ALBANIA

COUNTRY GENDER ASSESSMENT
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ABBREVIATIONS

AIDA  Albanian Investment Development Agency
AWP  Alliance of Women Parliamentarians
CEDAW  Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
DHS  Demographic and Health Surveys
GDP  Gross Domestic Product
EIGE  European Institute for Gender Equality
EU  European Union
EU-SILC  European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions
GEI  Gender Employment Gap Index
HCI  Human Capital Index
ILO  International Labor Organization
ILOSTAT  International Labor Organization Statistics
INSTAT  Institute of Statistics
IPU  Inter-Parliamentary Union
IPV  Intimate Partner Violence
LFP  Labor Force Participation
MoHSP  Ministry of Health and Social Protection
NCGE  National Council of Gender Equality
NEET  Not in Education, Employment or Training
NSGE  National Strategy for Gender Equity
OECD  Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PISA  Programme for International Student Assessment
SDGs  Sustainable Development Goals
STEM  Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
STEP  Science and Technology Entry Program
UIS  Institute for Statistics
UN DESA  United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UNDP  United Nations Development Program
UNESCO  United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF  United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund
VAW-IAWGED  Inter-Agency Working Group on Violence Against Women Estimation and Data
WBL  Women, Business, and the Law
WEF  World Economic Forum
WHO  World Health Organization
1. INTRODUCTION

Positioned as the linchpin in Albania’s journey towards a higher income economy and its aspirations for EU accession, the pivotal role of human capital cannot be overstated. However, the country faces challenges stemming from declining human capital due to factors such as migration, economic inactivity, including of women, and the underutilization of existing talent pools.

Enabling women’s economic participation is critical for Albania’s trajectory to a high-income country. Actively engaging, nurturing, and optimizing the diverse talents and capabilities of the population, especially of inactive segments is paramount to underpinning this growth trajectory. Gender and social inclusion lie at the heart of Albania’s development path and thus demand high-level attention and commitment.

In recent years, Albania has made significant strides in narrowing gender disparities across various socio-economic indicators. Trends indicate a positive trajectory, with notable improvements in areas such as education, healthcare, and political representation. However, while progress has been made, persistent gender gaps continue to present challenges, particularly in the realms of unpaid labor, economic opportunity, and entrepreneurship.

This Country Gender Assessment provides empirical evidence and analyzes gender equality in Albania. Methodologically, the report adopts the Gender Assessment framework proposed by the World Development Report on Gender Equality and Development (WDR 2012). Through this lens, the report scrutinizes recent progress and lingering challenges across three critical dimensions: Endowments, Economic opportunities, and Voice and Agency. Extensive research was conducted drawing from various data sources to gauge indicators such as health, education, labor market dynamics, and gender-based violence, among others.¹

This report updates and complements past work on gender equality in Albania. The analysis relies primarily on the WDI, 2019-2021 Labor Force Surveys (LFS), 2023 Life in Transition Survey, 2019 Enterprise Survey, 2021 Global Findex and other data available through the World Bank Gender Data portal, as well as a variety of secondary sources, which provide a broad picture of the key gender issues in Albania. The results of the analysis suggest that there are significant gender disparities hindering the well-being and economic welfare of women in Kosovo. However, gender gaps can arise in the outcomes and opportunities enjoyed by females and males across several dimensions. (WDR 2012). In many instances, men—rather than women—may suffer as a result of gender disparities. Regardless of whether these inequalities create disadvantages for men or for women, gender equality matters intrinsically, as well as instrumentally, to foster economic efficiency and development outcomes (WDR 2012).

¹ This note focuses on gender disparities specifically hindering the well-being and economic welfare of women in Kosovo. However, gender gaps can arise in the outcomes and opportunities enjoyed by females and males across several dimensions. (WDR 2012).
disparities in human capital and access to economic opportunities. The highlights can be summarized as follows:

- Albania could reap substantial economic benefits from reducing gender gaps, as highlighted by the percent value of Gender Equality Gain Index (GEGI), identifying the potential rise in long-run GDP per capita from equalizing employment rates between genders.

- Gaps in primary and secondary education are small, while gaps in tertiary education show that women dominate university enrolments. Along with the closing gender gaps and the outpacing of men in tertiary education enrollment, women consistently outperform men in academic assessments.

- Gender gaps persist in economic opportunities, including lower labor force participation, employment rates, and ownership of enterprises. Despite women’s increasing educational attainment and delayed marriage, these gains have yet to translate into commensurate improvements in economic prospects. A large percentage of women work as unpaid family workers, reflecting the high rates of underemployment for women. Women are mainly concentrated in less profitable economic sectors and occupations such as manufacturing and agriculture.

- A significant gender gap is evident in tertiary education enrollment, with women dominating at both the bachelor’s and master’s levels.

- A phenomenon known as motherhood penalty is observable in Albania. The transition to adulthood differs between genders: young men typically experience a decrease in inactivity rates and an increase in employment, while young women often transition from school to inactivity. Employment rates between men and women diverge at the time of family formation.

- The government’s commitment to Gender-Responsive Budgeting (GRB) underscores a strong sense of national ownership and dedication to advancing gender equality agendas across all levels of governance. Central budgetary institutions have made notable strides in embracing GRB, evidenced by the rise in gender-specific budget allocations, but progress within local governments has been slower.

Addressing gender equality offers opportunities. In addition to its intrinsic value, promoting gender equality is a central priority towards achieving inclusive growth and reducing poverty. Promoting women’s economic opportunities, access to endowments, and voice and agency is fundamental in tackling some of Albania’s main policy challenges, including raising labor productivity, promoting private sector development, and fostering resilience.
The structure of the report is as follows. Section 2 delves into the legal and institutional framework. Section 3 assesses gender equality from the perspective of human endowments. Section 4 discusses progress and challenges in economic opportunities. Section 5 focuses on issues related to voice and agency.

2. LEGAL AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

Gender equality in Albania has increasingly received attention in the political and legislative arena. The continuous commitment to gender equality has resulted in the ratification of various international conventions focused on gender equality and the fight against gender-based violence. The legislative and institutional framework on gender equality in Albania is quite comprehensive and has evolved to keep up with international changes and developments.

Overall, Albania’s legislative framework for gender equality has made significant progress, receiving an overall score of 91.3 out of 100 in 2023 from the World Bank’s Women, Business, and the Law (WBL) 1.0. index. This marks a notable improvement since 1975 (Figure 1). In the 1970s and 80s, a typical woman had just over half of the legal rights of men in access to economic opportunities (WBL index 59.4). With the fall of communism and the adaptation of the open market economy, the late 1990s and early 2000s showed improvements in the legal environment in the labor market. During this period, the WBL index jumped from 59.4 to 80. Until 2015, the index continued to increase to 85.6. In the last years since 2015, the WBL index has reached 91.3. Albania has moved at a slower pace compared to the EU-27 average (97.0 in 2023). Still, it is among the countries with the highest WBL 1.0. index in the Western Balkans, only surpassed by Kosovo and Serbia.

Albania has consistently performed well in terms of constraints on freedom of movement (Mobility Indicator), laws affecting women’s decisions to work (Workplace Indicator), and women’s pay (Pay Indicator), constraints related to marriage (Marriage Indicator), and opportunities to start and run a business (Entrepreneurship Indicator), and gender differences in property and inheritance (Asset Indicator) and got a perfect score in 2023 (Figure 2). However, when it comes to laws affecting women’s work after having children (Parenthood Indicator) and laws af-

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2 The WBL 1.0. index assesses how laws and regulations impact women’s economic opportunities across various areas, including Mobility, Workplace, Pay, Marriage, Parenthood, Entrepreneurship, Assets, and Pension. The score is calculated by taking the average of each index, with 100 being the highest possible score. The index is based on the analysis of the domestic laws and regulations, updated to October 2023.
fecting the size of a woman’s pension (Pension Indicator), Albania could consider reforms to improve legal equality for women. For example, one of the lowest scores for Albania is on the indicator measuring laws affecting the size of a woman’s pension, which increased from 0 in 1975 to only 50 26 years later. In 2023, men and women cannot retire at the same age with full or partial pension benefits.

According to the new WBL 2.0 legal frameworks index, women in Albania possess 77.5 percent of the legal rights of men. This update offers a deeper insight into the legal underpinnings of gender equality compared to the previous WBL 1.0 index (Figure 3). It underscores the importance of further improvements in crucial areas such as women’s safety, pension rights, support for entrepreneurship, and access to affordable and quality childcare.

The policy framework on gender equality is primarily driven by the “National Strategy for Gender Equality 2021-2030” (NSGE). The NSGE has four main strategic goals:

- Fullfilling of economic and social rights of women, young women, girls, and men, young men and boys in society and the empowerment of women, young women, and girls in all their diversity, aiming at an improvement and sustainability of the environmental (green) economy and their equal participation in the digitalization process.

- Ensuring the equal participation, representation, and leadership rights of women and men, young women and men, girls and boys in all their diversity in political and public decision-making at the local level.

- Reducing all forms of harmful practices, gender-based violence, and domestic violence.

- Applying of gender mainstreaming as the primary tool for achieving gender equality and gender justice in society.

Various institutional structures are in place to ensure gender equality. Since 2017, the Ministry of Health and Social Protection (MoHSP) has been the leading na-

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3 The new WBL 2.0. index includes two additional indicators – Safety and Childcare – and new and revised questions under the original WBL indicators. The analysis continues to be based on domestic laws and regulations. The new Safety indicator expands the measurement legislation on violence against women. Previously, WBL 1.0. addressed only two forms of violence: sexual harassment in employment (under Workplace indicator) and domestic violence (under Marriage indicator). The new Safety indicator now covers two additional forms of violence against women: child marriage and femicide. The new Childcare indicator assesses childcare services offered in center-based settings to children from birth to two years and 11 months.

tional authority in charge of gender equality. The Minister of Health and Social Protection is also the head of the National Council of Gender Equality (NCGE), the highest advisory body regarding gender equality and gender mainstreaming, including economic empowerment, social and cultural domains, political representation, etc. In addition, the Deputy Prime Minister is assigned as the coordinating national authority on gender equality to strengthen the institutional framework for gender issues. Each line ministry has gender equality officers who serve as gender focal points as per Law No.9970/2008, “On Gender Equality in Society.” Furthermore, every municipality appoints one or more local gender equality officers who also serve as local coordinators against domestic violence. Structures supporting gender equality are also part of the Albanian Parliaments, including the Sub-Committee on Gender Equality and Prevention of Violence against Women, established in 2017, and the Alliance of Women Parliamentarians (AWP), established in 2013. A dedicated independent body to protect against discrimination is the Commissioner for Protection Against Discrimination, which was established in 2010. This body examines complaints against discrimination of individuals or groups, and it acts on their behalf to launch administrative investigations, issue decisions, make recommendations, impose sanctions, and represent plaintiffs in court under their consent.

Figure 1. WBL Index 1.0. (1975-2023)


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5 Order of the Prime Minister Nr.32, date 12.2.2018 “On the Establishment of the National Coordinator for Gender Equality”

6 UN Women and UNDP. (2016).
Even with equal laws in place, achieving women’s rights and opportunities still faces significant challenges due to inadequate implementation and weak enforcement. WBL 2.0 supportive frameworks assesses the disparity between laws in theory and their application in practice (de jure vs de facto). It encompasses various instruments aimed at facilitating the implementation of laws, including national policies, plans and programs, services, budget, special procedures, and sanctions for noncompliance with certain standards. Data for Albania indicate that the supportive frameworks necessary for the implementation of laws could be strengthened across all the indicators, particularly in critical areas like childcare and safety (Figure 4).

Albania has taken significant steps toward promoting gender equality through the adoption of GRB. This approach aims to incorporate gender considerations into budgeting processes at both central and local levels, thereby addressing gender disparities in resource allocation and service delivery. While central budgetary institutions have made notable strides in embracing GRB, evidenced by the rise in...
gender-specific budget allocations, progress within local governments has been slower. To bridge this gap, training programs focusing on GRB have been implemented to enhance gender-sensitive planning and budgeting practices at the local level. The government’s commitment to GRB underscores a strong sense of national ownership and dedication to advancing gender equality agendas across all levels of governance.\(^7\)

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SPOTLIGHT 1 – Gender-Responsive Budgeting

GRB is an approach to budgeting that seeks to promote gender equality by ensuring that public policies and expenditures are designed and implemented in ways that take into account the different needs and priorities of women and men. It is an important tool to improve the transparency, accountability, effectiveness, efficiency, and equity of public expenditure.

GRB brings into focus issues that are frequently overlooked within budget analysis and decision making. These issues include the role that unpaid work plays in economic and social outcomes, especially the unequal distribution of and responsibility for unpaid work that is placed on women and the extent to which women can voice their needs and participate in decision-making on budgets. GRB not only assists governments in innovating when it comes to the resources for financing the SDGs but also allows them to track allocations for gender equality and to assess the extent to which they are making this information publicly available and transparent.

Albania has used the Medium-Term Budget Program for program and performance budgeting since 1998. Since 2010, the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Health and Social Protection, in close cooperation with the UN Women office in Albania, have been working to integrate GRB principles into the medium-term and annual budget programming processes. In 2012, GRB was included in the Medium-Term Budget Program, (MTBP) which was further enforced through a Decision of the Council of Ministers of Albania. GRB was included as a legal requirement of the Organic Budget Law in 2016 and the Law on Local Finances in 2017. These laws regulate the application of GRB in medium-term and annual budget planning along with the monitoring, evaluation, and reporting processes of the relevant institutions. GRB is annexed into the annual Standards Budget Preparation Instructions and represents an important tool for advancing gender equality in key national strategic documents. At the local level, GRB has been a legal requirement in the Local Government Financial Management cycle since 2017 with UN Women’s interventions. As all functions of central government are replicated at the local level as shared or delegated functions, municipalities in Albania are responsible for the implementation of all national and sectorial policies and strategies. After the introduction of program and performance-based budgeting (PPB) in 2018, the Albanian Financial Management Information System (AFMIS) was established at the central level. AFMIS speeded up the process and improved the quality of budget documents in 2019 and was used as a tracking tool for GRB allocations. The number of budget programs increased from 9 in 2013 to 47 in 2021, with budget support for gender equality initiatives rising from 1% in 2015 to 9% in 2021. From 1% of budget support in 2015 to 9% in 2021. The 2021–2027 gender equality strategy includes municipalities as one of the most important actors, among others, when it comes to tackling different aspects of gender inequality through the gender mainstreaming process within local budgets.

Source: UN Women
3. ENDOWMENTS

Albania has made several advancements in improving the health outcomes of its population, such as life expectancy and infant mortality. However, some areas of public health still need to catch up with Albania’s peer countries. On the other hand, women have made considerable gains in education, even reversing the gender gap in enrolment. However, gender segregation in education fields remains pervasive.

The 2020 Human Capital Index reveals that in Albania a girl born today will only reach 66 percent of her potential productivity as she grows up due to limitation in education and health, compared to 61 percent for a boy. These figures are below the averages for both the European and Central Asia region (70 percent for girls and 60 percent for boys) and the EU-27 (75 percent for girls and 71 percent for boys), as indicated in Figure 5).

3.1 HEALTH

Life expectancy has shown a steady increase since 2000, signalling advancement in healthcare and living conditions. However, despite these gains, Albania’s life expectancy at birth remained below the EU-27 average for both men and women.

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8 Source: World Bank (2020). The HCI calculates the contributions of health and education to worker productivity. The final index score ranges from zero to one and measures the productivity as a future worker of child born today relative to the benchmark of full health and complete education.
in 2021. On average, women tend to outlive men, with a life expectancy of 79.2 years compared to 74.1 years for men in 2021 (Figure 6). Notably, while men experience a shorter lifespan, their life expectancy has been increasing at a faster rate since 2000, with a gain of 2.7 years compared to 1.7 years for women. Despite these improvements, Albania’s life expectancy at birth still lags behind the EU-27 average for both genders. However, it’s noteworthy that Albania boaststhe highest life expectancy among its neighboring countries, second only to Kosovo, for both women and men.

9 The sharper decrease in life expectancy at birth between 2019 and 2020 (2.0 for women and 2.5 for men) may be capturing the impact of COVID-19.
Access to prenatal care and institutional births has significantly increased in Albania over the past two decades. The proportion of pregnant women receiving prenatal care with a minimum of four visits rose from 41.1% in 2000 to 77.8% in 2018. Additionally, nearly all births are attended by skilled health professionals, with no discernible urban-rural disparity (INSTAT, 2018). These advancements have contributed to a decline in the maternal mortality ratio, from 14 in 2000 to 8 in 2020, aligning with EU-27 levels. (Figure 7). However, Albania still registers the highest maternal mortality ratio among Western Balkan countries, trailing only Serbia. Meanwhile, infant mortality rates have notably decreased, narrowing the gender gap in mortality over the past two decades. (Figure 8).

Male-to-female sex at birth ratios increased in 1990 from 1.08 to 1.10 in 2000, reaching a peak in 2007 (1.13). In 2021, the sex ratio at birth in Albania was 108.4 boys per 100 girls, still well above the natural upper bound of 104 to 107 boys per 100 girls (Chahnazarian, 1988; Robitaille and Milla, 2022). This trend is attributed to factors such as the introduction of legalized abortion in 1991, alongside the accessibility of fetal sex-revealing technology in a society with prevalent son preference.

Albania faces challenges related to unhealthy behaviors, including rising obesity rates and persistent tobacco use, particularly among men. While men had a lower prevalence of obesity than women in the early 2000s, the gap has been closing in recent years. As of 2016, the prevalence of obesity stands at 21.8 percent for women and 21.6 percent for men (Figure 9). Similarly, tobacco use has been decreasing over time for women (from 10.9 percent in 2000 to 6.0 percent in 2020). However, men still have a much higher rate of tobacco use, with a prevalence of 38.8 percent in 2020, although this figure has also been declining from 59.0 percent in 2000 (Figure 10a). The data suggest that tobacco use has decreased in both Albania and the EU-27 over time, with Albania having much lower rates than the EU, particularly among women. Suicide rates among men are significantly higher than among women. Mortality due to suicide among men increased from 7 per 100,000 men in 2000 to 9.5 in 2007, lowering to 5.9 in 2019. The female suicidal rate has been consistently lower with an exception noted in 2011 (Figure 10b).

The adolescent fertility rate has not decreased significantly in the past two decades and remains higher than the EU-27 average. Compared to other Western Balkan countries, Albania has not experienced a decline in adolescent fertility rates.
In 2021, 14.5 births per 1,000 women aged 15 to 19 years, compared to 9.2 percent in the EU-27. Among the Western Balkan countries, Albania has the third-highest proportion of pregnant teenagers, following North Macedonia. Moreover, the adolescent fertility rate is higher in rural areas (28 births per 1,000 women ages 15-19 years) compared to urban areas (15 births) (INSTAT, 2018). Household wealth influences the likelihood of having children in adolescence; 6 percent of adolescents in the lowest wealth quintile have initiated childbearing compared to only 1 percent of those in the highest wealth quintile (INSTAT, 2018).

Figure 8. Infant Mortality Rate by Sex (per 1,000 births) (2000-2021)

Figure 9. Prevalence of Obesity (percent of the population 18 years old and over) (2000-2016)
Figure 10a. Prevalence of Current Tobacco Use (percent of the population 15 years old and over) (2000-2020)
Accessed: January, 8 2024.

Figure 10b. Suicide Mortality Rate (per 100,000 population) (2000-2019)
Accessed: January, 8 2024.

Figure 11. Adolescent Fertility Rate (births per 1,000 women aged 15 – 19) (2000-2020)
Accessed January, 8 2024.
Albania has experienced a persistent decline in the total fertility rate, dropping below the replacement rate (2.1 births per woman) in the past decades. The fertility rate declined from 2.23 children born alive per woman in 2001 to 1.40 in 2021, below the EU average of 1.50 births per woman. Compared with the rest of the Western Balkans, Albania has a higher fertility rate than Serbia, North Macedonia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina (See Figure 12).

Figure 12. Fertility Rate (2001-2021)

Due to the falling fertility rate and the continuous and significant migratory flows out of Albania, the total population is projected to decrease to 2.7 million in 2031 from the estimated 2.76 million in 2023 (INSTAT, 2023). Population experienced a decrease by 1.1% compared to 2022 and sex ratio of total population has slightly decreased. Net migration saw a slight improvement in 2022, with the net loss of population due to migration decreasing from 32,853 to 32,497 inhabitants. Sub-replacement fertility, outmigration, and population aging lead to concern about labor shortages and the subsequent effect on economic growth and social stability.

The dependency ratio in Albania reflects changing demographics. While the youth dependency ratio has slightly decreased between 2022 and 2023 from 24 to 23.8 percent, the old dependency ratio has increased from 23.1 to 24.4 percent. The net increase in the dependency ratio may exacerbate the care burden on women as

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14 Albania has faced extraordinary waves of migration in the 1990s with about one-fifth of the population estimated to have left the country with the main destinations Greece and Italy (King and Vullnetari, 2003; Carletto, Davis, et al., 2006). It is estimated that over 1.5 million Albanian citizens (over half of the current population of Albania) have migrated abroad to date, placing Albania among the top 20 countries in the world for the scale and intensity of international migration (Gedeshi and King, 2020; World Bank, 2016). As of the early 2000s, it is estimated that 25 percent of the total population, and over 35 percent of the workforce had emigrated. In its initial waves during 1990s, migration was mainly male dominated, while its composition changed a decade later and women comprised 41 percent of Albanians in Italy and Greece (Vullnetari, 2007). Migration studies find that female migration is positively selected for education (Stecklov et al., 2008).

15 Ratio of the number of males, to the number of females, born in a given period of time, usually expressed as number of males for every 100 females.
the primary caregivers (INSTAT, 2023). The old dependency ratio is projected to increase much more than the youth dependency ratio. The female old dependency ratio is projected to increase from 23.2 percent in 2020 to 35.3 percent in 2031. Likewise, the male old dependency ratio is projected to increase from 21.5 percent in 2020 to 34.4 percent in 2031.

Work and fertility decisions are jointly defined, with the compatibility of family and career is a key determinant of fertility. In particular, while in most medium and high-income countries, there has been a shift in women’s plans and aspirations, significant disparities still exist in the attainability of simultaneously pursuing a career and a family for women.

4. EDUCATION

The enrolment rates across all levels of education indicate a significant gender disparity that tilts in favor of girls, highlighting a concerning trend where boys are increasingly left behind in educational access. By 2021, girls held a notable advantage over boys in both primary and secondary education, effectively reversing the gender gap observed in 2000 (Figure 13). Conversely, while girls enjoyed a preference in pre-primary education in 2000, gender parity has since been achieved by 2020. Notably, the most substantial gender gap emerges in tertiary education, where women dominate with gross enrollment rates of 71.2 percent in 2021, leaving men trailing at 43.3 percent (Figure 14). While enrollment rates in tertiary education have steadily risen for both genders since 2000, the gender gap in tertiary education enrollments has widened over the past decade. Given this persistent trend favoring women in tertiary education, it is imperative to investigate and address the barriers hindering men’s access to higher educational opportunities.

On average, women exhibit higher educational attainment rates than men. In 2021, 18.9 percent of women over 25 had tertiary education, compared to 16.6 percent of men. This gap widens among those aged 25-39, with 39.6 percent of women and 27 percent of men attaining tertiary education. However, in the 65 and over age group, men lead, with 12.5 percent having tertiary education compared to 6.7 percent of women (Figure 15). Despite progress in tertiary education enrolment, women lag behind in upper secondary education. In 2021, only 21.2 percent of

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17 Gender parity index is the ratio of girls to boys enrolled in public and private schools.
women aged 25-39 achieved upper secondary education, compared to 38.7 per-
cent of men. This gender gap persists across age groups, with older generations
driving it. Unfortunately, Albania’s educational attainment trails EU countries due
to issues like insufficient funding, unstable governance instability, and limited ca-
pacity (OECD, 2020), ranking second lowest in tertiary education attainment in the
Western Balkans, ahead of only Kosovo.

Figure 13. Gender Parity Index for Gross Enrollment Rates by Education Level (2000-2021)
Download Service. Accessed: January, 8 2024. Note: The gender parity index for gross enrolment ratio in pre-primary, primary,
and secondary education is the ratio of girls to boys enrolled in public and private schools at each level.

Figure 14. Gross Enrollment Rates in Tertiary Education (2000-2021)
Girls outperform boys in school, as evidenced by the 2022 PISA scores. Across reading, mathematics, and science, girls demonstrate higher competency levels with a 20-point gap between 15-year-old girls and boys (Figure 16). Notably, the widest gap appears in reading scores, with a 40-point difference, followed by science at 29, and mathematics with a smaller 19-point gap. However, compared to EU countries, both genders in Albania exhibit lower results, with significant disparities of 104, 92, and 91 points below OECD average scores for girls in reading, science, and mathematics, respectively. The gaps for boys are 115, 117, and 116. These findings underscore the need for Albania to enhance education quality and address gender disparities in learning outcomes to better equip its youth for the global economy’s challenges.
Despite advancements in tertiary education, fewer women pursue and complete STEM degrees. Encouraging women’s participation in STEM is crucial for workforce inclusion, narrowing the gender wage gap, and fostering economic growth. While STEM enrollment is prioritized in the “National Strategy of Education 2021-2026,” data from 2021 reveals a persistent gender gap. Only 11 percent of women in higher education are in STEM fields, compared to 18 percent of men. This gap persists at the tertiary level, with only 9 percent of women graduating in STEM fields in 2020, despite comprising 47 percent of all STEM graduates. Notably, specific objectives and actions for gender equality in STEM are lacking. Gender segregation persists, with women concentrated in fields like education, health, humanities, and arts, further contributing to Albania’s lower STEM enrollment rates compared to both the EU and other Western Balkan countries.

Gender disparities in digital skills are minimal, with younger women and men equally proficient in basic or above basic digital skills (Table 1). Digital skills increase with education level for both genders, and notably, highly educated women hold a 5.7 percentage point advantage. Despite this, Albania lags behind the EU-27 average and countries in the region, like Serbia and Montenegro, in digital skills proficiency.
Table 1. Individuals with Basic Digital Skills or Above (percent, by sex, age group, and level of education) (2021)


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<td>Men</td>
<td>Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>AGE-GROUPS</strong></td>
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<tr>
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<td>51.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-54 years old</td>
<td>26.9</td>
<td>25.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55-74 years old</td>
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<td>3.9</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>LEVEL OF EDUCATION</strong></td>
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<td>Low formal education</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>8.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium formal education</td>
<td>24.1</td>
<td>23.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High formal education</td>
<td>52.2</td>
<td>57.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SPOTLIGHT 2 - School Hours

Parents of young children face the daunting task of juggling childcare responsibilities with earning an income. The scarcity of childcare facilities exacerbates this challenge, leaving parents with few options, such as relying on untrained caregivers, reducing work hours, or even quitting their jobs altogether. This issue extends beyond early childhood care; even when children reach primary school age, parents continue to grapple with the balance between work and childcare due to school hours and breaks. This struggle is amplified for single parents or households where both parents work full-time.

Analyzing school calendars in the Western Balkans reveals that children spend only half the working hours of a full-time employee in school annually. This underscores the necessity for accessible and affordable preschool and afterschool care. The lack thereof not only impedes parents’ ability to work but also forces them into difficult decisions regarding their children’s care quality.

Thus, the shortage of accessible and affordable preschool and afterschool care can have a profound impact on parents and families. It can limit parents’ ability to return to work or force them to make difficult choices about the quality of care their children receive.
5. ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

Despite women’s dominance in tertiary education, lower fertility rates, and longer life expectancy, these gains in endowments have not translated into commensurate economic opportunities. Albania grapples with persistent challenges, including the wage gap, gender gap in labor force participation rates, and extensive occupational segregation. The Gender Equality Gain Index (GEGI),\(^{19}\) which assesses the potential rise in long-run GDP per capita from equalizing employment rates between genders, stood at 12 percent in 2019. This underscores the economic and social impact of bridging the gender employment gap.

5.1 LABOR MARKET PARTICIPATION AND EMPLOYMENT STATUS

Gender disparities in labor market outcomes persist in Albania, with substantial gaps between women and men. Despite a gradual increase in female labor force participation (LFP) since 2011, it still notably lags behind that of men. In 2021, there was a 15.4 percentage point difference in LFP rates, with 61.3 percent for women compared to 76.7 percent for men (Figure 17). The gender gap is wider in Albania than in the EU-27 due to lower female participation rates. Although Albania has maintained a narrower gender gap than some neighboring countries over the last two decades, it remains wider than that of Serbia and Montenegro.

Persistent gender gaps are also evident in employment rates, mirroring European trends. The employment-to-population ratio for males aged 15 to 64 has consistently surpassed that of females over the last two decades, with rates of 58.9 percent for women and 71.3 percent for men in 2022 (Figure 18). Among Western Balkan countries, Albania has a relatively lower gender gap in employment rates compared to others, except for Montenegro.

Gender disparities in labor force participation are particularly pronounced among individuals without tertiary education, but significant gaps in employment rates persist across all education levels. In 2021, individuals with upper secondary education only had a participation rate of 82.8 percent for men and 55.6 percent for women, indicating a considerable gender gap (Figure 19). While this gap decreases notably among those with tertiary education, disparities in employment rates remain substantial across all education levels, with women facing lower employment

\(^{19}\) Source: Penning (2020). GEGI index measure of gender employment gaps equal to the long-run GDP per capita gains from increasing women's employment rates, so they are equal to men's. The basic GEGI is defined as the gap between male and female employment as a share of total employment.
probabilities despite advanced education (Figure 20).

Among individuals aged 15 to 24 with tertiary education, there is a significantly smaller gap in labor force participation (52.5 percent for men and 47.1 for women in 2021) than in employment rate (40.5 percent for men and 29.3 percent for women in 2021).

Youth not in education, employment, or training (NEET) rates remain high among both young women (27.8 percent in 2022) and men (22.6 percent in 2022), although gender gaps have narrowed since 2010 (Figure 22).\(^{20}\) The gender gap in NEET rates in 2022 (5.2 percentage points) is notably smaller than in 2010 (11.4 percentage points) (Figure 21).
Figure 19. LFP Rate by Education Attainment (percent population 15-64) (2010-2021)
*Source: INSTAT, LFS. 2021*

Figure 20. Employment to Population Ratio by Sex and Educational Attainment (percent population 15-64 years old) (2010-2021)
*Source: INSTAT, LFS. 2021.*

Figure 21. NEET Rates (2010-2022)
Inactivity and unemployment are associated with family formation. For young men, employment typically increases as they complete their education (Figure 23), while young women more often transition from school to inactivity instead of into the labor force (Figure 22). In Albania, women start forming families in the late teens through their twenties and thirties (Figure 24 and 25). During these years, the percentage of men not engaged in employment, education or training declines while the rate for women continues to raise until nearly the age of 25. This is consistent with the “motherhood penalty”, a pattern documented for countries across the world, where employment trends for men and women diverge significantly post-parenthood (Kleven et al. 2023).
The disproportionate burden of unpaid housework acts as a barrier to women’s entry into the labor force, reinforcing economic inactivity. Household responsibilities are cited as the main reason for economic inactivity by 18.8 percent of women, compared to only 0.6 percent of men (Figure 26). Qualitative analysis assessing women’s needs in rural areas reveals that rural women make decisions regarding entering the labor market in a different contextual setting (Expertise France, 2021). Structural factors such as limited job options, lack of training, and inadequate childcare services in rural areas further hinder rural women’s integration into the labor market, alongside persistent social norms reinforcing traditional gender roles.
Women not only participate less frequently in the labor market but are also more likely to hold part-time positions when employed (Figure 27). Moreover, while women experience lower employment rates, they are less likely to engage in precarious work compared to men. In 2019, men held over one-third (39.9 percent) of non-agricultural informal sector jobs, whereas women held only about one-fifth (21.2 percent). Albania exhibits the highest proportion of informal employment among both genders in comparison to Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia. There

21 Source: World Bank Gender Data Portal. Original Source: ILOSTAT. This includes all jobs in unregistered and/or small-scale private unincorporated enterprises that produce goods or services meant for sale or barter. Self-employed street vendors, taxi drivers, and home-based workers, regardless of size, are all considered enterprises. However, agricultural and related activities, households producing goods exclusively for their use, and volunteer services rendered to the community are excluded. Accessed: January 12, 2024.
is gender parity in the share of vulnerable employment, with around half of females (51.1 percent) and males (51.3 percent) working as contributing family workers or own-account workers in 2021. However, these figures surpass the European average (8.8 and 12.6 percent, respectively) and those of the Western Balkans (20.7 and 24.3 percent, respectively).

6. NEED AND PROVISION OF CARE

The gender-based division of caregiving responsibilities significantly impacts women’s economic participation in Albania. Social norms often dictate that women bear a disproportionate burden of caregiving, limiting their ability to engage in paid work or work longer hours. Women’s extensive unpaid care work leaves them time-poor, hindering their educational attainment, job opportunities, and earning potential. This situation funnels women into informal and lower-paying jobs, perpetuating economic inequalities.

In Albania, there is a prevailing societal belief that women should primarily handle household chores, even if their husbands are not working. Consequently, women overwhelmingly undertake the majority of unpaid care activities and domestic work. This disparity is starkly evident, with 87.8 percent of women in 2016 engaging in daily domestic tasks compared with only 16.1 percent of men, resulting in a substantial gender gap of 71.7 percentage points (Figure 28). This gap was notably wider than the EU-27 average of 40 percentage points. Furthermore, women play a significant role in caring for and educating their children, with a gender gap of 26.5 percentage points (51.1 percent of women versus 24.6 percent of men). This difference exceeds the EU-27’s average gender gap of approximately 13 percentage points.

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22 45.9 percent of men and 445 percent of women agreed with the statement, “A woman should do most of the household chores even if the husband is not working.” Source: “Life in Transition Survey (LITS IV)” (2023)
Despite its importance, childcare availability in Albania is limited, with a significant percentage of children not enrolled in formal childcare (93.2 percent of children aged 0-3 years compared to 64.7 percent in the EU). Notably, the quality of childcare services offered in Albania (rated at 6.2) is relatively similar to that of the EU (rated at 6.7).

Similarly, access to long-term elderly care in Albania is limited despite a growing demand for it. According to the International Labor Organization (ILO), 91 percent of elderly Albanians require long-term care, but less than 2 percent receive formal care. The COVID-19 pandemic has further intensified this issue, placing an additional burden on women in terms of unpaid care activities and domestic work. School and daycare closures, coupled with the presence of elderly family members at home during the pandemic, contributed to a rise in women’s participation in unpaid care activities and domestic work. Consequently, 76 percent of women reported increased time spent on unpaid domestic work, compared to 66 percent of men. Similarly, 72 percent of women reported increased time spent on unpaid care activities, in contrast to 62 percent of men (UN Women, 2020b).

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, women remained the primary contributors to household chores. A smaller percentage of women reported receiving support from their partners for household tasks than men. Specifically, only 46 percent of women received support, compared with the higher figure of 67 percent of men.
The percentage of households in Albania with elderly adults (65+) exceeds those with young children (0-6 years), indicating a greater prevalence of eldercare responsibilities. Specifically, 32.9 percent of the population resides with an older adult aged 65 or older, compared to 11 percent living with young children aged 0-6. While this may increase care work for other household members, it could potentially reduce childcare responsibilities if the older adult assists with grandchild care.

According to the Life in Transition Survey (LITS) IV 10 percent of the Albanian households require childcare, and a similar percentage necessitate elderly care (see Figure 29), marking Albania with the second-lowest care needs among Western Balkans countries after Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Household members are the primary source of care provision. Care needs are most often met by members of the household rather than institutions or other sources of care (such as nannies, relatives, or friends). Although institutional care is more common for children aged 4-6 (82 percent), its use diminishes for younger children (0-3 years old) and for the elderly (respectively, 46 percent and 22 percent). Among the most common reasons for not using childcare facilities are reliance on household members and concerns about service quality, mirroring patterns in eldercare (Figure 30).

23 The LITS IV includes a question asking whether each household member needs care and whether they use institutional care facilities. The question is asked for all children (0-6 years old), and elderly people.
Figure 30. Reasons for not using institutional care (2023)
Source: LFTS IV (2023)

A. Reasons for not using childcare facilities (% of the population living in households with childcare needs) by country

B. Reasons for not using elderly care facilities (% of the population living in households with elderly care needs) by country
7. LABOR MARKET SEGREGATION

Men are overrepresented in traditionally male-dominated industries, such as construction (12.2 percent of men employed compared to 0.6 percent of women), mining, quarrying, and utilities (3.3 percent of men compared to 1.1 percent of women), and trade and transportation (31.7 percent of men compared to 21.6 percent of women) (see Figure 31). Conversely, women are more likely to work in industries traditionally female dominated, such as agriculture (31.8 percent of men employed compared to 41.4 percent of women), manufacturing (8.8 percent of men compared to 14.1 percent of women), and public administration and social services (12.2 percent of men compared to 21.2 percent of women). Women are predominantly concentrated in managerial and clerical occupations, yet they remain a minority in fields such as skilled agriculture and the armed forces (Figure 32).

Figure 31. Share of Employment by Sectors and Gender (2020)
Source: Authors’ elaboration of the country’s official data

Figure 32. Share of Employment by Occupation and Gender (2020)
Source: INSTAT, Men and Women, 2021
7.1 Wage Gap

Gender equity regulations have been implemented across nearly every developed nation to address disparities in the workforce.\textsuperscript{24} Despite progress in reducing the gender wage gap in many countries, it remains a significant issue globally. According to the ILOSTAT Global Wage Report 2018/19,\textsuperscript{25} the raw mean gender pay gap stands at 18.8 percent,\textsuperscript{26} indicating that women earn 81.2 cents for every dollar earned by men. In Northern, Southern, and Western Europe, this gap narrows to 13.3%, while in Albania, it’s 11.2%. This suggests that while the gender pay gap persists as a concern, Albania is relatively better positioned compared to many regions, making progress towards closing the gap. Compared to other Western Balkan countries, Albania boasts one of the lowest raw gender gaps in earnings, 9.1 percent, second only to Kosovo (Table 2). However, even after controlling for factors like education, occupation, and industry, women still earn less than men on average. The gender wage gap widens to 17.5% when individual characteristics such as education level, age, and experience are factored in. This suggests that men may receive higher returns for their education and experience and encounter fewer barriers to entry into lucrative sectors. Women’s apparent advantage in labor market characteristics, such as education, may obscure the true extent of the gap.

After controlling for both individual and market controls such as occupation and industry, the gender wage gap in Albania decreases to 11.7%, the second highest in the Western Balkans after Serbia (13.9%). This persistent gap may indicate potential discrimination or a wage premium for men, possibly due to unobservable characteristics. Past studies in Albania have identified interrupted work due to caregiving responsibilities and occupational segregation as key contributors to the gender wage gap, with education serving to mitigate it (Miluka, 2013). This suggests the presence of discrimination in the labor market, where women and men with similar qualifications receive different rewards, possibly due to gender biases.

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\textsuperscript{24} Data from Women, Business and the Law (2023) show data 94 out of 190 countries had a law on equal pay for men and women. This has increased from 21 out of 190 countries in 1991.

\textsuperscript{25} See ILOSTAT (2018)

\textsuperscript{26} The data refers to the Factor weighted mean gender pay gap using hourly wages. The gender pay gap is higher when the estimate is based on monthly wages rather than hourly wages and it's equal to 20.5 percent, reflecting the fact that in most countries women and men differ significantly in respect of working time – specifically, that part-time work is more prevalent among women than men.
Table 2. Gender Wage Gap in Hourly Wages in the Western Balkans

Note: Log the difference between female and male full-time employee hourly wages in each country. Individual controls: Education level, age and age squared, experience, and its square. Market controls: Occupation and Industry. Kosovo does not include experience due to high levels of non-response. Montenegro’s education and industry variables are less disaggregated than in the other countries. Source: EU-SILC, 2020.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>ALB</th>
<th>MKD</th>
<th>MNE</th>
<th>SRB</th>
<th>XXX</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>YEAR</td>
<td>2020</td>
<td>2019</td>
<td>2019</td>
<td>2020</td>
<td>2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RAW GAP</td>
<td>-0.091***</td>
<td>-0.098***</td>
<td>-0.119***</td>
<td>-0.132***</td>
<td>0.042*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INDIVIDUAL CONTROLS</td>
<td>-0.175***</td>
<td>-0.139***</td>
<td>-0.150***</td>
<td>-0.168***</td>
<td>-0.063***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IND. + MARKET CONTROLS</td>
<td>-0.117***</td>
<td>-0.076***</td>
<td>-0.094***</td>
<td>-0.139***</td>
<td>-0.083***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7.2 ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND FINANCIAL INCLUSION

Entrepreneurship offers women a pathway to economic opportunities, contributing to job creation and overall economic growth. However, in Albania, there are fewer women-owned businesses, and female proprietors are more common among sole proprietors. As of 2021, only 31.1 percent of enterprises in the country were women-owned, significantly lower than the European average of 40.1 percent. Furthermore, women’s ownership in larger enterprises lags behind men, accounting for 22.8 percent and 23.7 percent in enterprises with 10-49 and 50 or more employees, respectively (Table 3). Unfortunately, these ownership rates have remained relatively stable, indicating a lack of significant progress in promoting women’s entrepreneurship. The World Economic Forum (WEF) Global Economic Competitiveness Index highlights Albania’s uncompetitive entrepreneurial culture (UN Women, 2021), suggesting the need for improvement in fostering a business-friendly environment conducive to enterprise development, innovation, or technological change. Women face additional barriers such as limited access to market information, legal support, and financial resources, which hinder their entrepreneurial success. Gender norms and stereotypes further exacerbate these challenges by restricting women’s access to productive resources and power in the entrepreneurial sphere.
Table 3. Active Enterprises by Size and Sex of Owner (percent) (2016-2021)
Source: INSTAT, Statistical Database, Statistical Register of Enterprises, 2021

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2020</th>
<th>2021</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Men</td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>Men</td>
<td>Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Enterprises</td>
<td>73.2</td>
<td>26.8</td>
<td>74.3</td>
<td>25.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-4 employees</td>
<td>72.6</td>
<td>27.4</td>
<td>73.8</td>
<td>26.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-9 employees</td>
<td>78.2</td>
<td>21.8</td>
<td>77.2</td>
<td>22.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-49 employees</td>
<td>80.8</td>
<td>19.2</td>
<td>80.1</td>
<td>19.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50+ employees</td>
<td>80.8</td>
<td>19.2</td>
<td>80.4</td>
<td>19.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While men dominate enterprise ownership across all economic sectors, the most significant gender gaps are in construction, transport and warehousing, and agriculture. Men own 82.5 percent of enterprises in transportation and warehousing, 84.9 percent in construction, and 69.5 percent in agriculture, forestry, and fishing (Figure 33). In agriculture, women are more likely to work as contributing family workers rather than owning enterprises themselves. The smallest gender gap in ownership is in industry, where women own 50.9 percent of enterprises.

Figure 33. Active Enterprises by Sex Owner and Economic Activity (percent) (2020)
Source: INSTAT, Statistical Databases, Statistical Register of Enterprises, 2021

Access to financial resources and credit is a prerequisite for entrepreneurship. Albania has the lowest share of financial account ownership for both men and women among Western Balkan countries. Borrowing through informal channels is prevalent among both genders, with rates almost three times higher than those in the EU-27 countries in 2021. Women’s lower rates of enterprise ownership have reflected their traditionally lower rates of financial account ownership and access to loans. Until 2017, a smaller share of women than men had formal institutional
account ownership. However, the gender gap decreased between 2011 and 2017, and it reversed in 2021, with 45.7 percent of women owning formal accounts compared to 42.6 percent of men. (Figure 34).

Figure 34. Financial Institution Account Ownership, by Sex (percent) (population 15+) (2011-2021)
Source: World Bank, Global Financial Inclusion

Most women and men in Albania often rely on family or friends for financial support. The rates of borrowing from informal sources have been similar for women and men in the last decade (Table 4). Similarly, men and women have similar rates of borrowing from formal financial institutions. Notably, the share of individuals borrowing through informal channels is almost three times as high in Albania compared to the EU-27 countries in 2021 but similar to other Western Balkans countries.

Table 4. Borrowing from Formal and Informal Channels by Sex (percent) (population 15+) (2011-2021)
Source: World Bank, Global Financial Inclusion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2021</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Borrowed from family or friends</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>28.7</td>
<td>17.1</td>
<td>23.9</td>
<td>29.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>29.2</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>23.2</td>
<td>27.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Borrowed from a formal financial institution</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>14.4</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>19.8</td>
<td>21.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td>19.6</td>
<td>20.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data on digital payments shows that in 2014, 21 percent of women and 24 percent of men made or received digital payments (Figure 35). The rates increased for both women and men in 2017 at 30 percent. In 2021, the rates of digital payments increased even further to 35 percent for both.

Despite equal legal rights to property, gender gaps persist in property ownership. Data on immovable property ownership shows that 69.0 percent of women do not own a house, compared to 47.8 percent of men (Figure 36). Additionally, only 5.0 percent of women own a house alone, while 30.1 percent of men do. A slightly higher percentage of women (22.3 percent) than men (17.8 percent) own a house jointly. Similarly, land ownership levels for women are low, with only 4.9 percent owning land alone compared to 15.7 percent of men. The majority of women (86.2 percent) do not own land, compared to 72.4 percent of men (INSTAT, 2017).
The majority of beneficiaries of supporting investment schemes are men, with differences as large as 62 percentage points in 2015, when only 19.0 percent of the beneficiaries have been women. Although this gap has slightly decreased over time, men still make up the majority of recipients of investment schemes (56.0 percent in 2019). Furthermore, in 2019, funds better tailored to support growth-focused enterprises were disproportionately awarded to men. Specifically, competitiveness funds were overwhelmingly granted to men at a rate of 93.1 percent, while creative economy and innovation funds also tended to favor men, with a rate of 80.0 percent (Figure 37). The only category primarily designated for women is start-up funds.
SPOTLIGHT 3 - SOGI

The Western Balkan countries have made strides in protecting fundamental rights, including those of sexual and gender minorities. However, the European Commission emphasizes the need for stronger implementation to combat discrimination and violence. The EU enlargement process offers an opportunity for SOGI inclusion, with support from various development partners. Limited data on SOGI reveal the profound impact of discrimination, exclusion, and violence on LGBTI individuals and the region as a whole.

Endowments - LGBTI individuals in the Western Balkans face significant challenges in education, employment, and accessing essential services due to discrimination, bullying, and violence. A 2018 World Bank survey revealed alarming rates of negative comments and conduct towards LGBTI people in schools, with a notable impact on mental health, including increased suicide rates. Discrimination extends to healthcare, where nearly 40% of respondents reported mistreatment or avoided treatment due to fear of discrimination. Widespread violence against LGBTI individuals further exacerbates the situation, with many cases going unreported. Additionally, accessing housing presents hurdles, as evidenced by higher refusal rates for same-sex couples compared to heterosexual counterparts. Montenegro’s recent passage of a same-sex partnership law signals progress towards equality in various domains.

Economic Opportunity - Data on labor market outcomes for LGBTI people remains extremely limited across the Western Balkans. A 2019 World Bank study in Serbia found that 15 percent of LGBTI people have experienced discrimination at work. Discrimination adversely affects their socio-economic outcomes; 10 percent of respondents have quit a paid job, and 7 percent have taken unexpected leave from work due to the discrimination they experienced. The same survey found that LGBTI people who reported experiences of workplace discrimination also reported lower incomes. A 2020 survey by the EU Fundamental Rights Agency found that LGBTI people in North Macedonia and Serbia frequently experience discrimination in the workplace: 25 percent of respondents in North Macedonia and 24 percent in Serbia respectively.

Voice and Agency - Discrimination, exclusion, and violence remain widespread, and LGBTI people often lack trust in the institutions designed to protect their human rights. Research in Serbia, for example, found that the vast majority of LGBTI people have low trust in the political system (95 percent), the legal system (93 percent), and the police (91 percent). The World Bank approaches sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) inclusion through its commitments to gender equality as well as social inclusion – two crucial components of the World Bank’s twin goals to eradicate extreme poverty and promote shared prosperity. Like heterosexual and cisgender women and girls, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) people are held to and impacted by prevailing restrictive gender norms and thus struggle to equally participate in markets, services, and spaces. In the Western Balkans, the same restrictive norms that hinder women and girls from achieving their full potential lie at the root of stigma, prejudice, and violence against LGBTI people.

Sources:
8. VOICE AND AGENCY

Women’s agency in Albania has substantially improved, primarily through increased political participation and decision-making. Overall, limited data availability poses a major barrier to fully understand, and address issues related to GBV and reproductive rights.

8.1 ATTITUDES TOWARDS WOMEN

Social norms can shape gender roles and stereotypes, impacting women’s outcomes by restricting their participation in the public sphere and within the household. While most people perceive women and men as equally competent business executives, there is a wider gender gap regarding perceptions of political leadership. 86.1 percent of women and 76.4 percent of men perceive both genders as equally competent business executives. Although women are more likely to agree with this statement, the difference is not significant. However, regarding the statement “Men make better political leaders than women do,” there is a significant gender gap, with 46.9 percent of women and 66.4 percent of men agreeing or strongly agreeing (Figure 38).
Figure 38. Beliefs Related to Women’s Role in Public Life
Source: LITS IV (2023)

A. Women are as competent as men to be business executives (% of the population agreeing (agree/strongly agree))

Social norms may foster acceptance of violent and abusive behaviors toward women, contributing to the prevalence of intimate partner domestic violence. Over half of women (52.2 percent) believe that in their community, violence between a husband and wife is considered a private matter, and others should not intervene. Additionally, nearly half (46.5 percent) believe that tolerating some violence to maintain family unity is a common belief in their community (Figure 39). A smaller percentage (27.6 percent) think that the community believes a woman is partly to blame for being beaten by her husband or should feel ashamed to discuss abuse outside her family. Only 13.5 percent of women believe that in their community, men sometimes hit or beat their wives, and 11.4 percent think men do so for refusing sexual intercourse.
8.2 POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Women’s representation in political power has increased over time. Historically, women were underrepresented in all levels of political leadership. However, since 2009, there has been significant progress due to the inclusion of a 30 percent quota in the Electoral Code, leading to more women becoming Members of Parliament (AWEN, 2021). Initially, women held few seats in the Albanian parliament, with percentages dropping in 1991, 1997, 2001, and 2005. Since 2008, the number of women in parliament has steadily increased, reaching 36 percent in 2022 (Figure 40). Additionally, women hold 50.0 percent of the positions of Spokesperson of Parliament and Chairs of Parliamentarian Commissions as of 2020, although there are no female chairs of parliamentarian groups. Since 2021, the Albanian parliament has been headed by a woman.

In the Council of Ministers, women’s representation has significantly increased from 5.3 percent in 2005 to 56.3 percent in 2020, surpassing the average among European countries and the Western Balkans. The most substantial increase occurred in 2014, reaching 30 percent representation and exceeding 50 percent in 2018 (Figure 41). The Gender Equality Index (GEI) of Albania in 2020 shows a score of 60.9 for the domain of power, with Albania outperforming the EU-28 average by 16.7 points in the subdomain of political power (EIGE, 2020).
However, other areas of representation still require improvement. In the judicial system, men predominantly occupy the highest hierarchical positions, while women are more represented in lower-level positions. For example, 100 percent of the highest positions in the Justice System are held by men, while women hold 50.7 percent of Judge positions at the District Court level and 41.2 percent at the Administrative Code level (Figure 42). Similarly, women are underrepresented in the armed forces, accounting for about 20.0 percent on average from 2018 to 2020.

Municipal councils show more equal outcomes. In 2020, 88.7 percent of candidates for mayor of the municipality and 86.9 percent of winning mayors were men. On the other hand, 51 percent of candidates for municipal councils and 56.3 of winning advisors are men.
8.3 ECONOMIC LEADERSHIP

Women make up less than half of the central bank’s board members, accounting for 46.2 percent in 2019, which is a slight decrease of about two percentage points from 2017. Despite this decrease, Albania exceeds the EU-27 average by 23.1 percentage points in terms of female representation on central bank boards. In the largest quoted companies, supervisory boards, or boards of directors in Albania, 26.4 percent of members are women, surpassing the EU-27 average by 1.3 percentage points. Additionally, in 2019, 18.1 percent of firms in Albania had a female top manager, aligning with the EU-27 average and representing a six percentage point increase from 2012. However, the proportion of firms with female top managers in Albania is lower than that of Serbia and Montenegro among Western Balkans countries.

8.4 VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Violence against women is widespread, social norms often tolerating such behaviors. More than half of women (52.9 percent) have experienced some violence at some point in their lives (Figure 43). In terms of partner violence, 65.8 percent of women have ever experienced dating violence, and 47.0 percent have experienced intimate partner violence (IPV). Additionally, 18.2 percent experienced non-partner violence, 18.1 percent have faced sexual harassment, and 12.6 percent have been stalked at some point in their lives. Women who have experienced non-partner violence since age 15 are nearly twice as likely to experience intimate partner violence. Other current forms of violence include sexual harassment (8.5 percent),
stalking (6.9 percent), and non-partner violence (2.9 percent), albeit at lower levels. Thirteen percent of women aged 15 to 49 report experiencing intimate partner physical and sexual violence (WHO, 2018).

Controlling and coercive behavior is the primary form of intimate partner domestic violence experienced over a lifetime. Specifically, 41.2 percent of women have encountered coercive controlling behaviors, 31.4 percent have faced psychological violence, 18.0 percent have experienced physical violence, and 21.0 percent have suffered from physical and sexual violence (Figure 44). Currently, 33.7 percent of women are experiencing some form of intimate partner violence, with similar rates to lifetime experiences. The most common current experiences include coercive controlling behaviors (25.2 percent), psychological violence (19.7 percent), and physical and sexual violence (8.2 percent).
The prevalent violence against women and the accompanying tolerance are evident in high rates of sexual and domestic violence crimes, often leading to family-related murders. Sexual crimes and domestic violence are the main offenses affecting women, with 86.4 percent of sexual crimes and 67.1 percent of domestic violence offenses involving women in 2020 (Figure 45). The majority of family violence murder victims are women, comprising 88.9 percent of victims in 2020. Women exhibit increasing rates as victims of family murders, surpassing men by 18.3 percentage points, while men experience decreasing rates.
SPOTLIGHT 4 – Intersectionality: gender and the Roma community

The Roma community, Europe’s largest ethnic minority, faces severe marginalization, vulnerability to human rights violations, and social isolation. The 2011 census, which excluded North Kosovo, estimated a total of 8,824, though 2010 OSCE estimates suggested that there were around 34,000 Roma people residing in Kosovo. Despite efforts by the Kosovar government to address their rights and inclusion, Roma, especially females, encounter barriers hindering their access to education, healthcare, and employment. Gender gaps persist, with Roma women bearing a disproportionate burden.

The gender gaps in self-reported unmet needs for medical care among the Roma population aged 16 and above are relatively large and statistically significant in almost all countries in the Western Balkans, except for Albania and Kosovo. Child stunting remains a challenge in Kosovo, and still, many vulnerable children are not vaccinated against measles, for instance, across these countries. Roma, and Roma women and girls, are likely to be especially affected by these challenges.

Labor force participation among Roma women remains extremely low, especially among those with low educational attainment, though gender disparities in employment have slightly narrowed. Balancing employment with caregiving responsibilities poses challenges for Roma women, who often reside in larger households and lack nursing breaks, particularly in Kosovo.

Gender-based violence among the Roma community is pervasive, with intimate partner violence considered socially acceptable and underreported due to fear, distrust in institutions, and community dynamics. Child marriages are common among Roma girls, driven by patriarchal traditions, lack of education, and economic hardship.

Despite legislative efforts and strategies to promote Roma inclusion in Kosovo, significant challenges remain, particularly regarding gender disparities, healthcare access, education quality, and addressing gender-based violence. Efforts to address these issues require comprehensive approaches that tackle societal norms, systemic barriers, and economic disparities.

Notes: 1. Roma is used to refer to several groups (for example, Roma, Sinti, Kale, Gypsies, Romanichels, Boyash, Ashkali, Egyptians, Yenish, Dom, Lom, Rom, Abdal), including travelers, without denying the specificities of these groups. These groups are all considered under the wider Roma umbrella in the European Union (EU) Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies (European Commission 2011). 2. Law on the Protection of Rights of Members of National Minorities, Official Gazette of BiH 12/03

9. CONCLUSIONS

Gender equality is pivotal for Albania’s economic advancement and its journey toward becoming a high-income nation and achieving European Union membership. The country has made commendable progress in key areas such as enhancing women’s access to education, healthcare, and political representation, which significantly contribute to harnessing Albania’s human capital for national development. The notable achievements in increasing women’s university enrollments and their participation in political decision-making are clear indicators of the strides made towards gender inclusivity and the empowerment of women in Albanian society.

Despite these advancements, Albania continues to grapple with deep-seated challenges that hinder the full realization of gender equality. The economic landscape still exhibits significant gender gaps, with women’s participation in the labor market lagging and their representation in entrepreneurship remaining limited. Societal norms contribute to an uneven distribution of unpaid labor, often placing a disproportionate burden on women, and curtailing their professional and personal growth opportunities. The ‘motherhood penalty’ remains a stark reality, hindering women’s career progression and amplifying gender disparities in the economic domain.

Albania can unlock the full potential of its human capital and drive sustainable economic growth by persistently striving for gender equality. This requires a united effort from all sectors of society, including government, businesses, communities, and individuals. By dismantling barriers that impede women’s full participation in economic, social, and political spheres, Albania can foster a more inclusive, equitable, and resilient society.
10. REFERENCES


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