

CHAPTER 2. GENDER BALANCE AND THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN KAZAKHSTAN

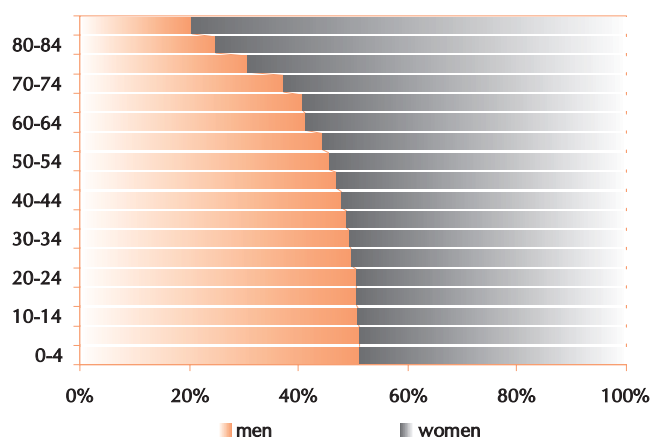
2.1 Demographic context

In the beginning of 2004, there were 7,752,206 women in Kazakhstan, accounting for 51.9% of the country's population. However, the gender breakdown is different for different age groups. There were more boys and young men than

girls and young women in the age group of 0-24. In older age groups women tended to prevail with a distinct correlation, i.e. the older the age group, the higher the proportion of women (Figure 1).

Figure 1

Women and men by age groups, 2004



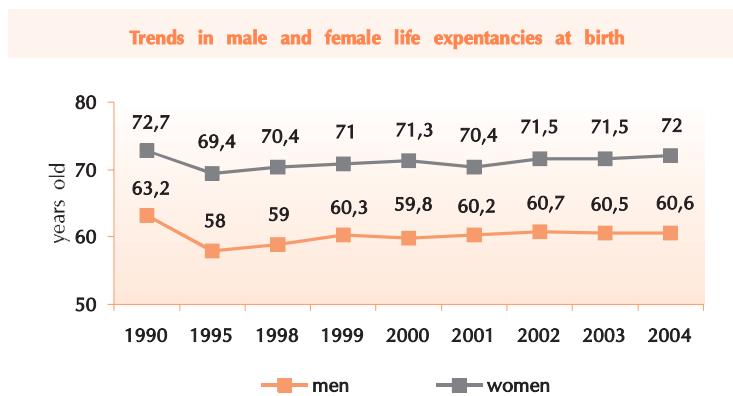
Source: *Women and Men in Kazakhstan. Gender Statistics. Agency on Statistics, 2004.*



Such a breakdown of men and women by age results directly from a degrading demographic situation linked with disproportionate mortality rates by sex and age groups. It is critical to highlight the gender aspects of mortality in Kazakhstan, the main of which are decreasing life expectancy as well as high mortality rate among men of working age.

Official data for 1990-2004 reports that life expectancy at birth dropped from 72.7 to 72 and from 63.2 to 60.6 years for women and men respectively, which increased the disparity between women and men from 9.5 years in 1990 to 11 years in 2004. This indicates severe gender disproportions of the demographic development of Kazakhstan.

Figure 2



Source: 1) *Living Standard and Poverty in Kazakhstan (statistical monitoring)*, Agency on Statistics/UNDP Kazakhstan. Almaty, 2004. 2). *The Republic of Kazakhstan: 2005. Brief statistical reference*. Agency on Statistics. Almaty, 2005.

Differing patterns of male and female mortality largely determine the marital status of women and men of different age groups. For example, the 1999 census reported that the proportion of widows was higher than that of widowers with gender disparities increasing in older age groups. Thus, of all people aged 50-59, 22.2% and 4.7% were widows and widowers respectively. In the age group 60-69, these figures increased to 42% and 11.4%.

The breakdown of married women and men varies by age as well. There are more married women than men in younger age groups, while there are more married men than women of middle, senior, or older age. Thus, 11.1% of women aged 18 are married compared with 2.1% of men. At the age of 60-69, only 49.8% of women but 84.4% of men are married. Such an asymmetric pattern of female and male marital status suggests challenges for women at the older age,

as based on traditional gender roles. The man often has had the role as family head and main provider. However, as the main reason is low life expectancy for men, this indicates an issue of serious concern relating to men's health in Kazakhstan.

According to the 1999 census, a household of 5 or more persons is most common in Kazakhstan. Especially vulnerable are female-headed households, in which women have to raise one or more children on their own due to reasons such as the child being born out of wedlock, divorce, or widowhood. As it is traditionally accepted that women take care of and raise children, the burden of households with one parent generally falls on the women. The fact that such households are common indicates the scope of the problem in Kazakhstan. Today, households consisting of a mother and a child (or children) account for 10.7% of all households in Kazakhstan, while households consisting of a father and children account for only 1%¹. The number of such households has increased over recent years due to the growing number of divorces, the disproportionate mortality of men of working age, the labour migration of men from rural to urban areas, the increasing number of male alcohol users, etc².

¹ *Women and Men in Kazakhstan. Gender Statistics*. Agency on Statistics, Almaty, 2004.

² *Poverty in Kazakhstan: Causes and Cures*. UNDP Kazakhstan, Almaty, 2004.

Box 2.1. Gender-related Development Index (GDI)

The GDI is a composite index measuring average achievement in the three basic dimensions captured in the human development index (HDI) - a long and healthy life, education, and a decent standard of living - adjusted to account for inequalities between men and women. Indeed the GDI differs from the HDI by the fact that the average value for each country's indicators is adjusted by the gap between male and female attainment. It is simply the HDI adjusted downward for gender inequality; the greater the gender disparity in basic human development, the lower a country's GDI relative to its HDI.

Kazakhstan's GDI score was 0.761 in 2002, ranking 63 among 144 countries. The table below shows the GDI positions of selected countries.

Country	GDI Rank	HDI Rank minus
Norway	1	0
Poland	34	1
Russia	49	1
Malaysia	52	-1
Kazakhstan	63	1
Saudi Arabia	72	-9
Peru	74	-4
Uzbekistan	85	1

The GDI performance of countries in Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) is slightly better than average compared to other emerging economies. The relatively equal system inherited by the Soviet Union partly explains these numbers. However, the achievements reached in Central Asia are far from being satisfactory. Kazakhstan, even if it ranks first among Central Asian countries, is distant from Russia and Eastern European countries. However, more troublesome is the fact that Kazakhstan is losing its position in the GDI ranking (62 in the year 2001).

The GDI is compared to the HDI in order to measure gender inequality. The most basic formula involves subtracting the GDI rank from the HDI rank; a negative result means that the gender record is poor. As shown in the table Kazakhstan seems a quite equitable society, like Poland and Russia, while the wider difference between GDI and HDI is found in the Middle East and South America.

Source: *Cultural Liberty in Today's Diverse World. Human Development Report. UNDP, 2004.*

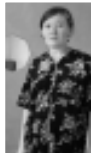
2.2 Gender equality on the labour market

2.2.1 Economic activity

When market relations were introduced, the level of economic activity tended to decrease, primarily due to a decline in women's economic activity. Such a situation resulted from, on the one hand, the abolition of the

socialist principle of "mandatory universal employment of all able-bodied people in social production" and along with that the new right to choose whether to stay at home or have paid work and, on the other hand, the in-

creasing tension on the labour market and growing unemployment, which, in turn, forced the most vulnerable groups, including women, out of labour force resources.



The early 2000s were marked by an initially weak upward trend and then a settling down of the population's economic activity, encouraged by the economic upheaval. In 2003, 65% of women

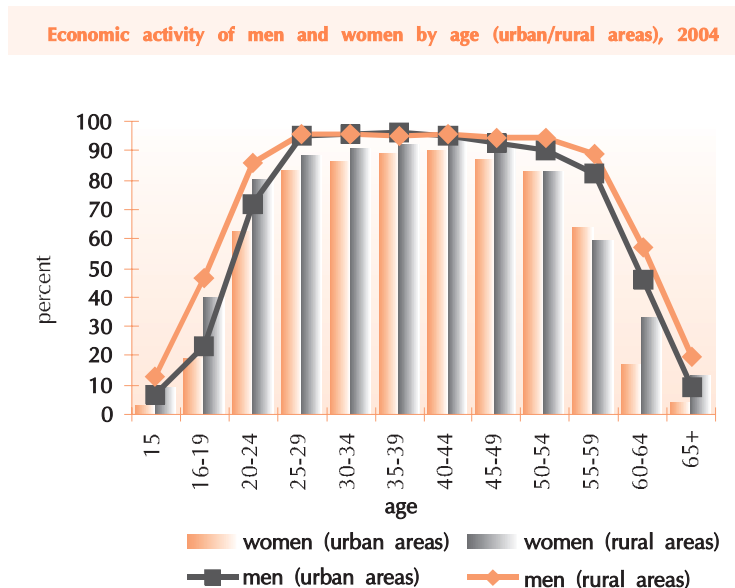
of working age (15+ years) were economically active³, which was still high when compared internationally, but fell behind the percentage of economically active men (75.6%).

Figure 3



Source: Key Labour Indicators in the Republic of Kazakhstan. Series 13. Employment and Remuneration. - Almaty, 2004.

Figure 4



Source: Key Labour Indicators in the Republic of Kazakhstan. Series 13. Employment and Remuneration. - Almaty, 2004.

Self-employment of women, especially in rural areas, largely accounts for such a high level of women's economic activity in Kazakhstan.

The profiles of economic activity of both men and women by age look alike (Figure 4). The age profile for economic activity of Kazakhstani women is not double-humped, as is the case with female employment in some western countries resulting from a "non-continuous" career pattern, with women tending to work before a child is born and then to work only after children have grown up. The peak of economic activity of urban women is at the age of 35-49 when 89-91% of women are economically active; for rural women, this is at the age of 25-49 with 95.6-96.2% economically active, the latter being equal to the proportion of economically active rural men of the same age.

Regional disparities in economic development have caused corresponding considerable regional disparities in the proportion of economically active women. In 2003, the minimum level of women's economic activity was observed in West Kazakhstan oblast (53.8%), while the maximum level was observed in Kostanai oblast (69.8%) (Figure 5).

³ Economical active population includes those employed (people above a specific age (+15 in Kazakhstan)) who, during the reference period, were in paid employment at work, self-employed or with a job but not at work and those unemployed (people above a specific age) who, during the reference period, were without work, currently available for work and seeking work.

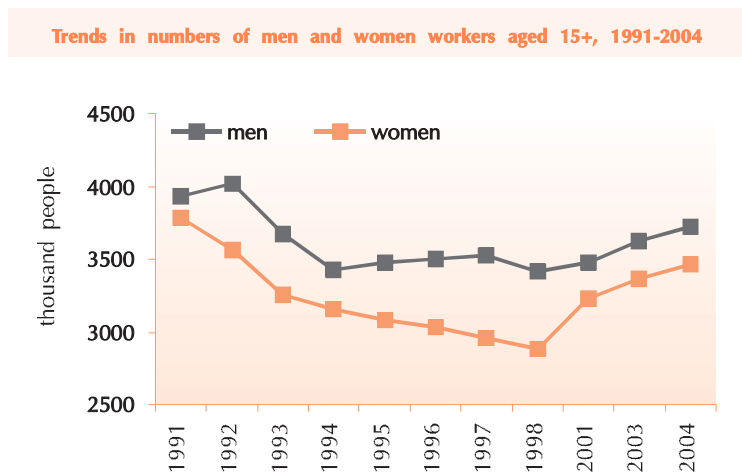
⁴ Labour Market in Kazakhstan: 1991-2002. Statistical Digest. Agency on Statistics, 2003.

Figure 5



Source: Key Labour Indicators in the Republic of Kazakhstan. Series 13. Employment and Remuneration. - Almaty, 2004

Figure 6



Sources: 1) Living Standards and Poverty in Kazakhstan (statistical monitoring). - Almaty, Agency on Statistics/UN Office in Kazakhstan, 2004; 2) Key Labour Indicators in the Republic of Kazakhstan. Series 13. Employment and Remuneration. - Almaty, 2004.

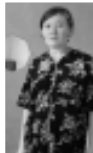
Despite the balance of economically active versus inactive women, the growing number of the population aged 15+ leads to a gradual increase in the absolute number of economically inactive women: this was 1,974.3 thousand in 2001 and 2,091.0 thousand in 2004.

At the same time, the percentage of economically inactive women has remained unchanged over the last four years at 35% with women comprising 62% of all economically inactive people.

2.2.2 Employment trends

The setback in production over the first few years of reforms caused a considerable decline in the number of the population that was employed. Moreover, this process was gender asymmetric (Figure 6). The proportion of female to male workers decreased over a much longer period by a much greater amount. Thus, the number of working men declined between 1992-1994 with another short-term decline in 1998, forcing 590,000 male workers out of the employment arena. The number of female workers declined over 1991-1998, i.e. 7 years, with a total of 895,500 female workers forced out.

The economic revival of the late 1990s had a positive effect on the employment situation. Nevertheless, this process was different for women than it was for men. Initially, women's employment status revived somewhat faster than men's. During 1998-2001, the number of female workers increased by 481,500 women (17%), while the number of male workers only increased by 203,700 men (6%). Then during 2001-2003 the number of male workers increased by 148,100,



while that of female workers increased by 148,300.

From 1990 to 2002, the number of female workers decreased by 414,000, while the percentage of women out of the overall employed population fell from 49 to 48%⁵. Thus it can be stated that Kazakhstani women managed to hold out on the labour market over the reforms. The level of employment remained fairly high, and the proportion of women out of the total employed population remained almost unchanged.

However, this came about at the cost of decreased quality of female employment with a prevalence of women in government-funded or low-paid sectors and at less prestigious posts.

2.2.3 Employment by different sectors of the economy

The breakdown of female employment based on economic sectors differs significantly from the corresponding breakdown of

male employment. It still maintains the same characteristics as it had during the Soviet time. The Dissimilation Index⁶ showing the percentage of male and female workers having to change occupation to balance the breakdown of men and women in each occupation demonstrates a continuity indicating no positive changes in this area. This index remained unaltered in 2001 and 2003, standing at 24.2%.

Currently, the proportions of female workers vary considerably between different sectors. Women are found in more stable but lower-paid employment, such as in government-funded organisations. The highest proportions of women are found in traditionally female sectors such as health-care and social services, education, hotels and restaurants, and finance.

Out of sectors traditionally employing men, the following should be highlighted: fishery, construction, mining and transport, and communications. Over

1998-2004, the breakdown of workers by sex altered, making the above-listed sectors even more dominated by men (Figure 7).

The same pattern is demonstrated in information about job-searches undertaken by unemployed men and women: 83.3% of all unemployed women looking for hired employment opportunities look for a post in a government-funded organisation. Men, however, prefer to find employment in the private sector, which is often riskier but better paid.

⁵ *Women of Kazakhstan. Report on Progress Towards the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. 2000; Poverty Monitoring Indicators in Kazakhstan Agency on Statistics/ UNDP Kazakhstan, 2003.*

⁶ *Duncan's Index shows the percentage of men and women workers having to change occupation to balance breakdown of men and women in each occupation. The Index may vary from 0 to 100 with the "0" value when percentages of men and women workers are equal and with the "100" value in case of 100% division of labour by sex.*

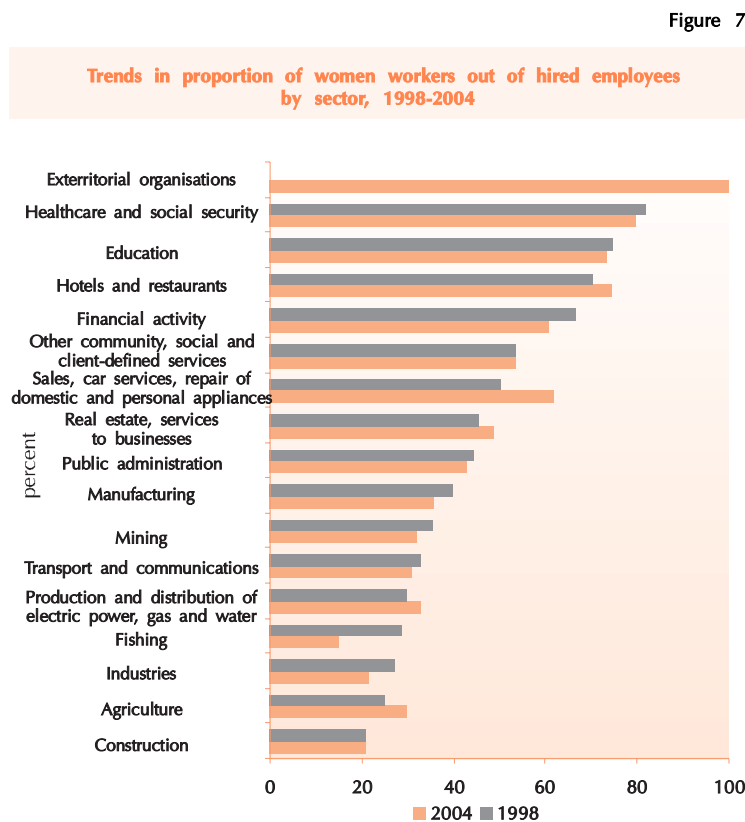


The pattern of the employment status of women and men is similar to the above. There are more hired male employees than female, with 62.1% of all female workers and 65.3% of all male workers being hired employees in 2004.

The years of reforms have encouraged a fast-growing form of employment to be used as a survival strategy - self-employment. It should be noted that in Kazakhstan, just as in other CIS countries, self-employment often goes along with employment in an informal sector and, as a result, with frequent violations of labour laws and poor social protection. In addition, informal employment often depreciates the value of education, qualification, and professional skills and is characterised by social risks.

There are more self-employed women than men, with proportions of self-employed women and men in 2002 standing at 43.7% and 36.4% respectively. Self-employment is most prevalent in rural areas, where 59.2% of all women and 51.5% of all male workers were self-employed versus 25.3% and 22.8% in urban areas respectively⁷. That there are so many self-employed women could result from the lower competitiveness of women as compared to men. The traditional sectors of female self-employment are trade with clothes and foods, crafts, agricultural production, personal services, catering, advice-giving and teaching, folk medicine, cosmetology, etc.

Despite the fact that a higher proportion of women are self-employed, women are underrepresented amongst employers, accounting for only 26.9% of all employers in Kazakhstan in 2004. In addition, a downward trend



Source: Key Labour Indicators in the Republic of Kazakhstan. Series 13. Employment and Remuneration. - Almaty, 2004

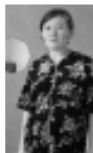
has been observed in the proportion of female employers over the last years as this indicator was 27.2% in 2001.

Such a gender breakdown of entrepreneurs indirectly indicates the unequal access of men and women to economic resources resulting from privatisation and other factors. Privatisation in Kazakhstan over the early and mid-1990s did not affect women almost at all. There was no formal differentiation between women's and men's rights to privatise with no legal limitations to women's right to own. However, privatisation was only highly beneficial to those who were at various levels of power at the time.

In 1991, when privatisation was about to start, only 5% of management personnel were women⁸ due to the structure of the Soviet economy, which indicates that women did not have equal opportunities to privatise large and medium-sized property. With limited access to resources for business activities, women mostly had access to the informal sector, small market segments⁹, and small enterprises. Large and medium

⁷ Key Labour Indicators in the Republic of Kazakhstan. Series 13. Employment and Remuneration. - Almaty, 2004.

⁸ Working Conditions and Life of Women. Statistical Digest., 1992, p. 204 Sarsembaeva, R.B. Female Enterprise in Kazakhstan: Development Highlights. Eurasia, Issue 4 (p. 9), 2002.



enterprises are currently owned and managed primarily by men.

Furthermore, the global trend is for the poorest women to be found in jobs where they risk degrading treatment, for example in domestic work and prostitution, while the poorest men are often forced to take hazardous work, for example in the building sector. In the informal sector where a large proportion of the poor seek opportunities, poor women often work at the very lowest levels since they lack capital or education that could increase their income and reduce risks¹⁰.

2.2.4 Segregation within economic sectors

Vertical occupational segregation refers to when men and women work in the same sector or job category, but men generally do the more skilled, responsible, or better paid work¹¹.

Extensive vertical segregation is one of the most prominent gender problems on the labour market in Kazakhstan. This is shown by, for example, gender breakdown of workers and professionals (Table 1); the higher responsibility the position entails, the less likely it is to be occupied by a woman. Only 3.5% of heads of government authorities and managers of all levels, including heads of organisations (high level offices) are women, while 76.7% of workers at low level offices are women.

When speaking of vertical segregation in the employment arena, one critical fact should be noted, that the educational level of female workers is much higher than that of male workers and the gap does not tend to shrink. Thus, in 2002, 19.9% of all female

Table 1

Vertical segregation by profession		
	percent	
	men	women
Heads of government authorities and managers of all levels, including heads of organisations	66.2	33.8
Highly qualified professionals	32.6	67.4
Middle-qualified professionals	35.3	64.7
Workers with responsibilities of information and document processing, record-keeping and service provision	23.3	76.7

Source: Labour Market in Kazakhstan. 1991-2002. Statistical digest. Almaty, 2003

Table 2

Ratio of female to male wages, 1998-2004							
	percent						
	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004*
Female to male wage ratio	75.7	67.6	61.5	58.7	61.7	60.7	60.4

* anticipatory data

Sources: 1) Living Standards and Poverty in Kazakhstan (statistical monitoring). Agency on Statistics/UN Office in Kazakhstan. Almaty, 2004. 2) Workers and Wages by Occupation (January-December 2004). Statistical bulletin. Agency on Statistics. Almaty, 2005.

workers had higher education while the same indicator was 15.8% for men. 30.9% of female workers and 25.6% of male workers had vocational secondary education in 2002. Men rather than women tended to have education at lower levels, such as primary vocational and various levels of general education, with the exception being that 2.8% of female workers and 2.4% of male workers had only primary education.

Extensive vertical segregation in combination with the higher educational level of female workers shows both inefficient use of educational and professional potential of labour resources and

suggests prevalence of traditional gender-based stereotypes and discrimination against women when recruiting and promoting workers in Kazakhstan.

2.2.5. Gender disparities in wages

Generally female wages are lower than male wages. In Kazakhstan, just as in many other transitional economies, gender disparities in remuneration increased considerably during the reforms. Thus, in the early 1990s women's wages were on average approximately 70% of average men's wages, while in 2003 this figure had dropped down to 60.7%.

¹⁰ Power and Privileges - on Gender Discrimination and Poverty, Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Stockholm 2004

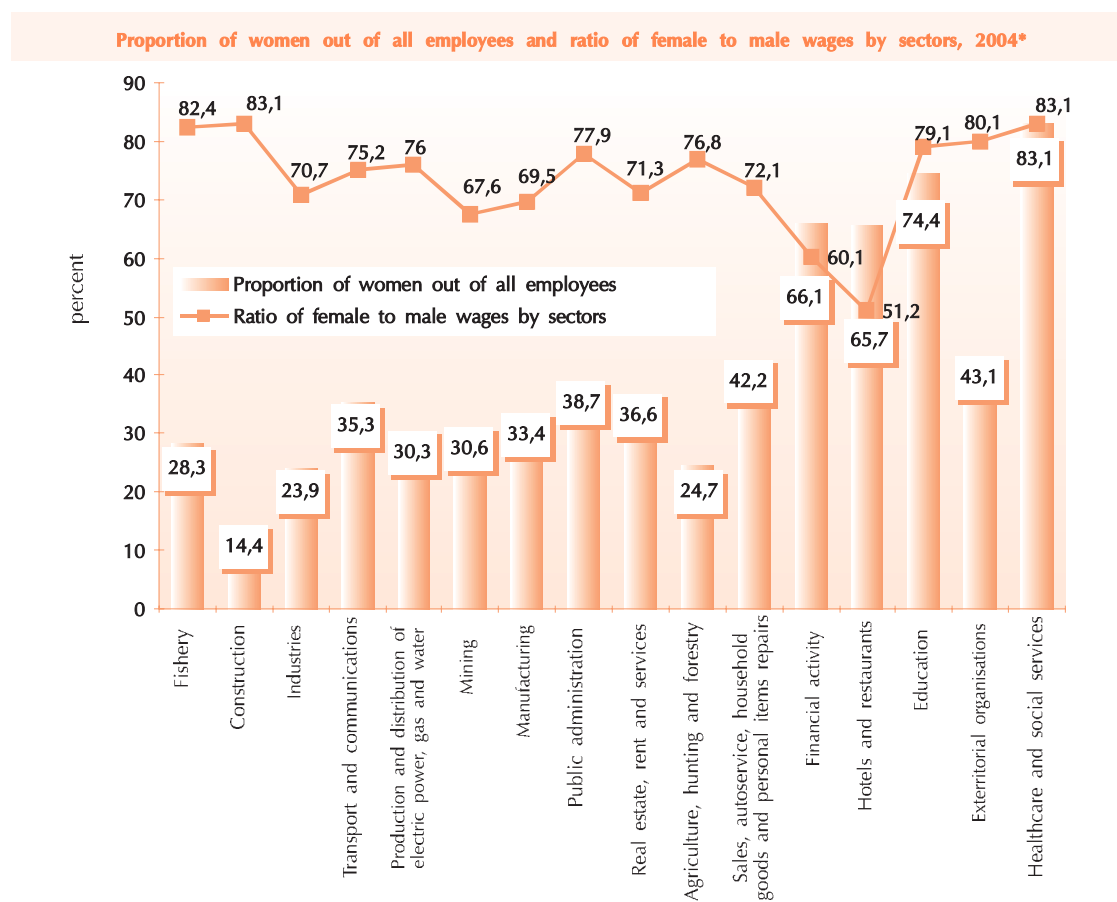
¹¹ Blackburn, M and Jarman, J. Occupational Gender Segregation. Social Research Update 16, 1997

It is critical to note that gender disparities in remuneration are typical for all economic sectors (Figure 8). The gap in remuneration is present both in male

and female dominated sectors. The smallest gap in remuneration was observed in education and healthcare, where in 2004 women's wages were generally

79.1% and 63.1% of men's wages respectively. However, the maximum gap was registered in another "feminine" sector, which is hotels and restaurants.

Figure 8



* anticipatory data

Source: *Workers and Wages by Occupation (January-December 2004)*. Statistical bulletin. Agency on Statistics. Almaty, 2005.

As shown earlier, gender disparities in remuneration have generally been increasing over the last years. The highest increase in gender disparities in

remuneration was among workers of hotels and restaurants with women getting 82.8% of men's wages in 1998 and 52.1% in 2004, which is nearly half. This

trend is observed in almost all sectors, suggesting that men have received a higher share of wage increase than women over the years of economic growth.

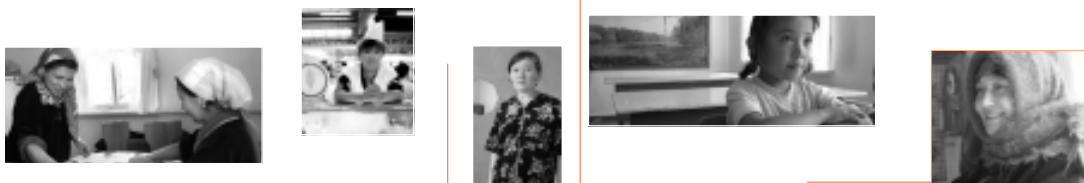
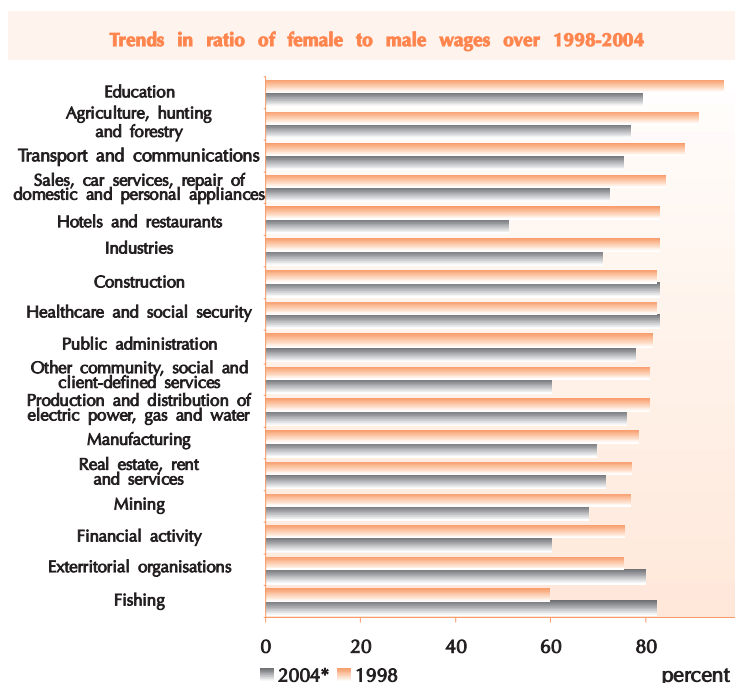


Figure 9



* anticipatory data

Sources: 1) *Living Standards and Poverty in Kazakhstan (statistical monitoring)*. Agency on Statistics/UN Office in Kazakhstan. Almaty, 2004. 2) *Workers and Wages by Occupation (January-December 2004)*. Statistical bulletin. Agency on Statistics. Almaty, 2005.

One of the main causes of gender disparities in remuneration is horizontal segregation by sector and profession, i.e. extensive employment of women in lower paid sectors and professions. This is verified by the breakdown of statistics on female workers by sectors and the amount of average monthly wages in these sectors. Figure 10 gives examples of six sectors: agriculture, fishery, healthcare, education, public administration, and trade, which employ 64.3% of all female workers. In addition, average monthly wages paid in these sectors were less than the national average wage, which was 28,329 tenge per month for all sectors in 2004. Another six sectors with average monthly wages higher than national average wage employ only 35.7% of all female workers. Besides, the analysis of the trends in the breakdown of female and male workers by sector shows that women gradually get "washed out" of the better-paid sectors.

The growing gap between women's and men's salaries can possibly also be explained by the increase of average wages in occupations dominated by men, while female occupations became less profitable. Generally, men also hold higher positions even in female-dominated sectors¹².

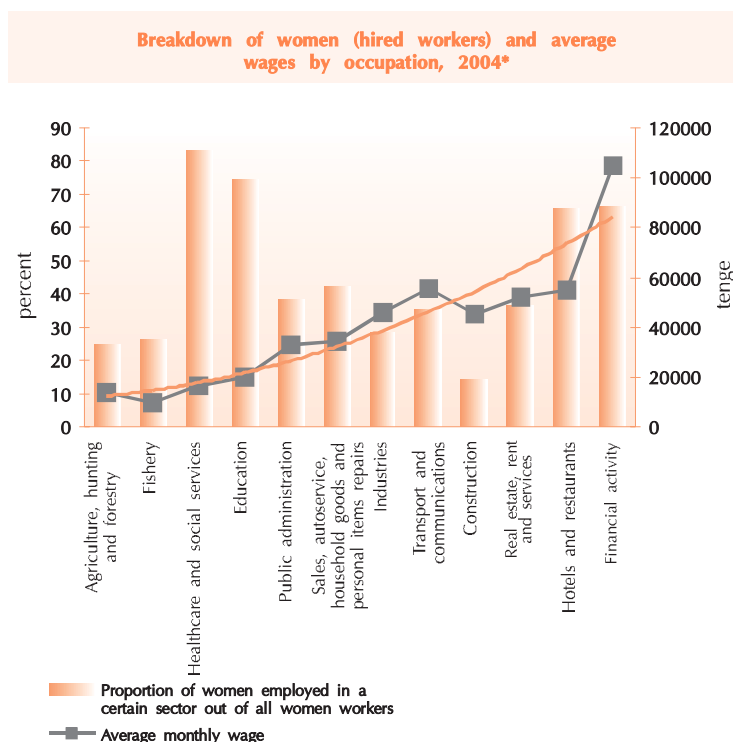
2.2.6 Gender-based division of household work

Gender roles are still traditional in Kazakhstan. Despite extensive employment and remuneration, women still do the bulk of unpaid household work and fulfil



¹² *Gender Equality and Extension of Women's Rights in Russia in the Context of the UN Millennium Development Goals*. UN Russia, 2005.

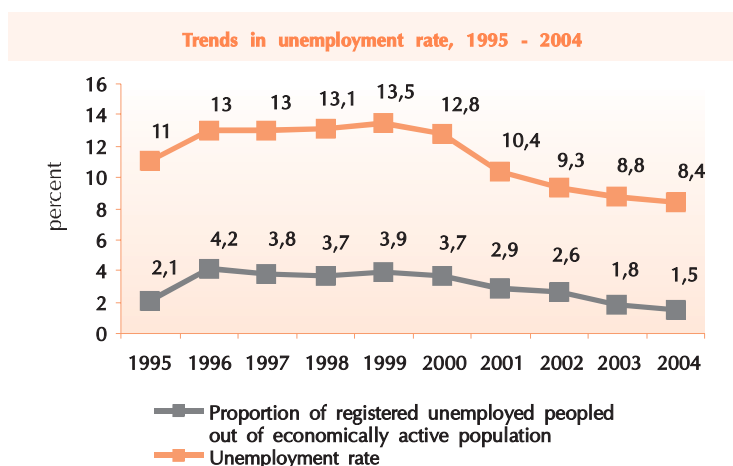
Figure 10



* anticipatory data

Source: *Workers and Wages by Occupation (January-December 2004). Statistical bulletin. Agency on Statistics. Almaty, 2005.*

Figure 11



Sources: 1) *Labour Market in the Republic of Kazakhstan. 1991-2002. Statistical reference. Agency on Statistics, 2003.* 2) *Republic of Kazakhstan: 2005. Brief statistical reference. Almaty, 2005.*

almost all responsibilities for taking care of and raising children.

Men are often the "breadwinner", while their contribution to housekeeping and child care is much more moderate. Men are more economically active, more extensively employed and work longer hours than women. Thus, men aged 29-38 spend an average of 50 hours a week on paid work, while urban and rural women of respective age spend 44 and 40 hours respectively. In older age groups, but no older than working age, gender disparities in paid working hours gradually go down both through reduced working hours men work and the longer hours women work.

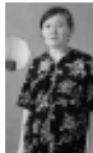
With comparable working hours, women spend much more time on housekeeping responsibilities than men. The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection reports that women generally spend three times more time on family housekeeping duties than men do¹³.

2.2.7 Unemployment

Economic crisis and structural economic changes of the early 1990s resulted in a reduced employment level and brought into existence the phenomenon of unemployment, which was new to Kazakhstan. The general unemployment level refers to the proportion of unemployed in the total labour force. In 1994, the unemployment level was 7.5%, peaking in 1999 at 13.5%. In 2004 the unemployment level stood at 8.4%.

Statistics show that in Kazakhstan female unemployment is higher than male unemployment. In 2004, women accounted for

¹³ *Poverty in Kazakhstan: Causes and Cures. UNDP Kazakhstan, 2004*



57.3% of all unemployed people, and female unemployment exceeded male unemployment levels as the figures were 9.8% and 7.0% respectively. A general downward trend in the unemployment rate of recent years has affected both women and men; however, the female unemployment rate is decreasing more slowly.

The high female unemployment rate is closely linked to problems caused by the economic crisis, which involved noticeably reduced budget allocations that forced women out of the employment arena without effective mechanisms for their return. In addition, Kazakhstan has recently seen a fairly abrupt shift to purely market methods of regulating labour relations. Clearly, such changes had differing effects on the status of men and women in the labour market, as their status differed before. The poorer competitiveness of women coupled with a prevalence of traditional stereotypes regarding male and female social roles have affected women negatively in the

employment arena and the labour market regardless of women's educational advancement.

Gender analysis of labour market trends shows that the feminisation of unemployment is indicated both by the unemployment rate and gender disparities in almost all the parameters used to measure unemployment, such as breakdown by age and education, duration of unemployment, level of long-term unemployment, etc. The breakdown of unemployed people by age shows that gender disparities in unemployment rates is typical for most age groups with the greatest disparities in unemployment level observed in the 30-34 age group.

A main cause for unemployment, regardless of gender, is the difficulty in finding a job after graduation or the absence of any job at all¹⁴. It is the younger age groups that suffer the highest unemployment rate. Young women under 24 years account for almost a quarter of all unemployed women, while this indicator is over one third for men. At the same time, in 2004 the

female/male youth unemployment rate was 15.7/13.1% respectively, which implies that young women are more affected by unemployment. The causes of this situation should be looked at in the context of men's traditional responsibility of providing for the family. As a consequence, their employment starts at an earlier age. Women generally study longer and actively start to market themselves on the labour market from age 25, after receiving an education and possibly having had a first child.

Over the last year, both female and male youth unemployment rates have been diminishing almost simultaneously, which implies that gender disparities in unemployment rates have not decreased. (Figure 12). It should be highlighted that the current educational standard of young women is more advanced than that of young men. With all other factors equal, such advancement should have given women the competitive edge on the labour market, yet this is not the case.

Unemployed women generally have a higher educational background than unemployed men; 10% of unemployed women and 9.5% of unemployed men have a higher education, with 29.4% of unemployed women and 20.6% of unemployed men having a vocational secondary education. Women with educational levels comparable to those of men account for the majority of the unemployed population, indicating that the educational capital of women is undervalued on the labour market.



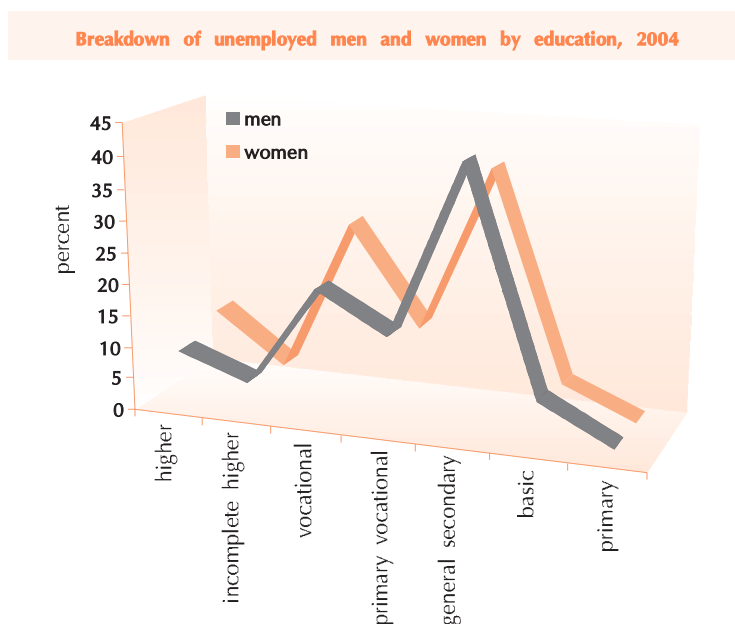
¹⁴ *Poverty in Kazakhstan: Causes and Cures*, UNDP Kazakhstan, 2004.

Figure 12



Source: Living Standards and Poverty in Kazakhstan (statistical monitoring). Agency on Statistics/UN Office in Kazakhstan. Almaty, 2004. 2) Key Labour Indicators in the Republic of Kazakhstan. Series 13. Employment and Remuneration. Almaty, 2004.

Figure 13

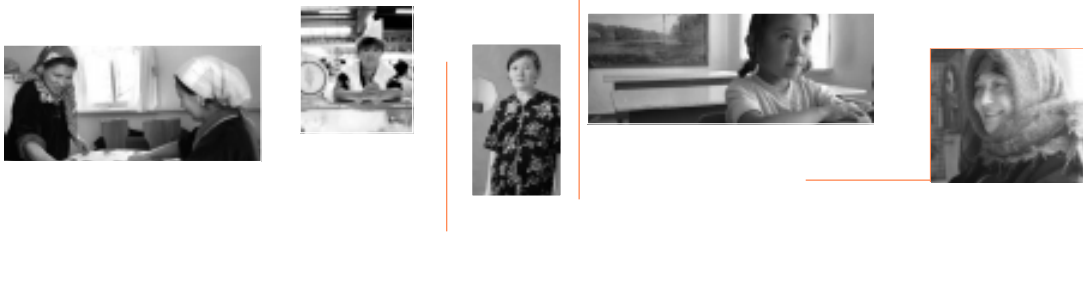


Source: Key Labour Indicators in the Republic of Kazakhstan. Series 13. Employment and Remuneration. Almaty, 2004.

Another factor hindering young women's employment is family and child responsibilities. Kazakhstani labour laws have been modified, removing most maternity and family benefits from the list of Government's responsibilities and making employers liable for them. Moreover, many such benefits, for example, leave to bring up children, are only granted to women, another factor making female labour more unattractive to employers. There are no effective mechanisms to protect women from discrimination, and these factors encourage discriminatory practices when recruiting, promoting, paying, and dismissing women, particularly those of child-bearing age.

Statistics on the duration of female and male unemployment and gender disparities in long-term unemployment also indicate the fact that Kazakhstani women versus men face greater difficulties on the labour market. In 2004, 58% of women versus 42% of men were unemployed for over 12 months, i.e. 1.3 times more, showing that women spend more time finding an employment (Figure 14).

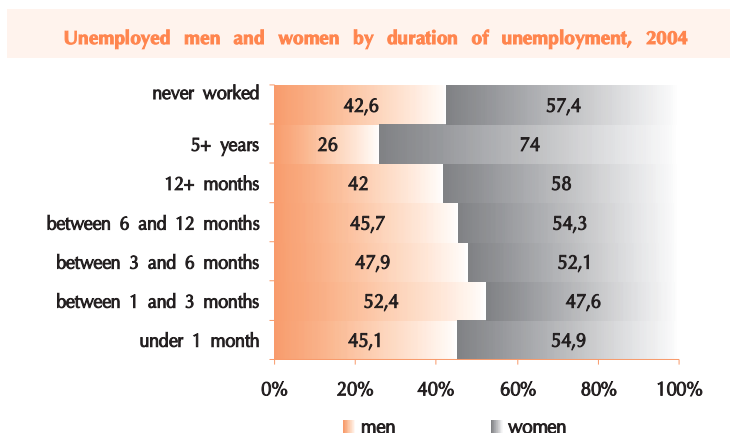
The non-applicability of women's skills and qualifications with the range of vacancies offered on the labour market partially accounts for the longer duration of female unemployment. Moreover, jobs traditionally employing men are currently increasing-



ly being vacated, which has adjusted the labour market to a preference for male labour.

In 2004, 62.8% of workers dismissed due to the liquidation of a company were men and 37.2% women. 59.5% of dismissals due to staff reduction were women, with the same proportion among those resigning voluntarily (often due to the traditional responsibilities of taking care of children without child care facilities and doing household work). Men become unemployed more often than women due to the collapse of their own business or the expiration of their employment contracts.

Figure 14



Source: Key Labour Indicators in the Republic of Kazakhstan. Series 13. Employment and Remuneration. Almaty, 2004.

2.3 Education

2.3.1 Educational levels among women and men

According to the 1999 census, women in Kazakhstan tend to have a higher educational level than men (Table 3).

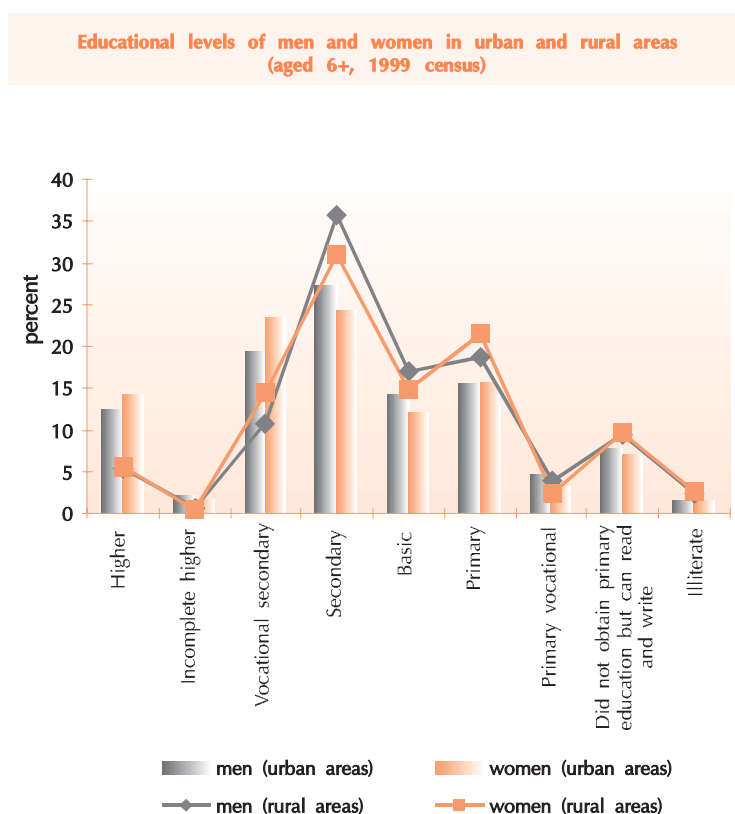


Table 3

Educational levels of men and women (aged 6+, by 1999 census, %)		
	Men	Women
Higher	9.3	10.6
Incomplete higher	1.4	1.3
Vocational secondary	15.5	19.8
General secondary	31.2	26.9
Basic	15.4	13.2
Primary	17.0	18.1
Primary vocational	4.4	2.8
Did not obtain primary education	10.2	10.0

Source: Education in the Republic of Kazakhstan. Agency on Statistics, 2003.

Figure 15



Source: Education in the Republic of Kazakhstan. Agency on Statistics, 2003.

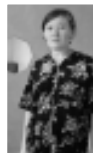
Men predominate at lower levels of education both in urban and rural areas (Figure 15)¹⁵.

The breakdown of gender disparities in educational levels by place of residence (urban/rural areas) and age shows that advanced educational levels are achieved by women of young and middle age (calculations were made using the number of people aged 15+). Thus, a larger proportion of women with higher education than that of men is only typical for urban people aged 20-49 and rural people aged 20-44, while there are more urban and rural men than women of older age with a higher education.

The situation is different with lower educational levels in both urban and rural areas. Men of all age groups more often have a general secondary and primary vocational education. However, people of older age are more likely to have a general primary or no education at all, including illiterate people, with the proportion of women significantly higher than that of men.

The above indicates that two opposite trends are simultaneously effective and feed into today's gender disparities in educational levels. Firstly, older men are more educated than women, a residual effect of the days when women were in general far less educated than men. An opposite trend is observed in educational levels of people in younger age groups. As a result, the overall disparities in women's and men's educational advancement will increase if the gender imbalance in education amongst the younger generation persists. The in-

¹⁵ Education in the Republic of Kazakhstan. - Almaty: Agency on Statistics, 2003.



crease will be determined both by more educated young women reaching adulthood and natural attrition of educated older men.

2.3.2 Gender misbalance in composition of students

Today, access to education largely depends on a family's level of welfare and place of residence rather than the sex, which makes it justifiable to say that the above-discussed gender disparities in educational levels have resulted from the differing values women and men have set on education for years, and on differing strategies for preparing themselves for paid work. Women go beyond the general school level of education more often than men and have demonstrated a greater aspiration for a higher level of professional education, such as vocational secondary and higher education. The different strategies of receiving education reflect on professional segregation as well as different returns on investment into education by men and women. Men's higher level of employment in construction, mining, and industries suggests professional training in these areas. Even unskilled jobs provide sufficient returns on education. However, for women, only a university education can ensure higher wages¹⁶.

Such trends are further illustrated by an analysis of the proportions of girls/boys and young women/young men in educational institutions of different levels, from primary school to postgraduate studies. This issue will now be discussed in greater detail.

Secondary education. At the start of economic reforms, there was a threat of reducing enrol-

ment in secondary education in Kazakhstan, as in many other countries of the former Soviet Union. Nevertheless, the UN estimates that Kazakhstan has achieved the goal of ensuring universal primary education for both boys and girls. Access to education is not so much a gender issue in today's Kazakhstan, but is rather determined by region-based access to schooling as well as poverty and low living standards. Yet, there are gender disparities in the composition of students.

The major issue is that gender balance is only observed up to grade 9 of general education schools. In the 2001/2002 academic year, the proportion of girls was 48.8% and 49.1% in grades 1-3(4) and 5-9 respectively. The trends observed for this indicator since 1999 allow for an assumption that specific actions taken in Kazakhstan since 1997 to ensure universal educational enrol-

ment of children of school age focus primarily on boys.

However, the picture is different with senior school, i.e. grades 10, 11 and 12, in which gender imbalance is observed. Boys drop out, leaving girls in the majority. Girls tend to complete basic education more than boys. In the 2001/2002 academic year, 54% of senior school students in urban areas were girls. In rural areas, on the contrary, there are more girls than boys in grades 10-11(12). However, the gap is small with the proportion of girl students gradually decreasing. In 1999, girls accounted for 51.8% of senior school students, while in 2001 they accounted for 51.1% (Table 4).

School results achieved by boys enrolled in general education seem to be worse than those of girls, because the number of boy students remaining in the same grade for a second year is 3-4 times higher than that of girls¹⁷.

Table 4

Trends in proportions of girls out of students accessing general education facilities (not including students of special support facilities) by grade and place of residence

	проценты		
	1999/00	2000/01	2001/02
Students, including the latest intake:			
1-3 (4) grades	49.3	48.8	48.8
5-9 grades	50.3	49.2	49.1
10-11 (12)	52.7	52.5	52.5
Students, including the latest intake in urban areas:			
1-3 (4) grades	49.0	48.9	49.0
5-9 grades	50.2	49.3	49.4
10-11 (12)	53.6	53.8	54.0
Students, including the latest intake in rural areas:			
1-3 (4) grades	49.5	48.8	48.7
5-9 grades	50.4	49.0	48.9
10-11 (12)	51.8	51.4	51.1

Source: Education in the Republic of Kazakhstan. Almaty, 2002

¹⁶ Gender Equality and Extension of Women Rights in Russian in the Context of the UN Millennium Development Goals. UN Russia, 2005.

¹⁷ Education in Kazakhstan Agency on Statistics, 2003.

Professional education. It is noteworthy that the current enrolment in primary vocational education institutions is fairly moderate. The overall number of enrolled students fell by 62% during the period 1991-2001, from 226,000 to 87,000 accounting for only 3.1% among all male students and 1.7% of female students. Although aspiring less to obtaining vocational secondary education, men prevail among those with primary vocational education, which generally means acquiring a trade and a mid-level qualification. Women only account for one third of students enrolled in primary vocational education institutions.

More women than men are enrolled in higher levels of education such as colleges, higher education facilities, and postgraduate research institutions. In 2003, women accounted for 54% of college students, 57.5% of higher education students, and 60.5% of postgraduate students.

Moreover, men tend to prevail at the lowest of these levels, i.e. in colleges. Over 1997-2003 the proportion of women enrolled in colleges dropped from 59.8% to 54%, while that of men increased from 40.2% to 46%.

In the area of postgraduate education, the dynamics are even more rapid. Over the years indicated above, the proportion of women grew from 46% to 60.5% (!). It should also be added that the number of women enrolled in higher and postgraduate education grew both through an increase in the proportions of women enrolled and an unprecedented increase in the overall enrolment in education of these levels. Over 1991-2001, the total number of higher education and postgradu-

ate students grew by 1.8 and 2.5 times respectively. As a result, most people with newly obtained scientific degrees are women. Women prevail amongst those with newly obtained doctor's degrees (57%). However, women only accounted for 29.7% of doctors of science in all age groups¹⁸.

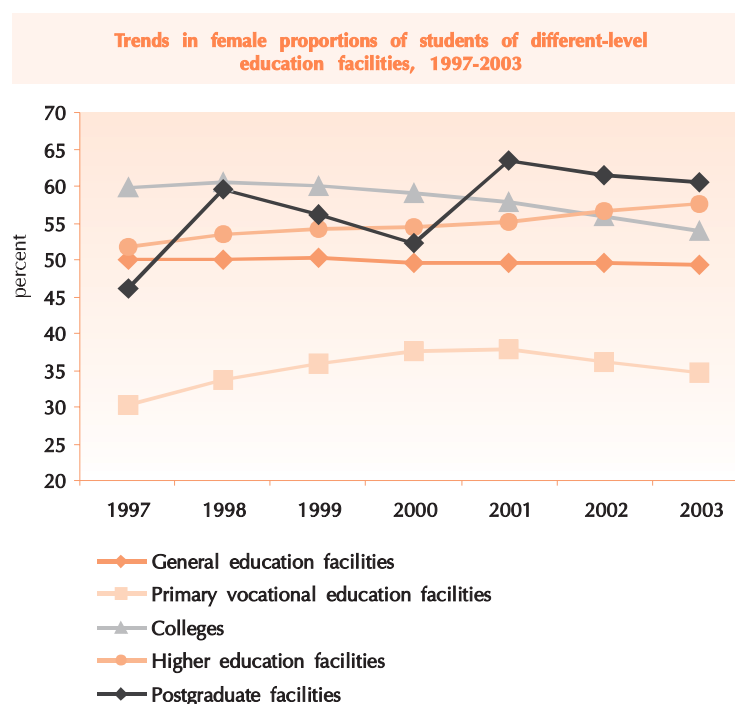
2.3.3 Segregation by profession

When reviewing structural gender inequality in education, the segregation of students enrolled in professional education by profession should be noted, as it is

closely related to segregation in the employment arena.

Young girls tend to choose professions that are highly feminised both in the employment arena and the labour market and avoid "male" professions. Thus, women account for 75.5% of all higher education students enrolled in pedagogic courses, 66.8% of those in medical courses, 69.5% of those in culture and arts related courses and 70% of students in economics courses. Only 4.5% of students in aeronautical engineering, 5.3% of students in transport engineering courses and 11.2% of students in electroenergetics courses are women.

Figure 16



Source: *Women and Men of Kazakhstan 2002. Gender statistics. Almaty, 2002.*
Women and Men of Kazakhstan 2004. Gender statistics. Almaty, 2004.

¹⁷ Education in Kazakhstan Agency on Statistics, 2003.

¹⁸ Women and Men of Kazakhstan. Gender statistics. Agency on Statistics, 2004.