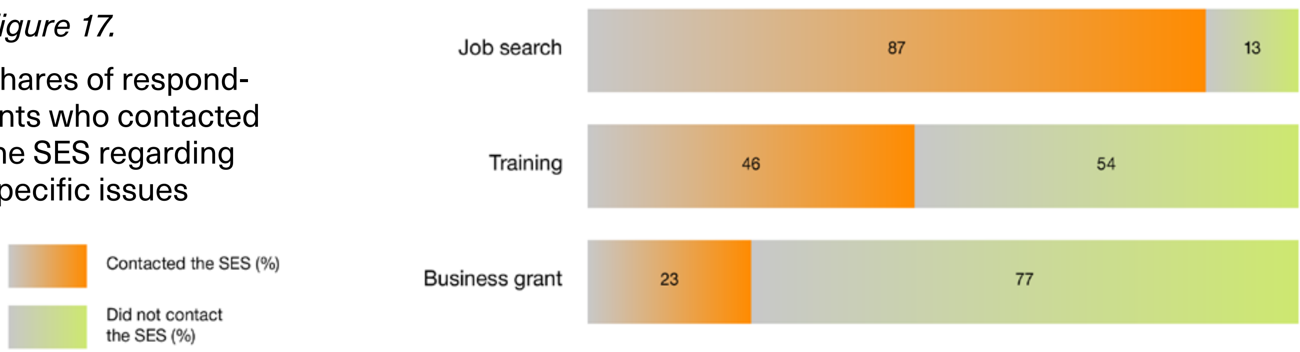
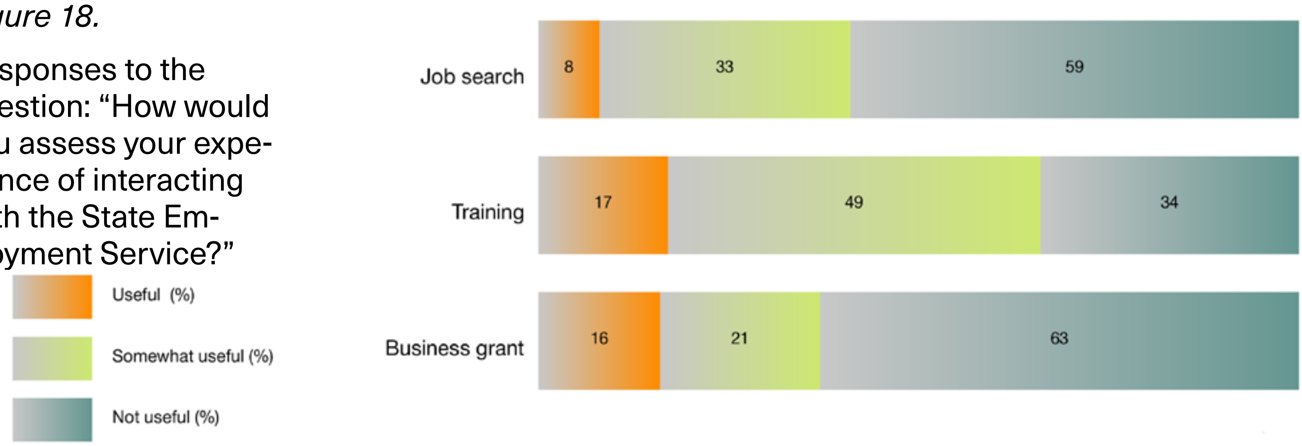


Figure 18.

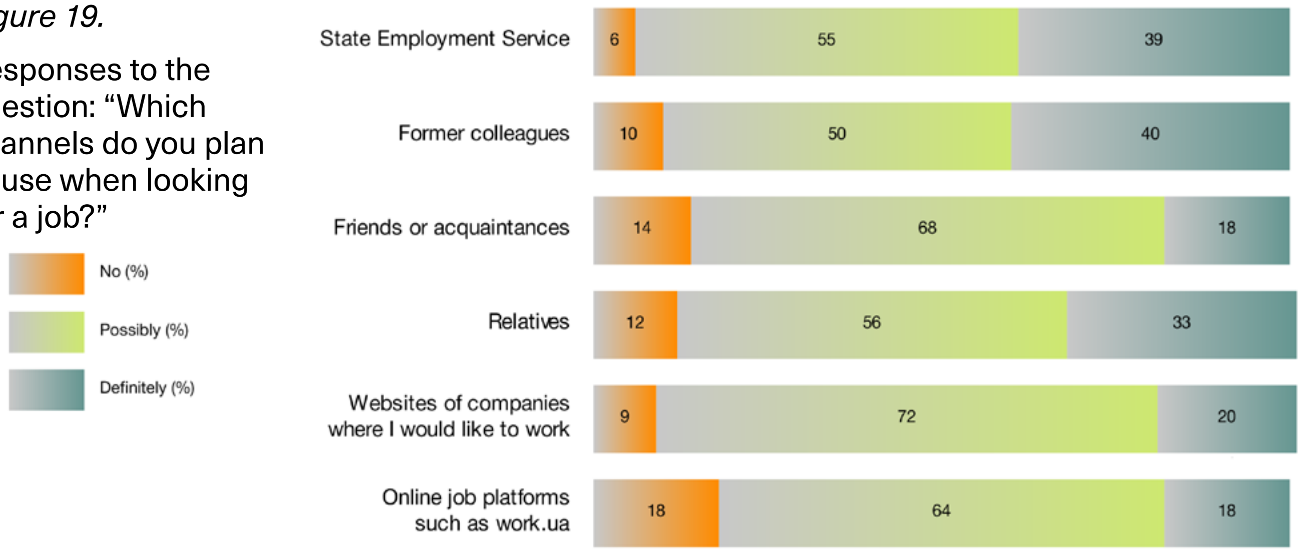
Responses to the question: "How would you assess your experience of interacting with the State Employment Service?"



As shown in Figure 19, most respondents plan to look for a job via job platforms or directly via the websites of companies where they would like to work. About 60% of respondents stated that they definitely or probably planned to contact the State Employment Service — roughly the same share as those planning to approach former colleagues. Respondents who had previously contacted the SES were 78% more likely to do so again.

Figure 19.

Responses to the question: "Which channels do you plan to use when looking for a job?"



Note: the sum of shares in a row may not equal 100% due to rounding errors

Only 5.9% of women in our sample attempted to train for traditionally male occupations, with 4.8% doing so successfully and 1.1% unsuccessfully. The largest shares trained as mechanical engineers, drivers, and locksmiths. However, respondents also mentioned other occupations, such as electrical technicians and heavers. Those who were unable to enter a "traditionally male" occupation had mostly attempted to become skilled workers. Among the reasons for failure, they cited inconvenient working schedules, particularly night shifts, excessively physically demanding or hazardous work, lack of knowledge and skills, and prejudice against women.

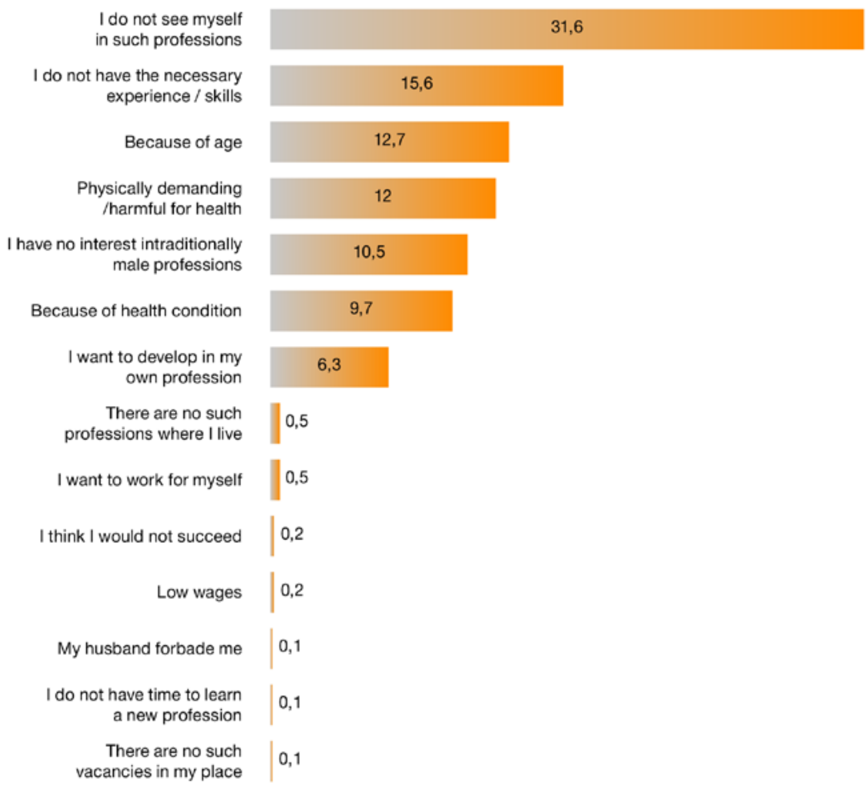
Among respondents who had not attempted to train for a "traditionally male" occupation, only 3% said that they would like to try, while 60% said they would not, and 36.6% did not provide a clear answer. This latter category potentially can be encouraged to participate in relevant training programmes. Of these respondents, 37% are unemployed, while one quarter are on childcare leave. Thus, relevant SES programmes could be promoted through job-search websites and social assistance centres.

Among respondents who would like to try a profession not traditionally associated with women, half named driving (of heavy machinery, public transport, etc.) as potentially interesting. Respondents also mentioned skilled blue collar occupations (such as locksmith or mechanic), white-collar jobs (such as lawyer or architect), and jobs in the security sector (firefighter, police officer).

Among respondents who did not want to try a non-traditional occupation for women (Figure 20), most stated that they had no interest in this. Other frequently mentioned reasons include the lack of necessary skills (for example, a driver's licence) or physical strengths, and factors related to age or health.

Figure 20.

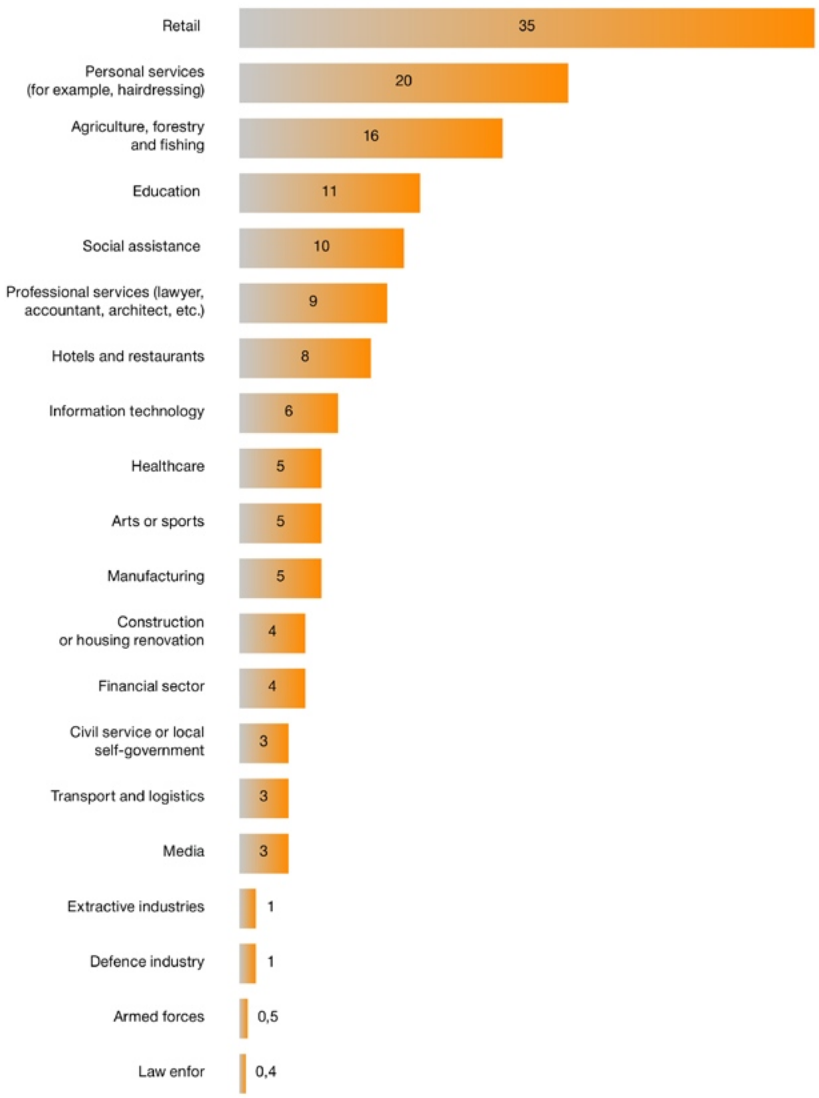
Do you consider the possibility of training for a new profession in a sector not traditionally associated with women? If you answered "no", please explain your answer (open-ended question)



These findings are consistent with responses regarding preferred sectors of employment (Figure 21): very few women would like to work in extractive industries, the defence industry, law enforcement, or the military. The overwhelming majority of respondents are interested in working in trade and personal services (for example, hairdressing).

Figure 21.

Preferred sectors of employment



Note: Respondents could select up to three answers; for analytical purposes, the shares were normalised to sum to 100%

ESTIMATES OF THE ECONOMIC IMPACT OF INCREASING FEMALE EMPLOYMENT

To assess the overall impact of a potential increase in the labour force on economic growth, we relied on a basic macroeconomic model that defines economic growth as a function of capital, labour, technology, and human capital. To estimate the model, we used the following data:

- parameters of the production function (the shares of labour, capital, and technology) from previous studies;
- GDP, fixed capital stock, investment, and depreciation data for Ukraine disaggregated into infrastructure and other sectors (State Statistics Service of Ukraine);
- labour productivity, human capital growth in the benchmark country, and the rate of human capital growth in Ukraine relative to the benchmark country (Penn World Tables);
- the ratio of employed persons to total population (State Statistics Service data for 2021 and our own estimate for 2025, as described below).

At present, Ukraine does not have exact data on the size of its population or labour force — in 2022, the State Statistics Service stopped publishing population and labour force data based on the ILO methodology. Existing estimates of the population size differ substantially from one another (Table 2), so our analysis relies both on these estimates and on our own calculations. Note that estimation results may change if the underlying data on population size and employment are revised.

Table 2. Estimates of the population of Ukraine, million people

Source	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
Institute for Demography, July 2023 estimate*	-	33.9	33.26	32.59	33.67
Institute for Demography, 2024 estimate*	42	36.7	35.3	34.2	33.3
Survey on the Socio-Economic Status of Households (Institute for Demography et al.)	-	31.14	-	-	-
WHO	41	37.7	37.9	39	39.5
IMF	34.5	34.03	33.34	32.86	33.38

*Estimate of the population living in the territory of Ukraine within its 1991 borders; data sources include mobile operator data and a range of administrative registers. Note: WHO and the Institute for Demography also provide age-sex population pyramids. The estimates of 41–42 million persons as of 2022 were likely derived from State Statistics Service data: they represent estimates of Ukraine's population excluding Crimea but including the occupied territories in the east

Table 3. Unemployment rate according to the ILO methodology, %: 2026 forecast

Indicator	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	Source
Period average	21.1	18.2	13.1	11.3	10.2	NBU, Inflation Reports
End of period	22.3	16.1	14.2	15.8	-	CES

Employment data are available from representative surveys conducted by Info Sapiens. Based on this data, the NBU in its Inflation Reports publishes period-average (annual average) figures, while the Centre for Economic Strategy reports end-of-period figures, which explains the slight differences between them (Table 3). Since these are aggregated data, Info Sapiens kindly provided us with estimates for March 2026 disaggregated by sex. Sex-disaggregated employment indicators are also available in the Institute for Demography study (Table 4).

Table 4. Employment indicators by sex

	Employed	Unemployed	In the labour force	Economically inactive	Source
Total population aged 15-70, million persons	13.255	0.971	14.226	9.516	Institute for Demography survey, December 2023–January 2024
Women aged 15-70, million persons	5.844	0.564	6.408	5.592	
Total, rate (%)	55.8	6.8	59.9	-	
Women, rate (%)	48.7	8,9	53.4	-	
Men, rate (%)	63.1	5.1	66.5	-	
Total aged 16+, according to the ILO methodology (%)	-	15.5	-	-	Info Sapiens survey
Women aged 16+, according to the ILO methodology (%)	-	18.7	-	-	
Men aged 16+, according to the ILO methodology (%)	-	13.1	-	-	
Total among the population aged 16+ (%)	48.88	9.07	-	42.05	
Women, among women aged 16+ (%)	40.35	9.2	-	50.45	
Men, among men aged 16+ (%)	59.11	8.91	-	31.98	

For the purposes of the modelling exercise, we assume that the population of Ukraine living in government-controlled area in 2025 is 30 million people (the calculations are described in the Annex 2). If the population is smaller (for example, 25–26 million people), the estimates would need to be adjusted accordingly.

An increase in the number of employed women, all else being equal, would contribute to a higher ratio of employed to total population, which would increase the economic growth rate.

In the baseline model, an increase in the employment-to-population ratio by 0.1 percentage points (for example, from 42.1% to 42.2%) leads to GDP growth that is 0.1 percentage points higher (for example, from 2.9% to 3.0%). The effect could be larger if an increase in labour supply also encouraged firms to invest in expanding production capacity.

HOW MANY UNEMPLOYED AND ECONOMICALLY INACTIVE WOMEN COULD JOIN THE LABOUR MARKET?

The survey conducted by Info Sapiens at our request showed that 73% of women who currently do not have a job (either unemployed or economically inactive) would like to find a job in the future, with 55% hoping to do so within one year. If they succeed, the employment-to-population ratio would increase by 11.7 percentage points (detailed calculations are provided in Annex 2).

> For comparison, in 2021 there were almost 5 million women aged 20–64 who were either unemployed or out of the labour force. If 73% of them had found a job, the employment-to-population ratio would have increased by 9.9 percentage points (assuming that the population living in government-controlled territories in 2021 was 36.5 million people). Since our analysis considers women aged 18–65, and because the population living in government-controlled area has declined since 2021, our estimates seem plausible.

HOW COULD THIS AFFECT UKRAINE’S GDP?

With this increase in the employment-to-population ratio, and assuming that these women find employment over the next six years, *additional* economic growth would amount to about 8 percentage points in the first year, 4 percentage points in the second year, and nearly 1 percentage point in each of the following four years (Figure 22). Of course, this is a hypothetical scenario: some people will lose their jobs or retire during this period, and some women who are willing to work will be unable to find employment. This scenario should therefore be treated as an (unattainable) upper-bound estimate.

Figure 22 presents three GDP growth scenarios:

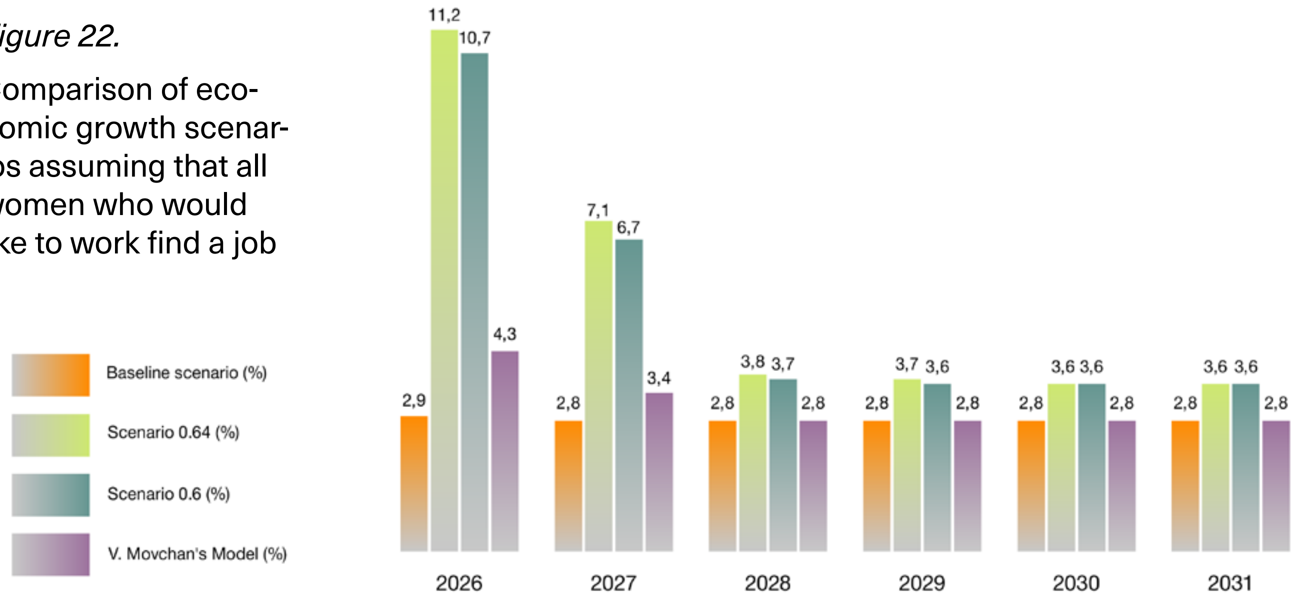
1. Baseline scenario assumes no changes, i.e. employment-to-population ratio remains at its 2025 level (0.421); no additional women enter the labour market.
2. Scenario 0.64 assumes that people aged 18–65 comprise 64% of the total population (this was the 2021 level and it is still used by the Institute for Demography, although it may have changed during the full-scale invasion). All women willing to work enter the labour market. Under this scenario, the employment-to-population ratio increases by 11.7 percentage points by 2030.

3. Scenario 0.6 assumes that people aged 18–65 comprise 60% of the total population (meaning that population ageing is more advanced than our estimates suggest), and all women willing to work enter the labour market. In this case, the employment-to-population ratio increases by 10.8 percentage points.

All three scenarios do not account for any potential inflow of migrants and assume that natural population decline is 0.7% per annum (the average for 1990–2022). In line with the survey results, the "0.64" and "0.6" scenarios assume that all unemployed and economically inactive women planning to find employment do so within the timeframes they indicated: 55% find employment in 2026, 28% in 2027, 5% in 2028, and 4% annually in 2029–2031.

Figure 22.

Comparison of economic growth scenarios assuming that all women who would like to work find a job



Thus, by 2030 the employment-to-population ratio could increase from 0.421 to 0.538. If the population in 2025 is 30 million people, the number of employed would increase by 24.3% — from 12.65 million to 15.49 million. If the population is smaller, for example 27 million, the number of employed would increase by 22.3% (from 11.37 million to 13.91 million). For comparison, Anastasia et al. (2026) estimated that the number of employed in government-controlled territories declined by one quarter compared to 2021 because of occupation, emigration, and mobilisation (implying that the number of employed in 2025 is approximately 11.7 million).

However, alternative modelling approaches may produce different results. For example, the economic model used by Veronika Movchan (IER) generates estimates that are significantly lower than ours. Under the same increase in the number of workers — 14% in 2026 — GDP would increase by only 1.4% (extrapolated from Table 5). Within the framework of our study, this may be treated as a lower-bound estimate of the potential impact of integrating economically inactive and unemployed women into the labour market.

Table 5. Impact of an increase in labour supply on macroeconomic variables

	Labour supply increase (scenarios)			
	by 5%	by 7%	by 10%	by 15%
Real GDP	0.5	0.7	1.0	1.5
Real wages, skilled workers	-3.8	-5.2	-7.3	-10.6
Real wages, unskilled workers	-2.8	-4.0	-5.6	-8.2
Return on capital	2.3	3.2	4.4	6.4

WHICH SECTORS HAVE THE GREATEST POTENTIAL FOR ATTRACTING WOMEN, AND TO WHAT EXTENT COULD THIS INCREASE OUTPUT IN THOSE SECTORS?

In order to answer this question, it is necessary to estimate the sectoral structure of employment in 2025. Since the full-scale war has obviously altered the structure of employment, this is not a trivial task. The estimation results are presented in Figure 23, while the detailed calculations are provided in Annex 2.

To estimate potential employment growth by sector, we use the results of the survey conducted for us by Info Sapiens. Respondents could select up to three sectors in which they would like to find employment. In the survey, sector categories differ somewhat from the State Statistics Service classification in order to provide greater clarity with regard to the jobs respondents would be willing to find (Table 6).

Figure 23.

Structure of employment, 2021 and 2025, %

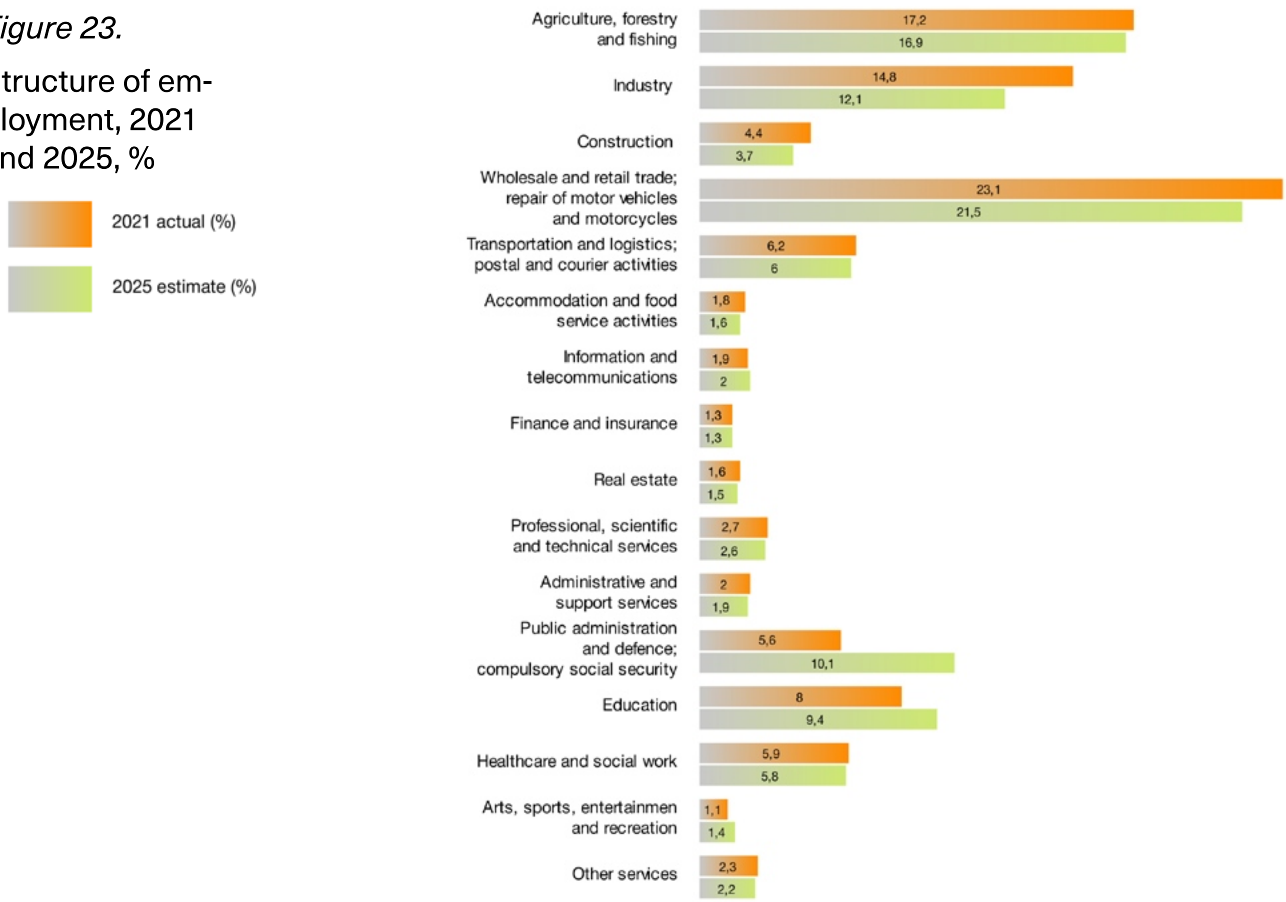


Table 6. Estimated potential employment growth by sector

Sectors according to the State Statistics Service classification	Sectors in the survey	Share of respondents who would like to work in the sector	Increase in sectoral employment if all interested respondents found jobs in the sector
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	Agriculture, forestry, and fishing	12.03%	17.5%
Industry	Extractive industries	0.99%	10.25%
	Manufacturing	3.36%	
	Defence industry	0.69%	
Construction	Construction or housing renovation	3.02%	20.1%
Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles	Trade	25.53%	29.2%
Transportation and storage; postal and courier activities	Transport and logistics	2.33%	9.6%
HoReCa	Hotel and restaurant business	5.87%	90.3%
Information and telecommunications	Media	2.06%	87.2%
	IT	5.02%	
Finance and insurance	Financial sector	2.8%	53%
Real estate	Professional services (lawyer, accountant, architect, advertising specialist, etc.)	6.79%	27.9%
Professional, research, and technical services			
Administrative and support services			
Public administration and mandatory social security	Law enforcement	0.3%	7.4%
	Military	0.39%	
	Civil service or local self-government	2.34%	
Education	Education	7.8%	20.4%

Sectors according to the State Statistics Service classification	Sectors in the survey	Share of respondents who would like to work in the sector	Increase in sectoral employment if all interested respondents found jobs in the sector
Healthcare and social support	Healthcare	3.99%	50.1%
	Social services (including psychological support)	7.8%	
Arts, sports, entertainment, and recreation	Arts or sports	3.96%	69.6%
Other services	Personal services (for example, hairdressing)	14.9%	166%

Note: The calculation was performed for the broader category. For the purposes of the calculations, the shares of sectors used in the survey were normalised so that their total summed to 100%.

Note that these estimates should not be interpreted as precise numbers (since currently we don't have accurate labour market data). Rather, they should be treated as approximate estimates of the scale by which the labour force in a given sector could increase. For example, potential employment growth in the public administration sector is estimated to be in the single digits, while employment in education or retail could increase by 20–30%. In the HoReCa sector or in information and telecommunications, employment could potentially almost double — of course, if there is demand in these sectors for additional workers. Table 7 presents estimates of output growth by sector assuming that all women who intend to do so found a job.

The baseline estimate in Table 7 is calculated using a standard production function:

$$Y = A^*L^{\alpha}K^{1-\alpha}$$

Y — output,

A — coefficient representing the level of technological development,

L — labour force,

K — capital,

α — contribution of labour to output,

$1 - \alpha$ — contribution of capital to output.

Knowing α (the labour share in GDP), it is possible to estimate the increase in output in a given sector if employment in that sector grows as shown in Table 6. The sectoral labour shares (that is, estimates of α) were provided to us by Anton Grui, Head of the Macroeconomic Forecasting Department at the NBU. Estimates of sectoral growth based on these coefficients are presented in the "output growth, baseline estimate" column of Table 7.

Veronika Movchan (IER) provided calculations for several labour supply increase scenarios (the full scenarios are presented in Annex 4). The final column of Table 7 presents estimates based on these scenarios. Since our sectoral categories are broader than those used by IER, output growth in the broad sectors was calculated as a weighted average, with weights equal to the shares of workers employed in certain subsectors relative to the total number of workers employed in these sectors.

For scenarios extending beyond those provided by IER (that is, where labour supply growth exceeds 15%), linear extrapolation was used. The estimates in the final two columns of Table 7 are rather close for most sectors. However, they should still be treated as approximate, given the absence of accurate labour market data.

Table 7. Estimated change in output in response to labour supply increase by sector

Sectors in the survey	Share of respondents who would like to work in the sector	Increase in sectoral employment if respondents found jobs in the sector	Output growth, baseline estimate	Output growth, IER estimate
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	12.03%	17.5%	11.1%	**
Extractive industries	0.99%	10.25%	4%	**
Manufacturing	3.36%			
Defence industry	0.69%			
Construction or housing repair	3.02%	20.1%	12.6%	1.9%
Trade	25.53%	29.2%	18.1%	14.7%
Transport and logistics	2.33%	9.6%	5.2%	3.9%
Hotel and restaurant business	5.87%	90.3%	62%	70.7%
Media	2.06%	87.2%	55.1%	28%
IT	5.02%			
Financial sector	2.8%	53%	29%	31.8%
Professional services (lawyer, accountant, architect, advertising specialist, etc.)	6.79%	27.9%	18.8%	13.7%
Law enforcement	0.3%	7.4%	5.9%	1.2%
Military	0.39%			
Civil service or local self-government	2.34%			

Sectors in the survey	Share of respondents who would like to work in the sector	Increase in sectoral employment if respondents found jobs in the sector	Output growth, baseline estimate	Output growth, IER estimate
Education	7.8%	20.4%	16%	3.3%*
Healthcare	3.99%	50.1%	38.4%	8.1%*
Social services (including psychological support)	7.8%			
Arts or sports	3.96%	69.6%	52.6%	35.1%
Personal services (for example, hairdressing)	14.9%	166%	98.3%	83.1%

**Note:* In the IER estimates, education and healthcare are treated as public services, while arts and sport are classified as other personal services. **Estimates for agriculture and industry are not provided because the sectoral classification used for these areas (Table D6) does not correspond to the sectoral classification used in the survey.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Due to the full-scale war, labour shortages have become the main challenge for Ukrainian businesses. At the same time, unemployment in Ukraine remains relatively high — 11% in 2025. This reflects a "traditional" problem of the Ukrainian labour market: the mismatch between the skills demanded by employers and those offered by workers, which has intensified since 2022.

Another significant imbalance in the labour market is the substantially lower labour force participation rate among women compared to men. While this situation has existed for quite some time, leaving about 3.5 million potential workers outside the labour market now seems particularly wasteful. Increasing female participation in the labour force is necessary not only to expand the supply of goods and services, but also to enable women to replace men who have joined the Defence Forces. Our survey showed that nearly three quarters of women who are currently not employed would like to find a job, with more than half hoping to do so within a year.

Research for other countries shows that greater female participation in the labour market increases not only GDP, but also labour productivity. However, the magnitude of this effect may differ across countries and sectors due to structural, institutional, and cultural barriers to women's participation in the labour market, as well as horizontal discrimination. Thus, policies aimed at increasing female employment should take into account country-specific circumstances and context. For example, in Ukraine, requiring men to take a part of parental leave is infeasible for families in which men are serving in the military. At the same time, measures that help reduce female care burden are now more important than ever.

For Ukraine and other countries, the main factor limiting female employment is the need to combine paid work with unpaid household labour (for 31% of women with children aged 0–6, the availability of a kindergarten or childcare room is a mandatory condition for finding a job, while another 45% consider it desirable). These constraints may prevent women from working in positions that require constant physical presence at the workplace, involve "non-standard" working hours, or are located far from their place of residence.

Our survey found that for 40% of women planning to find a job, a long commuting time is a very significant barrier to entering the labour market, while only 11% do not consider it a barrier. At the same time, 36% of respondents are ready to relocate for employment. Therefore, communities facing labour shortages, as well as employers themselves, should think about transporting potential workers to workplaces (for example, by new public transport routes or employer-provided transport), as well as providing accommodation, at least for some time (e.g., dormitories).

Naturally, recommendations such as expanding the number of kindergartens or after-school programmes remain relevant. However, implementing these recommendations is complicated by security considerations—many kindergartens do not have shelters, and legal opportunity of opening mini-kindergartens in private homes or childcare facilities at enterprises is constrained by the availability of shelters nearby such facilities. Under these conditions, remote work may be the only feasible option for many women. Therefore, both at the legislative level and at the level of employers, opportunities for remote and hybrid work should be expanded.

Today, Ukrainian legislation remains heavily focused on worker protection and on restricting women's participation, especially of women with children, in physically demanding jobs, night shifts, and similar forms of employment. In practice, such restrictions may reduce women's chances of finding a job. Although a separate law temporarily lifted many of these restrictions during martial law, there is a clear need to adopt a new Labour Code designed on the principles of greater flexibility (flexicurity) and gender equality.

For more than half of the women who would like to find employment, the match between a job and their education or previous work experience is not particularly important. At the same time, 61% of women would like to undergo training, while ~10% would even be willing to pay for it. This suggests that women are highly open to mastering new skills or even entirely new professions. However, only 3% expressed a desire to train for a "traditionally male" occupation. On the other hand, 37% did not provide a clear answer to this question. This implies that with effective communication, some of them could potentially be encouraged to enter such occupations. Nevertheless, most respondents selected "traditionally female" sectors such as trade, personal services, education, or social protection.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Prioritising care services

Our study, as well as other research implemented in Ukraine and abroad, found that caregiving is a significant barrier to labour market participation. This is particularly relevant for mothers of children with disabilities and for women caring for family members with serious illnesses or war-related injuries. Therefore, the most important recommendation is to expand care infrastructure both for children (preschool education facilities) and for adults (home-based care services). Note that almost 11% of women we surveyed would like to work in education and social support, and this potential should be utilised.

2. Flexible working hours and an opportunity to work from home

According to our survey, flexible working hours and an opportunity to work from home are important for many women. This is reflected in the importance respondents attach to the "ease of commuting" factor — most women are unwilling to spend more than one hour travelling to work. Thus, encouraging employers to adopt solutions that reduce commuting time (from remote work arrangements to the provision of dormitories) could increase female labour market participation. Local authorities can positively influence labour market participation by developing public transportation routes, including those that allow combining private and public transport.

3. Training programmes and combining training with employment

Most women are open to training and acquiring new professions. This suggests significant potential for expanding existing SES training programmes and creating new programmes both within the SES and in educational institutions, as well as directly at enterprises. The development of dual education, which is currently progressing rather slowly, is one way to increase employment among those who are currently outside the labour force. Other instruments that facilitate labour market entry, such as subsidised internship or mentorship programmes, should also be considered.

Particular attention should be paid to highly demanded professions — technicians, skilled workers, and the like. Efforts to attract women into such professions and sectors should be accompanied by media campaigns and by the effective enforcement of anti-discrimination legislation. The first step on this way is collection of high-quality gender-disaggregated data on recruitment into different positions and respective pay levels.

4. Special attention to vulnerable groups

The cluster and regression analysis showed that some categories of non-employed women (younger women, women without children, and those from higher-income households) may be easier to integrate into the labour market. However, internally displaced persons and older women face greater difficulties in finding a job due to prejudice and mismatch of their skills with employers' requirements. These groups therefore require comprehensive support that includes not only job search assistance but also, when necessary, financial support during training and psychological assistance. Awareness-raising efforts aimed at reducing discrimination are needed as well.

ANNEXES

ANNEX 1. LEGAL CLAUSES AFFECTING FEMALE LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION

Table A1. Key provisions of labour legislation

Provision / issue	Legal act (reference)	Type of impact	Gap or limitation of the provision	Practical effect on women's employment
Canceling the list of prohibited occupations	Ministry of Health Order No. 1254 of 13 October 2017	Expands access	Article 174 of the Labour Code still formally prohibits underground work for women (ILO Convention No. 45 denounced in 2024)	Women gained access to more than 450 occupations; the State Employment Service launched retraining programmes
Denunciation of ILO Convention No. 45 (underground work)	Law of Ukraine, 2024	Expands access	Article 174 of the Labour Code has not yet been formally amended and requires harmonisation	Removes the legal basis for denying women access to mining occupations
Participation of women in the Armed Forces of Ukraine (voluntary service)	Law of Ukraine "On Military Duty and Military Service" No. 2232-XII, Part 12, Article 1; Ministry of Defence Orders No. 313/2021 and No. 35/2022	Expands access	Legislation governing the combination of military service and motherhood remains fragmented	New technical and medical specialisations in the Armed Forces became available for women
Gender quotas in electoral lists	Electoral Code of Ukraine, 2019 (entered into force in 2023), Article 219	Incentive	No sanctions for non-compliance with the quota	At least 40% women in every five candidates on a party list; increased representation of women in local councils

Provision / issue	Legal act (reference)	Type of impact	Gap or limitation of the provision	Practical effect on women's employment
An employer cannot refuse to hire a woman due to pregnancy or children	Article 184 of the Labour Code	Anti-discrimination → disincentive	No obligation to provide a written refusal with justification; implicit discrimination during initial selection is practically impossible to prove	Employers avoid hiring women with young children or those who "may go on maternity leave"
Fines for discriminatory job advertisements	Article 24-1 of the Law "On Advertising"; from 5 May 2025 — enforcement powers assigned to the State Service on Food Safety and Consumer Protection (Law No. 3992-IX of 8 October, 2024)	Anti-discrimination	Only the wording of advertisements is monitored; discrimination during recruitment remains outside regulatory oversight	Fine of UAH 86,470
Restrictions on night shifts for women	Article 175 of the Labour Code	Protection → disincentive	The Cabinet of Ministers has not approved the list of relevant sectors, leaving the legal ambiguity here	In manufacturing and technical sectors, employers use this as an argument against hiring women for positions that imply night shifts
Ban on night work, overtime, and business travel for pregnant women and mothers of children under 3	Articles 176-177 of the Labour Code	Protection → disincentive	Even with employee's consent, employers bear legal risks and therefore avoid such candidates	Barrier to hiring women in transport, construction, and manufacturing
Equal pay for equal work	Article of the Law "On Remuneration of Labour"; Article of the Law "On Ensuring Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men"	Equality	No mandatory employer reporting on the gender pay gap; no enforcement mechanism	Gender pay gap of 18.6%; women earn less even for equivalent work in technical sectors

Provision / issue	Legal act (reference)	Type of impact	Gap or limitation of the provision	Practical effect on women's employment
Childcare leave until the child is three	Articles 179-181 of the Labour Code; Law "On Leave"	Protection → attachment to home	No compensation for employers for long absences; employers bear the cost of retaining the position	De facto incentive to avoid hiring women of reproductive age
Absence of a minimum legal age at which a child may be left unsupervised	Cabinet of Ministers Resolution No. 585/2020 — regulates only specific cases (children under 7 left without a person aged 14+)	Gap	There is no general minimum age in legislation at which a child may legally be left alone	Combined with the shortage of childcare facilities and the need to accompany younger children to educational institutions, this legal uncertainty effectively ties mothers to the home even where formal employment rights exist
Relaxation of protective norms during wartime	Law "On the Organisation of Labour Relations under Martial Law" No. 2136 of 15 March 2022 (currently in force)	Temporarily expands access	These norms will be automatically reinstated after martial law ends; no systemic reform has been adopted	Women have been engaged in night, underground, and overtime work, but their double burden has increased
New paid parental leave (draft)	Draft Labour Code (No. 14386 of 15 January 2026), Article 150	Redistribution of care responsibilities (draft)	Not yet adopted; trade unions challenge Article 150 as a de facto reduction of guarantees	Four months of leave, two months reserved for each parent — incentivises fathers to take leave and reduces the "female" care burden
Gender neutrality of protective norms (draft)	Draft Labour Code No. 14386, general provisions	Systemic reform (draft)	Not adopted; risk of only formal neutrality without real redistribution of responsibilities	Right to remote work and flexible schedules for pregnant women without loss of employee status

Note: Types of impact are defined as follows: "Expands access" — the provision directly permits or broadens female participation; "Anti-discrimination" — prohibits unequal treatment; "Protection → disincentive" — protects employed women but discourages employers; "Gap" — absence of a legislative provision; "Incentive" — encouragement rather than obligation; "Temporary" — applies only during martial law; "Draft" — included in draft legislation and not yet adopted

ANNEX 2. ESTIMATING POPULATION SIZE AND EMPLOYMENT-TO-POPULATION RATIO

POPULATION OF UKRAINE

To model the economic impact of integrating unemployed and economically inactive women into the labour market, we use data only for the population living in government-controlled territories of Ukraine, since these are the people currently participating in the labour market. Prior to 2022, the State Statistics Service estimated the population numbers including the temporarily occupied territories of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts but excluding Crimea, so we rely on the estimate produced at the end of 2019 for government-controlled territories. At that time, 37 million people lived in government-controlled areas of Ukraine. Adjusting this figure for average natural population decline (0.7% per year, calculated using State Statistics Service data), we estimate that by the end of 2021, 36.5 million people lived in government-controlled areas. Given the number of employed persons at that time (15.6 million), the overall employment-to-population ratio was 0.427 (this is a key parameter in the baseline model).

Next, we estimate the population in 2025, taking into account both natural population decline and emigration. According to CES estimates, 5.6 million Ukrainians were living abroad at the end of 2025, implying that slightly more than 30 million people remained in government-controlled territories. According to the Household Budget Survey, Ukraine's population in 2023 was 31.1 million. These estimates were likely obtained by adjusting the 2019 population for the number of refugees (between 5 and 6.3 million).

EMPLOYMENT-TO-POPULATION RATIO

Taking into account data from Info Sapiens and assuming that the share of the population aged 0–17 is around 14.6% (Institute for Demography estimates), while the employment rate among the population aged 18+ is 49.35%, we can calculate that the overall employment-to-population ratio currently is at 0.421 (= 0.4935 × 0.854).

By how much could the employment-to-population ratio change if all women who expressed such an intention found a job?

To answer this, several assumptions about the population structure are required. As of early 2022, the share of population aged 18–65 was slightly above 64%, according to the State Statistics Service. Data from the Institute for Demography suggest that this share remains at 64% today, so we use this figure as the basis for the calculation (if it is lower, additional economic growth will also be lower, as the share of the older population will increase).

According to the Info Sapiens labour force survey, women constitute 51.8% of 18-65 population, therefore, their share in total population is 33.6% (0.64 × 0.518).

Among these women, 47.8% are unemployed or not participating in the labour force, meaning that their share in total population is 16% (0.336 × 0.478).

According to our survey, 73% of them would like to find a job. If all of them succeed, other things equal, the employment-to-population ratio would increase by 11.7 percentage points (0.16 × 0.73).

ESTIMATING THE STRUCTURE OF EMPLOYMENT

The next step is to estimate the structure of employment in 2025. Unfortunately, the latest Labour Force Survey data published by the State Statistics Service are for 2021. Since the full-scale war has very likely altered both the structure of the economy and the structure of employment, it is not possible to extrapolate the 2021 employment structure to 2025.

The State Statistics Service publishes data on employment at enterprises (that is, excluding budgetary institutions and, most likely, excluding informal employment). However, as illustrated in Table A2, this data differs substantially from Labour Force Survey employment figures (for example, the number of employed people according to the Labour Force Survey is almost twice as high as the number of employed at enterprises). Moreover, the difference between these data is not constant. Thus, since the Labour Force Survey remains the most comprehensive source of employment data, we rely on it although it has not been updated since 2022.

Table A2. Extent to which the number of employed people from the Labour Force Survey (data collection discontinued in 2021) exceeds the number obtained from enterprise reports (surveys continue), %

	2015	2021
Total	97.35	72.37
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	346.73	367.41
Industry	6.45	6.74
Construction	127.33	97.50
Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles	59.43	54.22
Transportation and logistics; postal and courier activities	7.16	12.58
HoReCa	42.06	13.86
Information and telecommunications*	-0.80	-33.88
Finance and insurance	13.45	2.51
Real estate	12.26	10.11
Professional, scientific and technical services	32.67	25.39
Administrative and support services	2.41	5.28
Public administration and defence; mandatory social security**	-	-
Education	4769.20	2809.06
Healthcare and social support	844.79	18.17
Arts, sports, entertainment, and recreation	325.51	251.63
Other economic activities	161.87	145.78

Source: State Statistics Service data, authors' calculations. *In the IT sector, the number of people employed at enterprises exceeds the total number of employed people, likely due to differences in the definitions of this industry. **Since there are no enterprises in the public administration sector (only budgetary institutions), enterprise employment reports do not contain data for this sector

Changes in employment should be related to changes in GDP. Therefore, we use this relationship to estimate the structure of employment in 2025. First, we examine indices of gross value added and employment by sector. As shown in Figure A1, in some sectors changes in output are strongly associated with changes in employment, whereas in others the relationship is weak or practically absent. Thus, in sectors where the correlation coefficient between the employment index and the output index exceeds 0.6, we assume that the employment index changed in line with the GDP index. In the other sectors we assume that the employment index changed in line with the average employment index. This allows us to derive employment indices for all sectors in 2025.

Figure A1.

GDP indices (2012–2025) and employment indices (2012–2021), 2012 = 100; correlation coefficients calculated for 2013–2021

Source: State Statistics Service; authors' calculations

Next, to calculate the share of a given sector in total employment, we multiply that sector's share in 2012 by the estimated sectoral index for 2025 and divide the result by the overall employment index for 2025. The resulting estimates are presented in Table A3 in the column "estimate based on shares."

$$\text{Sector share (2025)} = \frac{\text{sectoral employment (2012)} \times \text{sectoral employment index (2025)}}{\text{total employment (2012)} \times \text{overall employment index (2025)}} =$$

$$= \text{sector share (2012)} \times \frac{\text{sectoral employment index (2025)}}{\text{overall employment index (2025)}}$$

To verify our calculations, we estimate the structure of employment using a somewhat different approach. We examine State Statistics Service data on the sectoral distribution of GDP and the sectoral distribution of employment. For sectors in which the correlation between the share of GDP and the share of employment exceeds 0.6, we assume that the share of employment changed in line with the share of GDP. For the remaining sectors (where employment is not strongly correlated with GDP), we assume that the share of employment remained equal to the average for 2013–2021.

The results are presented in Table A3, in the column "estimate based on shares." The column "average estimate" presents the arithmetic mean of the two estimates, weighted so that the shares sum to 100%. We use this average estimate in the subsequent calculations.

We additionally validated the estimated employment structure. To do so, we used State Statistics Service data on employment at enterprises for 2022–2024 to forecast sectoral employment in 2025 using linear regression. The resulting percentage changes relative to 2021 were then extrapolated to total employment figures for 2021 (based on State Statistics Service data). This method is based on the assumption that overall employment changed proportionally to employment at enterprises.

The main limitation of this method is the absence of forecasts for employment in the sectors "Education" and "Public administration and defence; compulsory social security," since enterprise employment statistics do not include budgetary institutions, while in these sectors all or most of workers are employed in such institutions.

To directly validate the employment structure (Table A3), all sectors of the economy except these two were taken as 100%. Comparing the "average estimate, 2025" with the extrapolated full-employment indicators showed an average deviation of |0.5 percentage points| (maximum deviation: 1.4 percentage points). This suggests that the employment estimates derived from GDP dynamics are sufficiently accurate.

Table A3. Estimated structure of employment by sector

	2021, actual	2025, estimate based on indices	2025, estimate based on shares	Average estimate, 2025	Average estimate, 2025, excluding two sectors	Extrapolated estimate based on official employment data, 2025, used to validate the average estimate
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	17.2%	17.7%	17.5%	16.9% ↓	21.0%	19.9%
Industry	14.8%	12.7%	12.6%	12.1% ↓	15.0%	14.9%
Construction	4.4%	4.5%	3.1%	3.7% ↓	4.6%	4.0%
Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles	23.1%	22.6%	22.2%	21.5% ↓	26.7%	28.1%
Transportation and storage; postal and courier activities	6.2%	6.3%	6.1%	6.0% ↓	7.5%	6.6%
HoReCa	1.8%	1.9%	1.5%	1.6% ↓	2.0%	2.4%
Information and telecommunications	1.9%	1.9%	2.2%	2.0% ↑	2.5%	2.6%
Finance and insurance	1.3%	1.4%	1.4%	1.3%	1.6%	1.3%
Real estate	1.6%	1.5%	1.6%	1.5% ↓	1.9%	2.0%
Professional, research and technical services	2.7%	2.8%	2.6%	2.6% ↓	3.2%	3.7%
Administrative and support services	2.0%	2.1%	1.9%	1.9% ↓	2.4%	2.3%
Public administration and defence; mandatory social security	5.6%	10.5%	10.5%	10.1% ↑	–	–
Education	8.0%	9.8%	9.8%	9.4% ↑	–	–
Healthcare and social support	5.9%	6.0%	6.1%	5.8% ↓	7.2%	7.1%
Arts, sports, entertainment, and recreation	1.1%	1.7%	1.2%	1.4% ↑	1.7%	1.7%
Other services	2.3%	2.4%	2.2%	2.2% ↓	2.7%	3.5%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Table A4. Results of the probability regression. Dependent variable: whether the respondent plans to find a job in the future

	Variable	Coefficient	Std. error	P>z
Age (56–65 years — base category)	Age 18-24	1.459***	0.282	0.000
	Age 25-35	0.715***	0.204	0.000
	Age 36-45	1.064***	0.209	0.000
	Age 46-55	0.586***	0.169	0.001
Type of locality (village — base category)	Urban-type settlement	0.115	0.216	0.595
	City	0.476***	0.126	0.000
No work experience		-0.360***	0.101	0.000
Marital status (single — base category)	Married	-0.135	0.164	0.412
	Divorced	-0.017	0.209	0.937
	Widow	-0.320	0.256	0.212
Number of children	Under 3 years old	-0.375**	0.178	0.035
	4–6 years old	0.024	0.143	0.868
	7–17 years old	0.235**	0.098	0.017
	18–23 years old	0.005	0.149	0.974
	23+ years old	0.051	0.095	0.594
Children aged 23+ living with the respondent		-0.327**	0.164	0.046
Person has always lived in this locality		-0.208	0.146	0.154
Person relocated because of the war		-0.003	0.218	0.987
Person has IDP status		0.069	0.242	0.774
Household size		0.087	0.053	0.101
Education (secondary education — base category)	Vocational education	0.052	0.183	0.777
	College	0.072	0.176	0.684
	Bachelor's degree	-0.027	0.162	0.866
	Master's degree	0.040	0.172	0.815
Self-assessed income (saving even on food — base category)	Enough for food, but buying clothes is a problem	0.224	0.182	0.218
	Enough for food and clothes, but buying durable goods is a problem	0.192	0.181	0.288
	Enough for everything except large purchases such as housing	0.231	0.227	0.310
	Enough for everything	-0.986**	0.401	0.014
Types of social assistance received by the respondent	Child benefits for children under 3	0.983***	0.269	0.000
	IDP benefits	-0.890***	0.227	0.000

*** significant at the 1% level, ** at the 5% level, * at the 10% level

Table A5. Results of the ordered probability model (ordered probit). Dependent variable: expected salary

Variable		Coefficient	P>z
Education (secondary education — base category	Vocational education	0.117	0.526
	College	0.311	0.085
	Bachelor's degree	0.475***	0.007
	Master's degree	0.557***	0.002
Regions (Kyiv — base category)	North	-0.791***	0.000
	West	-0.453***	0.007
	Centre	-0.801***	0.000
	South	-0.533***	0.003
	East	-0.571***	0.009
	Work experience, years	0.008	0.110
	Unemployment duration, years	0.015	0.150
It does not matter whether the job matches the respondent's education		0.307**	0.037
It does not matter whether the job matches the respondent's previous experience		-0.306*	0.054
Position the respondent is applying for	Unskilled worker	-0.580***	0.000
	Skilled worker	-0.337***	0.003
	Professional	-0.192*	0.083
	Manager	0.561***	0.000
	Freelancer	0.234**	0.037
	Entrepreneur	0.159	0.241

	Variable	Coefficient	P>z
Additional job requirements (not important — base category)	Part-time employment — desirable	-0.169	0.138
	Part-time employment — mandatory	0.007	0.977
	Flexible working hours — desirable	-0.088	0.546
	Flexible working hours — mandatory	-0.204	0.344
	Convenient transport access — desirable	0.480**	0.010
	Convenient transport access — mandatory	0.351*	0.070
	Less than one hour commuting time — desirable	0.324	0.146
	Less than one hour commuting time — mandatory	0.264	0.232
	Kindergarten availability — desirable	0.285**	0.029
	Kindergarten availability — mandatory	0.194	0.388
	Friendly team — desirable	-0.036	0.891
	Friendly team — mandatory	0.087	0.743
	Opportunity to work remotely — desirable	0.103	0.407
	Opportunity to work remotely — mandatory	0.165	0.413
	Opportunity for training — desirable	0.038	0.851
	Opportunity for training — mandatory	0.275	0.241
	Career opportunities — desirable	0.265	0.115
	Career opportunities — mandatory	0.181	0.405
	Opportunity for international business trips — desirable	0.290**	0.018
	Opportunity for international business trips — mandatory	-0.351	0.193

Note: Demographic factors are included in the model but are not shown in the table. The authors can provide the full tables upon request. *** significant at the 1% level, ** at the 5% level, * at the 10% level.

ANNEX 4. ESTIMATING CHANGES IN GDP AND SECTORAL OUTPUT UNDER DIFFERENT SCENARIOS OF EMPLOYMENT CHANGES

Estimates of the impact of changes in labour supply on GDP are based on the production function. Assume that the production function has constant returns to scale and is defined as follows:

$$Y_t = Z_t \left(H_t L_t\right)^{\alpha} K_t^{1-\alpha}$$

where Y_t is output in period t, Z_t is total factor productivity, H_t is human capital (measuring the quality of workers), L_t is the employed population, and K_t is physical capital. Using lowercase letters to denote percentage changes (that is, $x_t=(X_t–X_{t-1})/X_{t-1}≈\log(X_t/X_{t-1})$), we obtain:

$$y_t = z_t + \alpha h_t + \alpha l_t + (1 - \alpha) k_t.$$

This equation shows that aggregate growth has four components: growth in labour productivity (z_t), growth in the employed population (l_t), accumulation of physical capital (k_t), and improvements in the quality of human capital (h_t); α represents labour share in total output.

Labour share (α) in Ukraine is approximately 0.55, which is close to the average for Eastern European countries (Penn World Tables data). Data on capital and depreciation are derived from the State Statistics Service, the labour calculations are described above, and annual labour productivity growth is assumed to equal 1.6% (Penn World Tables data).

Human capital growth is calculated as follows:

$$H_t = H_{t-1} \times \left(1 + g_H + \phi \log log \left(\frac{H_{t-1}^{base}}{H_{t-1}}\right)\right)$$

Where g_H is the baseline growth in the quality of human capital (from PWT), while the term $\log(H_{t-1}^{base}/H_{t-1})$ represents the "catch-up" effect between Ukraine and the benchmark country (Germany in our case). In the PWT framework, φ≈-0.13. This means that if human capital in Germany is 20% higher than in Ukraine in a given year, then in the following year the gap will amount to 1-0.13×20%=17.4%. We model this catch-up process as passive, although greater investment in education could accelerate convergence.

The data in Table A6 were provided by Veronika Movchan (IER), who prepared these calculations for us pro bono. The table presents output growth by sector under scenarios in which employment in these sectors increases by 5%, 7%, 10%, or 15%. For other values of labour supply growth, we apply linear extrapolation based on the data presented in Table A6.

Table A6. Output growth (%) under different employment growth scenarios

	Employment growth			
	5%	7%	10%	15%
Agriculture				
Grain cultivation	1.61	2.22	3.12	4.56
Livestock production and fishing	2.92	4.05	5.70	8.35
Forestry	7.51	10.57	15.20	23.04
Extractive industries				
Coal, oil and gas extraction	2.33	3.24	4.59	6.76
Mining of metal ores	1.63	2.26	3.20	4.72
Mining of other minerals	2.37	3.29	4.65	6.86
Manufacturing				
Fish products	2.32	2.77	3.27	3.87
Meat products	3.74	5.18	7.31	10.73
Fruit and vegetable processing	3.01	4.15	5.81	8.41
Fat and oil production	2.68	3.73	5.27	7.76
Dairy products	4.33	6.01	8.50	12.54
Flour and grain-milling industry	3.20	4.22	5.54	7.34
Other food products	3.15	4.31	5.94	8.43
Textile production	7.85	11.02	15.80	23.82
Clothing production	5.89	8.26	11.81	17.74
Leather goods	10.38	14.64	21.14	32.22
Wood products	8.05	11.32	16.29	24.70
Paper and printed products	2.51	3.46	4.83	6.98
Petroleum products and coke	2.46	3.32	4.50	6.22
Chemical products, fertilisers, rubber, plastics, paints	4.30	5.99	8.49	12.57
Pharmaceutical products	3.15	4.34	6.07	8.79
Glass, clay, cement and stone products	2.73	3.80	5.37	7.92
Metals and metal products	3.16	4.40	6.22	9.18
Machinery production	6.39	8.96	12.85	19.35
Consumer electronics and optical instruments	4.03	5.60	7.91	11.62
Electronic components	5.85	8.18	11.66	17.43
Electric motors, equipment and batteries	10.86	15.35	22.25	34.14
Transport equipment	4.18	5.79	8.12	11.84
Furniture and jewellery products	4.85	6.78	9.66	14.42
Electricity and gas production	2.07	2.87	4.05	5.95

	Employment growth			
	5%	7%	10%	15%
Water supply, steam production, waste processing	3.49	4.85	6.87	10.17
Wholesale and retail trade	2.72	3.76	5.29	7.72
Transport				
Land transport	1.84	2.54	3.58	5.24
Water transport	2.56	3.53	4.93	7.13
Aviation	4.33	6.03	8.53	12.59
Auxiliary transport services	2.53	3.51	4.95	7.27
Telecommunications	4.15	5.79	8.24	12.26
Computer and information services	1.42	1.98	2.82	4.21
Insurance	3.38	4.70	6.64	9.80
Banking and financial services	3.17	4.39	6.19	9.09
Other professional services	2.57	3.57	5.04	7.41
Hotels and restaurants	4.09	5.70	8.07	11.93
Other private services	2.64	3.67	5.19	7.64
Construction	0.48	0.67	0.95	1.39
Public services	0.83	1.16	1.65	2.46

ANNEX 5. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ENCOURAGING FEMALE LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION

Table A7. Recommendations for the government and employers on encouraging women's participation in the labour market

Area	Recommendations for the government and local authorities	Recommendations for employers
Infrastructure and work conditions	Development of care services (kindergartens, after-school programmes, social care for adults). Encouraging private providers of such services — opening mini-kindergartens and providing home-based care. Expansion of transport networks and ensuring access to social housing in areas experiencing labour shortages. Compensation for employers for adapting workplaces.	Introduction of flexible working hours (remote and hybrid work) and opening of childcare rooms at enterprises. Organisation of employer-provided transport and dormitory accommodation. Adaptation of working conditions for employees from non-traditional groups (for example, assistive devices to reduce physical strain).
Training and development	Provision of free retraining programmes (including through SES vouchers) and promotion of female participation in non-traditional occupations. Encouraging educational institutions to develop dual education programmes and involve businesses in them.	Provision of opportunities for self-development and clear career prospects. Establishment of internal internship and mentorship programmes. Participation in dual education programmes.
Corporate culture and equality	Strengthening efforts to detect discrimination in hiring and monitoring gender pay gaps.	Building friendly teams and a healthy corporate culture. Ensuring competitive wages in line with market expectations.
Communication and support	Information campaigns aimed at overcoming gender stereotypes regarding occupational choice. Introduction of individual career advisers for vulnerable groups.	Active communication of available vacancies through the SES, informal networks, and online job platforms. Support for women returning from childcare leave.

ANNEX 6. RETRAINING PROGRAMMES FOR WOMEN

Table A8. Programmes supporting women's retraining and employment

Programme title	Implementing organisation	Funding source	Programme details	Active / completed	Period (if specified)	Women-only / universal
SES pilot project: training women in "non-traditional" occupations	State Employment Service / Ministry of Economy	State Budget of Ukraine	Women can receive free training in 31 occupations (tram/trolleybus driver, CNC machine operator, renewable energy installation specialist, tractor driver, maintenance technician, etc.). Duration: up to 10 months; training cost covered up to UAH 30,280. Applications online or through employment centres.	Active	Since November 2024	Women-only
SES training voucher	State Employment Service / Ministry of Economy	State Budget of Ukraine	Voucher covers training in 156 specialisations (agricultural engineering, primary education, demining, etc.). Maximum amount: UAH 30,280. Available to all registered unemployed persons. Applications online or through employment centres.	Active	Permanent; list of specialisations updated annually	Universal
LEP4WORK	Ukrainian Women's Fund	International Labour Organization (ILO)	The project included various mechanisms to support employment for women, youth, displaced persons, people with disabilities, and veterans - from training and grant support to retraining and motivational meetings.	Completed	August 2025 — March 2026	Universal, women — 70%
OnTrack — Reskilling Ukraine	Beredskapslyftet (Swedish non-profit organization) / Ministry of Economy of Ukraine	Government of Sweden, private foundations and businesses	Free retraining programmes in transport, manufacturing, and construction. Combine theory and practice. Include free accommodation, meals, support, and employment assistance.	Active	Since 2024	Women-only

Programme title	Implementing organisation	Funding source	Programme details	Active / completed	Period (if specified)	Women-only / universal
“From Training to Employment” (Skills4Recovery)	Entrepreneurship Development Fund / GIZ / Solidarity Fund PL	EU, Germany, Poland, Estonia (Skills4Recovery multidonor initiative)	Grant-based retraining programme in construction, transport and logistics, agriculture, and services. Implemented through Oschadbank. Targeted at veterans, people with disabilities, and women. Employers submit applications for candidate training.	Active	Launched June 2025	Universal
Women For the Future — mentorship programme	Happy Monday (NGO “Professionals of the Future”)	UN Women, Government of Sweden in cooperation with the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister for European Integration	Four rounds of a two-month mentorship programme. Includes group and individual mentoring. Assistance with job search, career changes, and returning after forced career breaks. Competitive selection. Free of charge. More than 74,000 women supported over the lifetime of the initiative.	Completed	October 2024 – November 2025 (4 rounds)	Women-only
“Building My Path” — online course (Women For The Future)	Happy Monday / UN Women Ukraine	UN Women, Government of Sweden	Free online course for professional development. Training in career skills, job search, and self-presentation.	Active	Launched April 2025	Women-only
Empowering Women in Agrifood	Impact Force / UN Women	Government of Iceland, Government of France; Ministry of Digital Transformation of Ukraine, Diia. Business	Training in entrepreneurial and digital skills for women in agrifood. Aims to support economic integration and financial security for women affected by war.	Active	Since November 2024	Women-only
“Believe” women’s entrepreneurship support programme (Rivne region)	Diia.Business Rivne + International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC)	PC USA (Presbyterian Church USA) through IOCC	Two months of training in marketing, financial planning, business planning, pitching, and career development. Grants for the best participants plus paid internships. 50 participants per cohort.	Active	Since January 2025	Women-only

Programme title	Implementing organisation	Funding source	Programme details	Active / completed	Period (if specified)	Women-only / universal
"Vidvazhna" programme (Ministry of Digital Transformation)	Diia.Business / Ministry of Digital Transformation / Entrepreneurship and Export Promotion Office	State budget; implemented in partnership with business	"Vidvazhna" is Ukraine's first large-scale acceleration programme helping female entrepreneurs transform traditional businesses into digitally mature and competitive enterprises. The educational system covers nine key dimensions of digital maturity — from digital marketing to cybersecurity.	Active	Since 2023	Women-only
Women Leadership Programme (WLP) — MIM / IMD	MIM Business School / IMD (Switzerland)	IMD's Lundin Sustainability Chair	Programme for women leaders. Provides knowledge, tools, and networking opportunities to support effective contributions to the country development during wartime and post-conflict reconstruction.	Active	Since 2024	Women-only
Projector Creative & Tech Foundation — IT and creative industries for women	Projector Foundation (ГО)	European Union / private donors	Free online training in IT and creative industries (design, marketing, project management) for displaced women and refugees. Includes HR support, CV preparation, and portfolio projects. Requirement: English proficiency at B1+ level.	Completed	2022–2025	Women-only
SheCodes Foundation Ukraine —programming for women	SheCodes Foundation (international NGO)	Private donors / SheCodes Foundation	Free online coding courses for Ukrainian women (refugees and IDPs). Goal: teaching programming from scratch. Instruction in English (Intermediate level). Duration: 1–4 months. Applications via shecodesfoundation.org/ukraine.	Active	Since 2022; enrolment open	Women-only
Beetroot Academy — WINGS and Empower Ukraine	Beetroot Academy (Swedish-Ukrainian IT school)	UNFPA / Swedish Institute / Susanne Hobohm Foundation	Several projects: WINGS — digital education for women in small communities with scholarships; Empower Ukraine — IT training for IDPs and vulnerable groups with mentor support. Areas include web development, Python, and digital marketing.	Active	Since 2023	Universal

Programme title	Implementing organisation	Funding source	Programme details	Active / completed	Period (if specified)	Women-only / universal
SkillBoost Ukraine — digital skills and AI (Beetroot + Swedish Institute)	Beetroot Academy / Swedish Institute	Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs	Free programme for IT professionals, civil servants, and civil society representatives to develop digital and AI skills. Open to all, including women.	Active	Since 2024; currently not accepting new applications	Universal
Iron Women —training in operating construction machinery	Beredskapslyftet / Reskilling Ukraine / Volvo CE / ETS Group	Government of Sweden / private partners (Volvo CE)	Free training for women to become excavator and front-loader operators. Open to women aged 18+ with any category of driving licence. Includes online theory and intensive practice. Accommodation and meals provided free of charge.	Completed	October 2024 – 2025	Women-only
She Drives — training female bus drivers	NGO "Foundation for Institutional Development" / Ministry for Communities Development / UN Women	Sweden (through UN Women)	Pilot project for training and employing female bus drivers. 100 women across 10 Ukrainian regions. Employment partners include Kyivpastrans and intercity carriers. Open to women aged 21–65 with category B, C, CE, or D1 licences.	Completed	2024–2025	Women-only
Training female metro drivers — Kyiv Metro	Kyiv Metro	Municipal budget of Kyiv City Council	Recruitment of women for metro driver training. Duration: approximately 7 months. Applications submitted through Kyiv Metro's website.	Active	Since 2025	Women-only
VONA — women's economic security (UNFPA / Beetroot)	Beetroot Academy / UNFPA Ukraine	UNFPA (United Nations Population Fund)	Programmes aimed at strengthening the economic security of women who have experienced or are at risk of gender-based violence. Provides access to IT education and opportunities for personal and professional development.	Active	Since 2023	Women-only

Programme title	Implementing organisation	Funding source	Programme details	Active / completed	Period (if specified)	Women-only / universal
America House Kyiv — English, workshops, leadership (Point of Youth)	America House Kyiv (US Department of State / US Embassy)	US Government (Department of State)	Free programmes including English courses, conversation clubs with Americans, and workshops on career skills development. Includes the Point of Youth leadership programme for young people from Kyiv, Odesa, and Lviv (2 months). All activities are free of charge.	Active	Ongoing (regular enrolment)	Universal
EU4Business — support for women entrepreneurs (EBRD / EU)	EBRD / partner banks (Raiffeisen, Ukrsibbank, Credit Agricole, etc.)	European Union / EBRD	Programme supporting women's entrepreneurship through access to finance for women-led SMEs, advisory support, mentoring, training, networking, and business skills development. Part of the financing is implemented through partner banks.	Active	2023–2027	Women-only
Empowerment of Women in Tech (EPAM)	EPAM Systems (EPAM University)	EPAM Systems	Free educational programme for women focused on developing technical IT skills (programming, testing, data). Includes online training, practical assignments, and opportunities for future employment within the company or on the labour market.	Active	Since 2022	Women-only
Craft & Business (EU4Business)	EU4Business (with local partners in Ukraine)	European Union	Support programme for small businesses in craft production. Includes entrepreneurship training, brand development, access to finance, and support for market entry.	Active	Since 2020	Universal
Helvetas Ukraine Skills Program	Helvetas Ukraine	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and other donors	Vocational education and retraining programme focused on developing practical skills across different sectors. Includes training, cooperation with employers, and improving employment opportunities.	Active	Since 2020	Universal

Programme title	Implementing organisation	Funding source	Programme details	Active / completed	Period (if specified)	Women-only / universal
USAID “Dream and Act”	IREX (USAID “Dream and Act” programme)	USAID	Grant competition supporting youth initiatives in school self-governance. Aims to develop leadership, organisational, and project skills that can serve as a foundation for future professional development.	Completed	2020–2025	Universal
Creative Business Academy (House of Europe)	House of Europe	European Union	Educational programme for representatives of creative industries aimed at developing business skills (marketing, strategy, finance). Includes training, mentoring, and support for business development.	Active	Since 2019	Universal
“I Rely on Myself” — financial skills course for women (Projector + Kredobank)	Projector Institute	Projector Foundation / Kredobank Foundation / Projector Institute	Free two-month online financial literacy course for women aged 18+. Includes budgeting, personal financial planning, webinars, and mentoring sessions with financial consultant Oksana Zheliezko.	Active	Since September 2025	Women-only
“Culture and Creativity” — online training for cultural managers (EU Eastern Partnership)	“Culture and Creativity” portal / EU	European Union (Eastern Partnership Programme)	Free online courses for cultural managers covering fundraising, communications, marketing, strategic management, and project management. Targeted at cultural sector professionals in Ukraine and Eastern Partnership countries.	Active	Ongoing (regular updates)	Universal
SES “Own Business” grant (microgrant for unemployed persons)	State Employment Service / Ministry of Economy	State Budget of Ukraine	Grant of up to UAH 250,000 for registered unemployed persons to start their own business. Women account for 58% of all recipients. Requires submission of a business plan and completion of training at an employment centre. Open to all.	Active	Permanent	Universal