

# REGIONAL GENDER DISPARITIES IN THE REPUBLIC OF BELARUS IN THE ECONOMIC SPHERE

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*Проанализированы региональные гендерные диспропорции населения Республики Беларусь в экономической сфере за 2000–2012 гг. Рассмотрены особенности распределения мужчин и женщин по категориям персонала, региональная гендерная асимметрия в области оплаты труда и уровня зарегистрированной безработицы, представлена группировка видов экономической деятельности населения Республики Беларусь по уровню гендерного равенства.*

*The paper analyzes regional gender disparities of the population of the Republic of Belarus in the economic sphere for years 2000–2012. There were considered the features of distribution of men and women for the staff categories, presented grouping of economic activities of the Republic of Belarus according to the level of gender equality, analyzed the regional gender asymmetry in the sphere of remuneration of labor and unemployment rate.*

*Ключевые слова: гендер; гендерное равенство; региональные диспропорции; безработица.*

*Keywords: gender; gender equality; regional disparities; unemployment.*

Currently the Republic of Belarus holds the state policy that is aimed at the creation of prerequisites and the necessary social conditions for women and men equal status, equal conditions to contribute to political, economic, social and cultural development of the country and to use its results. Despite the fact that during the implementation of a balanced socio-economic, demographic and gender policy Belarus has made a considerable progress, gender disparities are still relevant, including the economic sphere.

In the Republic of Belarus women take the majority of the employed population, the proportion of employed women among all employees in the country is 51 %. Distribution of women and men by economic activities has its own peculiarities and is characterized by occupational segregation. The reasons for unequal distribution of women and men by economic activities is that women bear the main responsibility for running household and raising children, forcing them to choose a job with flexible hours or part-time, a job in tertiary industry, such as education (82.3 % of the total number of employees are women), retail trade (80.5 %), health and social services (85.9 %), etc. [2; 3].

Stereotype attitude of the society to the professional activities of women and men is one of the reasons for current distribution of men and women on the staff categories. 47.1 % of women are classified as workers while 52.9 % – as employees in 2012. In the total number of economically active population of all categories, the highest share among men are workers – 55.5 %, and among women – employees 68.5 %. Among male employees the main share is classified as professionals as well as among women. At the same time, when determining the proportion of male and female heads in the total number of employees, the difference in the number of women and men is not so significant,

the number of male managers totals 206.9 thousand people, while the number of women leaders – 187.8 thousand people.

On the labor market, the general trend is decrease in the relative number of workers in total employment and a relative increase in the number of all categories of employees. Proportionality of these changes says that the position of women in the labor market is slowly changing. Number of women specialists with the appropriate level of education is almost 3 times higher than men specialists. However, the quantity does not go into “quality”, and the proportion between men and women leaders is hardly reduced (table 1).

Analysis of the table leads to the conclusion that the distribution of men and women personnel categories is affected by the following reasons:

- coefficient of the labor activity of women is particularly high in the fertile period when women have to spend huge forces not only on professional career, but delivering and bringing up children;
- presence of gender biases, according to which a female employee copes with her responsibilities less successfully than men;
- socially accepted gender norm of the status of women, when she should take primary responsibility for family and household while professional success is the lot of men;
- specificity of the behavior of women that lost their jobs, which is characterized by greater inactivity, delegation of authority to find a job to public authorities, in contrast to men that are focused on self-employment efforts.

In the Republic of Belarus a high proportion of working women have higher education: 54 % of all working women. Among working men this figure is only 37 %. But despite the obvious advantage of women in the professional qualification level, salary of women in comparison to men remains low (table 2).

Table 1

## Distribution of men and women by categories of personnel, 2008, 2010, 2012

	Men			Index of dynamics by personnel category, 2012/2008	Women			Index of dynamics by personnel category, 2012/2008
	2008	2010	2012			2008	2010	
Percentage to total								
Total	100	100	100	—	100	100	100	—
including:								
workers	72,7	71,8	70,8	<b>0,97</b>	49,2	48,2	47,1	<b>0,96</b>
employees	27,3	28,2	29,2	<b>1,07</b>	50,8	51,8	52,9	<b>1,04</b>
of them:								
heads	11,1	11,3	11,8	<b>1,06</b>	8,4	8,6	8,9	<b>1,06</b>
specialists	14,8	15,3	15,9	<b>1,07</b>	37,1	37,7	38,8	<b>1,05</b>
other employees	1,4	1,6	1,5	<b>1,07</b>	5,3	5,5	5,2	<b>0,98</b>
Percentage to total number of employees of relevant category								
Total	46,6	46,6	45,4	<b>0,97</b>	53,4	53,4	54,6	<b>1,02</b>
including:								
workers	56,3	56,5	55,5	<b>0,99</b>	43,7	43,5	44,5	<b>1,02</b>
employees	31,9	32,1	31,5	<b>0,99</b>	68,1	67,9	68,5	<b>1,01</b>
of them:								
heads	53,5	53,2	52,4	<b>0,98</b>	46,5	46,8	47,6	<b>1,02</b>
specialists	25,8	26,1	25,5	<b>0,99</b>	74,2	73,9	74,5	<b>1,00</b>
other employees	18,8	20,4	19,5	<b>1,04</b>	81,2	79,6	80,5	<b>0,99</b>

S o u r c e: developed by authors based on [3].

Table 2

## Dynamics of nominal gross payroll of women to men's one by regions and in Minsk\*, 2000, 2005, 2010, 2012, %

	Nominal gross payroll of women to men's one			
	2000	2005	2010	2012
Republic of Belarus	81,0	79,1	76,6	74,5
Regions:				
Brest	85,6	83,0	79,7	77,6
Vitebsk	86,1	78,0	76,4	77,3
Gomel	74,9	74,5	73,4	70,9
Grodno	84,9	85,5	78,4	77,7
city of Minsk	76,3	77,5	75,7	71,8
Minsk	76,5	76,4	72,1	71,8
Mogilev	87,3	81,1	79,5	76,5

\*December of each year, excluding small and micro organizations without departmental subordination.

S o u r c e: developed by authors based on [4].

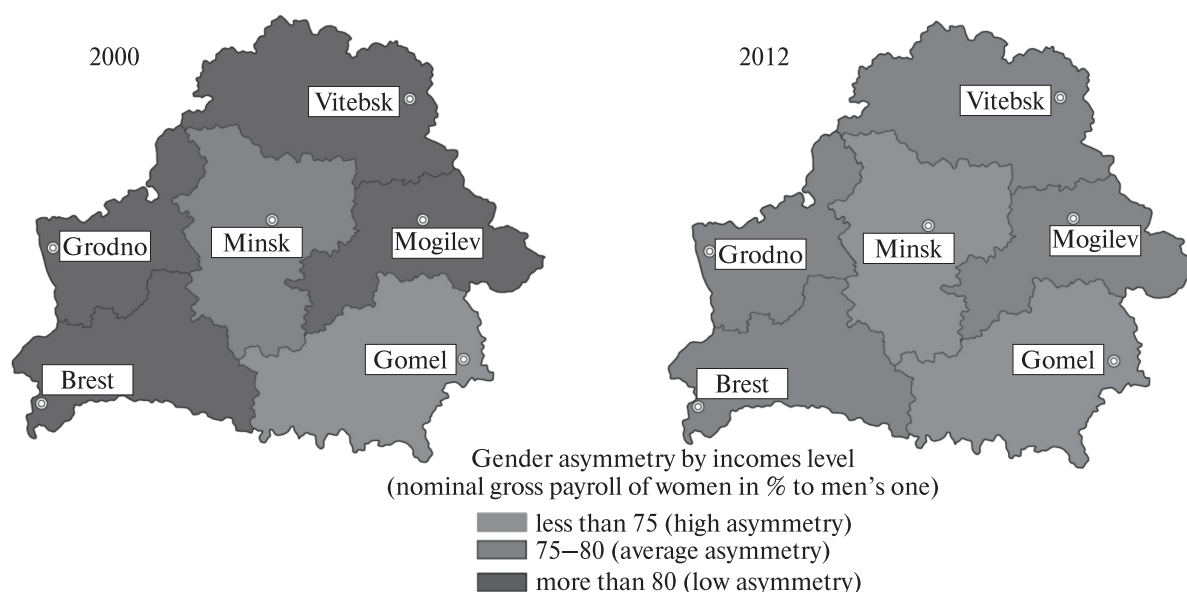


Fig. 1. Dynamics of regional gender asymmetry in terms of income, 2000, 2012, %

Source: developed by authors based on [4].

Referring to the aspect of gender asymmetry in the area of remuneration, it should be noted that in 2012 the average nominal monthly salary of women of the average male wage in the economy of Gomel and Minsk regions and the city of Minsk was 70.9 % and 71.8 % respectively. This figure is less than the average for the country, which is equal to 74.5 %. The most equal salary of women and men presented in Grodno and Brest regions (77.7 % and 77.6 % respectively) (fig. 1).

The above mentioned differentiation of wages between men and women is primarily a result of the professional segregation of women in the framework of certain types of economic activities and professions. However, the difference in salary

between women and men is also observed within the framework of certain types of economic activity that is caused by the women choice of professions, allowing them to combine the labor duties with family. As a result, women prefer non-monetary benefits (reduced and flexible working hours, extra holidays) to a higher level of remuneration.

Highest gender differentiation in remuneration occurs in the industrial regions of Belarus, which on the whole is typical for the country, it is caused by the presence of hazardous industries and kinds of activity that are highly charged with the provision of compensatory surcharges for harmful conditions, however, work of women in such kind of industries is prohibited by law (table 3).

Table 3

**Grouping of economic activities of the population of the Republic of Belarus according to the level of gender equality, 2012**

Level of gender equality according to the level of income*	Type of economic activity
high (more than 90 %)	agriculture, hunting and forestry
above average (80–90 %)	production and distribution of electricity, gas and water; construction; trade; car repair, household goods and personal use items; public administration; education; health care and social services
average (70–80 %)	fishing, fish farming; mining; manufacturing; hotels and restaurants; transport and communications; financial activities
below average (60–70 %)	operations with real estate, rent and service rendering to consumers; provision of community, social and personal services
low (less than 60 %)	individual subsectors: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• activities related to computer technology (industry – operations with real estate, rent and services rendering to consumers);</li> <li>• air transport activities (industry – transport and communication)</li> </ul>

\* Ratio of the nominal gross average monthly women's wages to men's wages, %.

Source: developed by authors based on [4].

Differences in remuneration between men and women increase with age: if among the thirty-years old the gap in wages is 7 %, among the pre-retirement age – is 30. The implementation of the reproductive function and absorption of women in family and domestic problems leads to the loss of earned income.

There is a predominance of women in the total number of unemployed in the country. In 2012 the proportion of women in the total number of unemployed amounted to 48 %. The duration of “female unemployment” is longer than “male” for 1 month and counts about 2.6 months. The share of women in the status of the unemployed for more than 6 months is high – about 19 %, while the proportion of men with a similar duration of unemployment is about 13 % of all unemployed men. The number of unemployed women with higher education exceeds the number of men with the same level of education by 1.6 times.

The cause of female unemployment is not only the female professions that are less in demand on the labor market, but also the fact that hiring women entails for an employer certain risks, including: child(ren) disease and the following temporary disability of women, probability of the birth of a child and need for communication with the long-term presence of women on maternity, nursing leave and more. As a result, in most cases, an employer prefers male employee.

For example, the republican average level of unemployment for men is 0.6 %, and for women – 0.5 %. Registered unemployment, as reported in the Brest region, is 0.9 % and 0.8 % for men and women respectively; Vitebsk, Gomel, Grodno – 0.7 % for men and 0.7 % – 0.5 % for women; in Minsk – 0.5 % and 0.4 % for women and men respectively;

Mogilev – 0.6 % for both genders; Minsk – the lowest in the Republic of Belarus – 0.2 % for both women and men (fig. 2).

From economic point of view, Minsk and Gomel regions as well as the city of Minsk are the most favorable parts of the country. Main economic indicators of these regions are the highest in Belarus, and characterized by positive dynamics. This fact is an inherent feature of each of the regions in terms of attractiveness for population. For residents of Minsk and Gomel regions a high share of employment is typical, Minsk differs by minimum level of unemployment across the country.

Taking into consideration economic terms, Mogilev and Vitebsk regions are the least homogeneous. The neighborhood of these regions with Russia, on the one hand, favors the development of bilateral ties, and on the other hand, has a negative impact on the labor market. Most able-bodied male population of these areas is leaving for Russia in search of highly paid work, which has a negative impact not only on the areas of the economy but also on the country as a whole. The female part of the population, remaining in the region, is often involved in nonmaterial sphere of economy that is reflected insignificantly in the structure of GDP (table 4).

Despite the measures taken, the status of women in the country remains difficult and controversial. However, on the other hand, considering all the difficulties, certain conditions have been created based on which it is possible to change the situation for the better. These include: the active development of new and improvement of the existing legislative framework considering a gender factor; formation of a national mechanism for implementing the state policy in relation to women; increasing women's

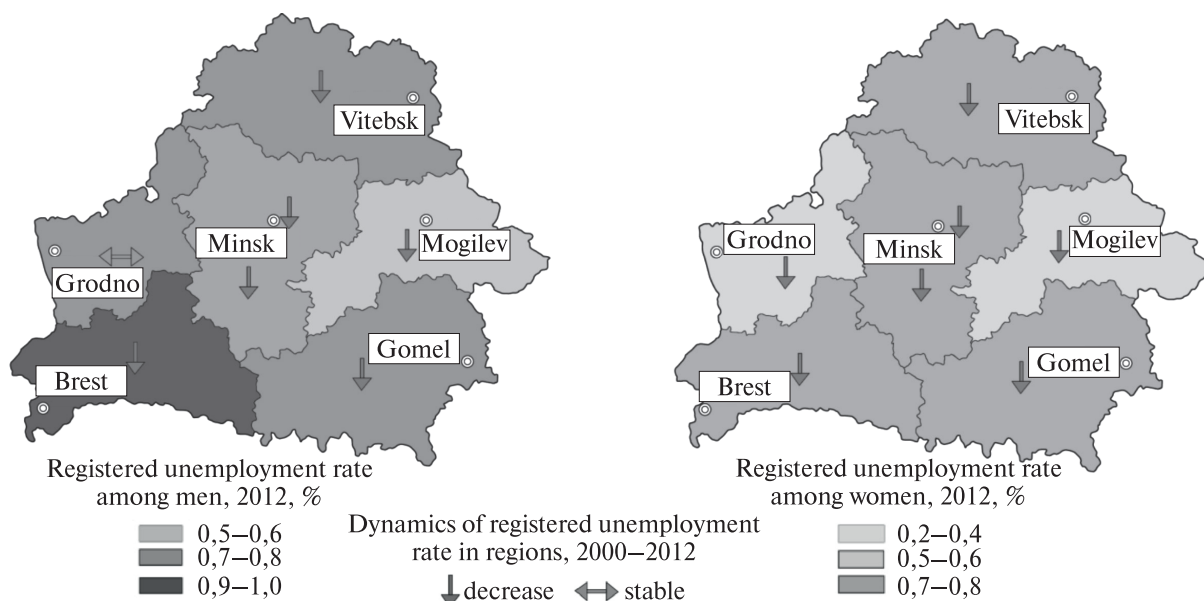


Fig. 2. Regional changes in the level of registered unemployment of Belarus population with differentiation by gender, 2000 – 2012, %

Source: developed by authors based on [1].

Table 4

**Main economic indicators of the regions of Belarus, 2012**

Regions	The ratio of nominal gross average women's wages to men's wages, %	Registered unemployment rate, %		Share in the total number of employees, %		GRP, in % to GDP	Index of gender balance
		women	men	women	men		
Brest	77,6	0,80	0,90	45,5	54,5	9,6	1,13
Vitebsk	77,3	0,70	0,80	44,7	55,3	8,5	1,16
Gomel	70,9	0,70	0,70	45,6	54,4	11,5	1,17
Grodno	77,7	0,50	0,70	45,7	54,3	8,4	1,15
City of Minsk	71,8	0,20	0,20	44,7	55,3	24,0	1,19
Minsk	71,8	0,50	0,40	47,2	52,8	14,0	1,12
Mogilev	76,5	0,60	0,60	44,7	55,3	7,5	1,13

S o u r c e: developed by authors based on [1; 4].

participation in political, economic and social decision-making; growing awareness of the society and women themselves on the need to changes in this direction. The development of the women's

movement, the expansion of social partnership with women's organizations and government agencies to gender studies have a positive impact on the improvement of the social status of women.

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