



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations

GENDER AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN  
EASTERN EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA:

## KEY ISSUES





GENDER AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN  
EASTERN EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA:

# **KEY ISSUES**

FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This brochure was prepared by the FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia. Its purpose is to provide an overview of the key issues that affect the status of rural women in the region, and to assist FAO and other government and development partners to identify and effectively implement the gender mainstreaming approach into development assistance planning. The data were compiled and the text of the brochure prepared by Jessica Gardner, Consultant, with the overall guidance of Dono Abdurazakova, Gender and Social Protection Specialist (FAO REU). Review and constructive suggestions were provided by Marya Hillesland, Statistician (FAO ESP), Giorgi Kvinikadze, Statistician (FAO REU) and Aroa Santiago Bautista, Gender Mainstreaming Specialist (FAO REU).

## ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

<u>CEDAW</u>	<u>Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women</u>
<u>GDP</u>	<u>Gross Domestic Product</u>
<u>GER</u>	<u>Gross Enrolment Rate</u>
<u>GII</u>	<u>Gender Inequality Index</u>
<u>HDI</u>	<u>Human Development Index</u>
<u>FAO</u>	<u>Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations</u>
<u>NGO</u>	<u>Non-governmental organization</u>
<u>REU</u>	<u>Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia (FAO)</u>
<u>UN</u>	<u>United Nations</u>
<u>UNECE</u>	<u>United Nations Economic Commission for Europe</u>
<u>UNDP</u>	<u>United Nations Development Programme</u>
<u>UNESCO</u>	<u>United Nations Education, Science and Culture Organization</u>
<u>UNICEF</u>	<u>United Nations Children’s Fund</u>
<u>VAW</u>	<u>Violence against Women</u>





## INTRODUCTION

FAO's Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia works with governments of Member States and other partners to eradicate food insecurity, malnutrition and rural poverty, and to ensure that agriculture contributes its full potential to each country's national economy and the well-being of all women and men.

This is a brief overview discussing key issues that affect the status of rural women in the region. It aims to assist interested parties in developing their awareness and it can also be used for advocacy purposes and enhancing the impact of development interventions.

# GENDER EQUALITY AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Gender equality is fundamental to achieving sustainable development. The new internationally-agreed Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) include an individual goal on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, as well as gender sensitive targets contained within other goals.<sup>1</sup>

Although women comprise half the population, they only hold a minor share of decent jobs and decision-making roles. Empowering women to participate on an equal footing with men is imperative for development. Rural women often form the majority within disadvantaged groups and frequently face constraints due to gender norms (which differ across countries and change over time) that place them at a disadvantage in relation to men across many different areas, for example: fewer opportunities for educational attainment and income generating activities; discrimination and segregation in the labour market; unequal inheritance practices; and marriage laws that favour men in divorce settlements.

Women make crucial contributions in agriculture and rural enterprises in all developing country regions. Although they work as farmers, workers and entrepreneurs, women experience multiple constraints that reduce their productivity and limit their contributions, which in turn affects agricultural production, economic growth and the well-being of their families, communities and countries.

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) has an essential role to play in achieving the goals of poverty alleviation and food security. The organization offers guidance and assistance, including the production and use of statistics, to ensure policies and decisions are evidence-based. Gender statistics form a vital part of this toolkit, providing agriculture and rural development practitioners with assistance to monitor the relative situation of women and men, their role in agricultural production and their status in society.

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<sup>1</sup> More information is available at: <http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/post-2015#sthash.c8hNsCgT.dpuf>

# GENDER STATISTICS ESSENTIAL FOR AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Gender statistics cross-cut the traditional fields of economic, social, demographic and environment statistics to provide accurate data on the situation of women and men. A core element of this provision is the collection, dissemination and analysis of sex-disaggregated data.

However, there is much more to the production of gender statistics. The development and use of gender-specific indicators are a key to understanding the causes and impacts of gender inequality. These include, for example, the measurement of women's and men's time use, their decision-making roles in households, access to and control over assets and significant issues such as domestic violence. The field of gender statistics also involves ensuring that sex-disaggregated data and gender-specific indicators are fully analysed and that the information is easy to access, understand, interpret and apply. Gender statistics are essential for evidence based policies and decisions. For example, gender statistics provide agriculture and rural development practitioners with data to monitor the relative situation of women and men, their role in agricultural production and their status in society.

A three-part video toolkit produced by the FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia provides an overview of:

- Gender issues in agriculture and rural development;
- The importance of gender statistics;
- Gender indicators to better understand the status of rural women and men.

Key indicators have also been identified for monitoring gender issues in agriculture and rural development in the region.<sup>2</sup> These relate to issues such as access to land and productive resources, labour and time use and productivity. However, data disaggregated by sex and rural / urban location are needed to produce these statistics, and such data can be difficult to find in the public domain. Mainstreaming gender in agricultural censuses is central to ensuring that the necessary data are not only collected, but also analyzed, disseminated and used. This challenge is currently being addressed through the global strategy to improve agriculture and rural statistics so that gender-sensitive data, and data disaggregated by the sex of the holder and sub-holder, are systematically produced and widely available.

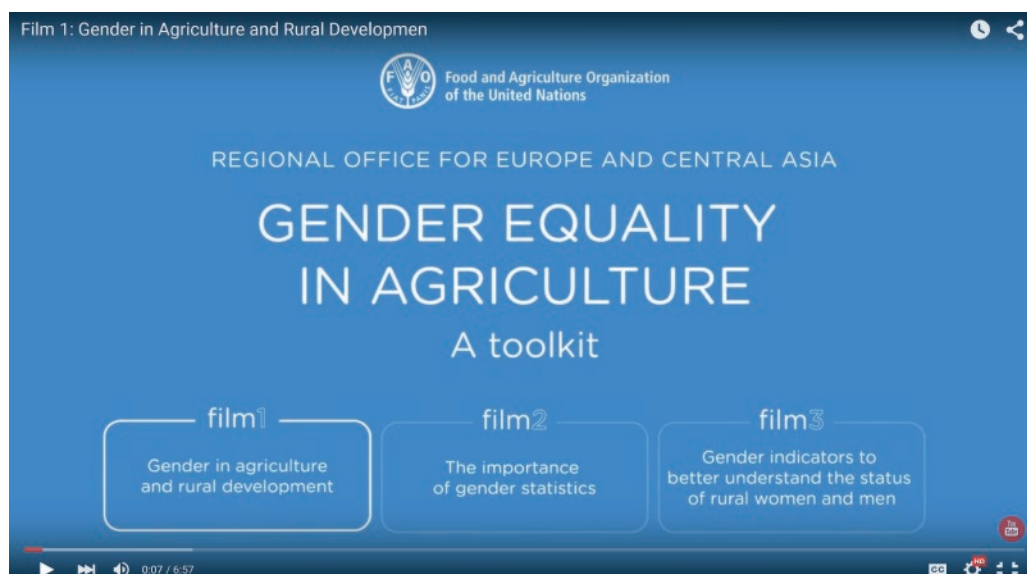


Figure 1: Video toolkit on gender statistics in agriculture (available at: <https://youtu.be/Et2gHFzKCNk>)

<sup>2</sup> FAO. (2015). Core gender of gender indicators in agriculture. (Available at <http://www.fao.org/3/b-bb179e.pdf>.)

## GENDER AND POPULATION DYNAMICS

Despite increasing urbanization, many people in the focus countries of the region live in rural communities.<sup>3</sup> Large rural populations can experience increased gender disparities due to:

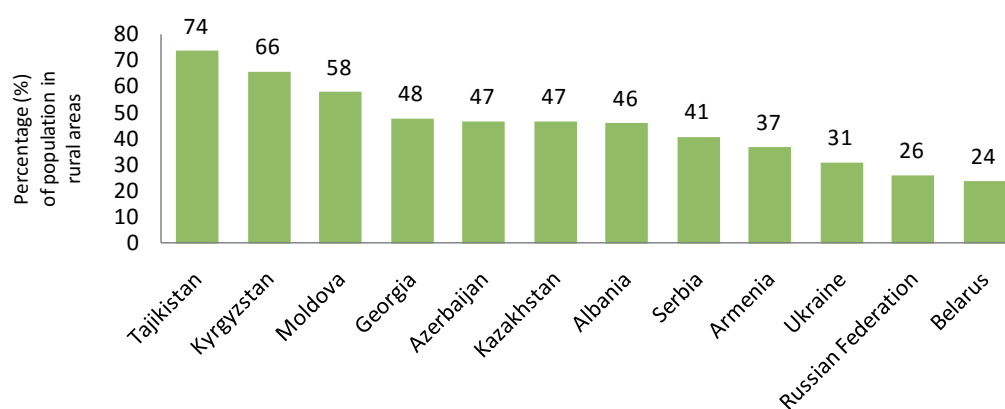
- Limited access to basic services and employment opportunities in rural areas;
- Greater dependency on agricultural production and a high number of women in contributory family worker roles;
- Higher fertility rates, which are linked to pressures on the delivery of basic services, such as education and health;
- An increased time burden on women who tend to be the primary caregivers.

With the exception of Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine, where less than a third of the total population live in rural areas, the focus countries of the region have sizeable rural populations (see Figure 2). This is particularly the case in Tajikistan where 74 percent of the population live rurally. The majority of the population in Kyrgyzstan (66 percent) and the Republic of Moldova (58 percent) are also rurally-based.

Economic and educational opportunities are often concentrated in urban areas, driving high rates of rural to urban migration in some countries. Since rural to urban migration is male-dominated in many countries of the region, these opportunities tend to benefit men. Migration also changes the population structure of rural areas, often leading to higher proportions of the elderly and very young, and imbalances in the number of men and women living in urban and rural areas.

### Large rural populations can lead to disparities

Figure 2: Percentage (%) of population living in rural areas, 2012.



Notes: For data on Armenia refer to 2011; data on Georgia refer to 2002; data on Kazakhstan refer to 2008; and data on Ukraine refer to 2013.

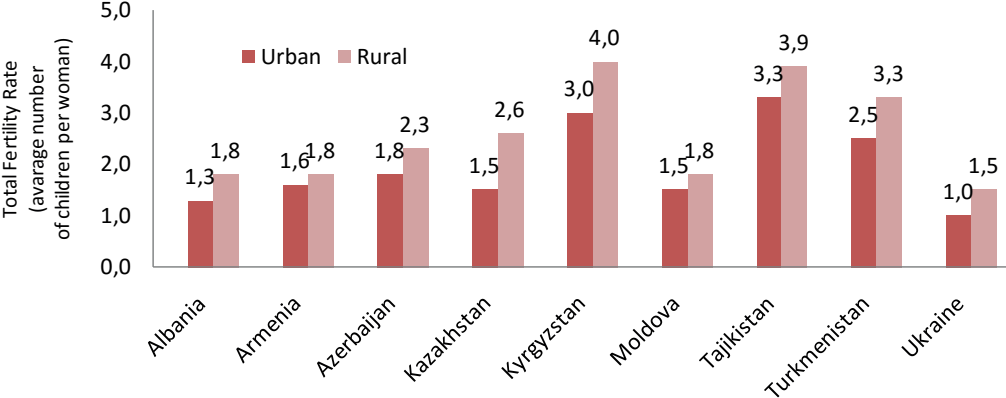
Source: United Nations Demographic Yearbook, 2013.

<sup>3</sup> The focus countries are Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, FYR of Macedonia, Moldova, Russian Federation, Serbia, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.

As demonstrated in Figure 3, women living in rural areas have more children than those living in urban centres. Higher fertility rates can increase the risk of poverty and maintain traditional gender stereotypes. Larger families require more resources and, without sufficient social service schemes, they tend to be more dependent on prevailing gender roles and attitudes. In this situation, the education of boys is often prioritised over girls in times of economic hardship.

**Fertility rates are higher in rural areas**

Figure 3: Total Fertility Rate, by urban/rural location



Source: Demographic and Health Survey Reports for the countries and years indicated.

Migration has a major impact on the size and age-sex structure of rural populations. There has been significant rural to urban migration within the region, as well as emigration across national borders. Globally, the majority of international migrants are male. However, in South-Eastern Europe, Eastern Europe and Central Asia, more than half of the migrants moving to and from the region are female.<sup>4</sup>

Increasing unemployment and limited economic opportunities have made migration an attractive option for women needing to support their families. This leads to the diversion of money back into the origin countries through remittances, which account for more than 40 percent of gross domestic product in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Russia is the most common destination country for migrants from the region. Rural communities are affected when large numbers of men and women move away, resulting in ageing populations, fertility reduction and a declining rural labour force.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> International Organization for Migration (IOM). (2015). Migration Facts and Trends: South-Eastern Europe, Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

<sup>5</sup> FAO. (2014). Rural Women in Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

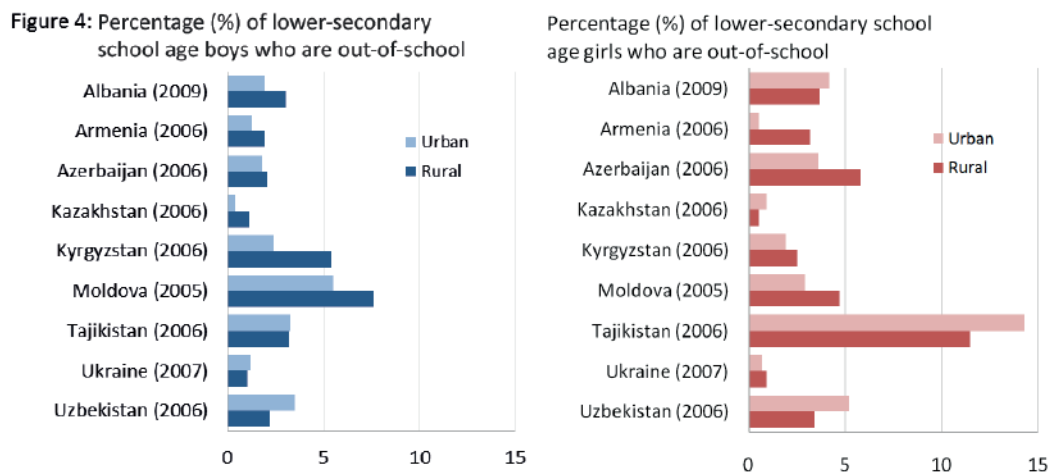
## EDUCATION

Social norms related to gender, family, work and education imply social expectations of women's and girls' prioritisation of family over professional careers and less provision and uptake of educational opportunities. This is especially relevant for rural women and girls. Rural communities are also at risk of lower standards of education. Limited infrastructure and the greater distance from major centres make it difficult to attract and retain experienced teachers. The facilities available in rural schools, including internet connectivity, are often poor due to the relative expense of maintaining buildings and equipment.

The region has a long history of investment in education and, at national level, enrolment in secondary school is high. The gross enrolment ratio (GER) for girls in Albania (2013-2014) is 92.61 percent, which is higher than the global average of approximately 74 percent for secondary school enrolment, although this figure is 106 percent for boys in Belarus (2012-13) and Uzbekistan (2010-11). Gender gaps in secondary education are minimal, with the exception of Tajikistan and Armenia. In Tajikistan (2011-12), the GER is 82 percent for girls and 92 percent for boys, resulting in a gender parity index of 0.89, indicating that boys are more likely to attend secondary school. The gender gap in Armenia (2008-09) is larger and, in this case, in favour of girls. The female GER is 104 percent and the male rate is 91 percent, resulting in a gender parity index of 1.14.<sup>6</sup>

Data on out-of-school children in rural versus urban areas reveals a mixed picture. In six of the nine countries where data are available (see Figure 4), children in rural areas are more likely to be out-of-school than children in urban areas. However, in Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and to some extent Ukraine, urban-based children are at a greater disadvantage.

### Boys and girls in rural areas are more likely to be out-of-school



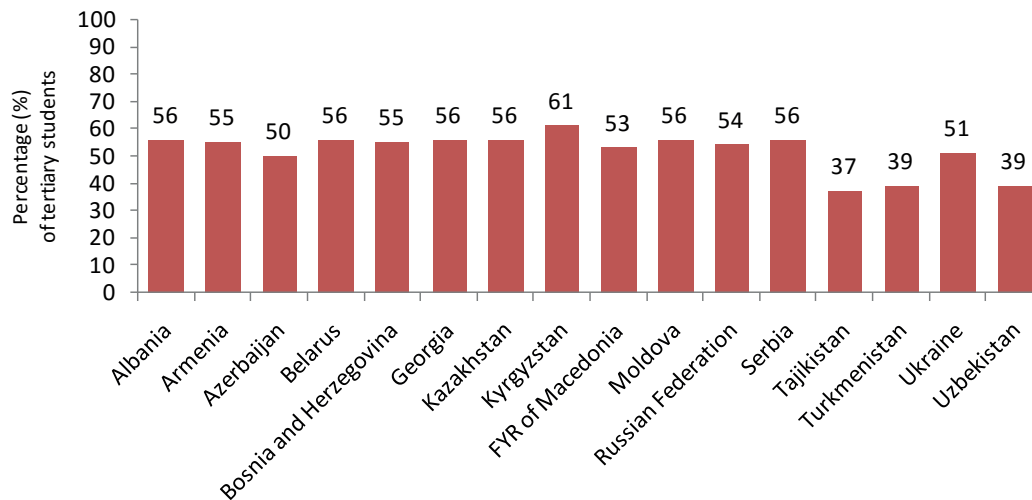
Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics database, 2005-2009.

<sup>6</sup> Gross enrolment ratios and gender parity indices are drawn from the UNECE Population and Gender Database; global average GER is sourced from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics online database. Different years are available for different countries.

Poor participation in lower-secondary school is most evident in Tajikistan, where almost 15 percent of girls and 12 percent of boys living in rural areas are out-of-school. In Albania, Azerbaijan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, girls in their early teens (lower-secondary school age) are more likely to be out-of-school than boys in both rural and urban areas. In Kyrgyzstan, Republic of Moldova, and to a minor extent Ukraine, being out-of-school at a relatively young age is more common amongst boys than girls.

### High proportion of tertiary graduates are women

Figure 5: Percentage of tertiary students that are women, 2013



Notes: Data for Azerbaijan and FYR of Macedonia refer to 2012; data for Tajikistan and Turkmenistan refer to 2014.  
Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics database

Women are well represented amongst tertiary graduates across the region (see Figure 5). Whilst they form the minority of graduates in Tajikistan (37 percent), Turkmenistan (39 percent) and Uzbekistan (39 percent), in all other countries at least half of tertiary graduates are women.

Women also form a sizeable proportion of graduates from agriculture programs. In FYR Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia, almost half of the graduates from tertiary level agriculture study are women (49 percent, 47 percent and 47 percent respectively in 2013). In Uzbekistan, however, tertiary-level graduates with a qualification in agriculture are much less likely to be women (16 percent of graduates of agriculture programs in 2011 were women).

## GENDER GAPS IN WORK AND EMPLOYMENT

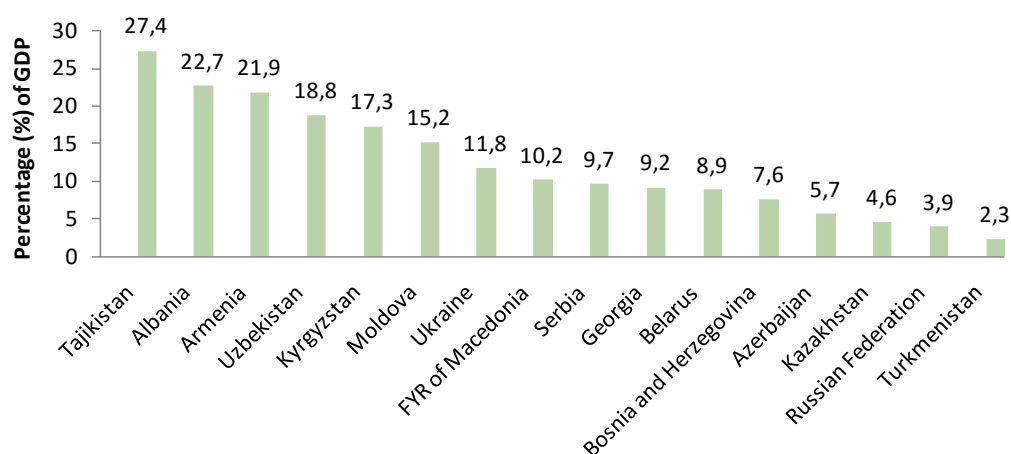
Despite their high levels of participation in secondary and tertiary education, women remain overrepresented in unpaid work and in roles such as contributing family workers, and hold a minor share of managerial and decision-making positions. Furthermore, unpaid household care work continues to be the main responsibility of women. For example, the Moldovan time use survey, conducted between 2011 and 2012, found that women spend 4.9 hours per day taking care of the family and household, doing voluntary work or attending meetings; whereas for men it was 2.8 hours per day.<sup>7</sup>

Because the domestic and reproductive work is socially linked with female gender roles, the inferior levels of infrastructure and technology in rural households have a direct impact on women's unpaid workload. For example, rural women from Albania invest much more time in food preparation, cleaning, child care and other domestic and reproductive activities than women in urban areas (5 hours 55 minutes compared with 4 hours 35 minutes)<sup>8</sup>. Women's time invested in domestic and reproductive activities is also six times higher than that of men in rural areas<sup>9</sup>. This substantially reduces women's economic and educational opportunities. For example, women in rural areas of Albania spend almost half of the time that women in urban areas do in time dedicated to study<sup>10</sup>.

Many women and men in the region generate incomes through informal employment, either by being self-employed in an informal sector enterprise and producing goods for own-use, or by working as a contributing family worker, irrespective of whether they work in a formal or informal enterprise.<sup>11</sup> Informal employment is particularly high in rural areas and in the agricultural sectors. For example, in 2013 in Armenia, more than three quarters (78 percent) of the rural labour force were engaged in informal employment, compared with only 23 percent of those employed in urban areas. In Albania, where agriculture contributes to almost a quarter of GDP, the majority of women in the sector are informally employed, with 87 percent of women who work in agriculture, doing so as contributing family workers<sup>12</sup>.

### Agriculture is a major economic driver in several countries

Figure 6: Agriculture, value added percentage (%) of GDP, 2014.



Note: Agriculture corresponds to ISIC divisions 1-5 and includes forestry, hunting and fishing, as well as the cultivation of crops and livestock production. Value added is the net output of a sector after adding up all outputs and subtracting intermediate inputs. It is calculated without making deductions for depreciation of fabricated assets or depletion and degradation of natural resources. The origin of value added is determined by the International Standard Industrial Classification (ISIC), revision 3.

Source: World Bank Development Indicators (<http://databank.worldbank.org/>)

7 Statistics Moldova and United Nations Moldova. (2014). Analytical Note: The Importance of Unpaid Work in Moldova. (available at: [http://www.md.undp.org/content/moldova/en/home/library/democratic\\_governance/analytical-briefs--time-use-in-the-republic-of-moldova/analytical-brief-7.html](http://www.md.undp.org/content/moldova/en/home/library/democratic_governance/analytical-briefs--time-use-in-the-republic-of-moldova/analytical-brief-7.html)).

8 INSTAT, UNFPA & UN Women. (2011). Albania Time Use Survey 2010-11. Tirana, Albania. (available at [http://www.instat.gov.al/media/171100/albanian\\_time\\_use\\_survey\\_2010-2011.pdf](http://www.instat.gov.al/media/171100/albanian_time_use_survey_2010-2011.pdf)).

9 Ibid. Women invest 5 hours and 55 minutes daily whilst men invest 56 minutes.

10 Ibid. 1 hour and 13 minutes per day in the case of women from urban areas and 37 minutes per day in the case of women from rural areas.

11 The 2013 resolution of the 19th International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS) adopted new definitions for measuring work and recommended that the definition of employment exclude own-use production of goods and services.

12 INSTAT and UN Women. (2015). Women and Men in Albania 2015. Tirana

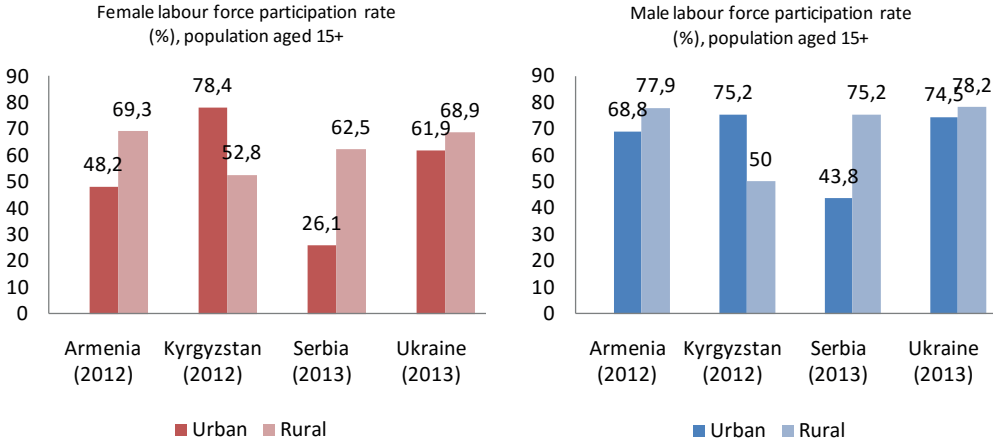


Agriculture forms a significant part of the economy in most countries of the region, where it exceeds 10 percent of GDP (see Figure 6). In Albania and the Republic of Moldova, agriculture has historically been a major sector of employment, but this has declined in recent years, particularly for women. For example, in Albania in 2012, 57 percent of employed women worked in agriculture, whereas two years later the proportion had fallen to 50 percent.<sup>13</sup> This is probably due to the expansion of non-agricultural sectors of the economy and the increasing use of technologies, resulting in less demand for labour. Without the creation of new jobs through rural development initiatives, fewer rural employment opportunities could increase the risk of poverty and lead to higher rates of rural to urban migration.

Employment in agriculture, forestry and fishing is shaped by gender roles and stereotypes. A study on work in forestry found that women are clearly underrepresented and choose not to study and work in the sector for a range of reasons. These include the male-dominated work environment and perceptions of hard manual labour. However, there is a need for equitable opportunities for women in forestry and the adoption of flexible working provisions, women-only networks, mentoring and appropriate training and work conditions are strategies that could be used to attract more women to the sector.<sup>14</sup>

**Labour force participation often higher in rural areas**

Figure 7: Female and male labour force participation rate



Notes: for Ukraine excludes the population aged 71 years and above.  
Source: Household surveys, International Labour Organization database.

Labour force participation in Armenia, Serbia and Ukraine is higher for men and women in rural areas compared to urban centres (see Figure 7). In Kyrgyzstan the situation is reversed, with urban participation rates being significantly higher for both women and men.

In rural areas, limited economic opportunities are reflected in higher poverty rates. In Moldova in 2012, almost a quarter (23 percent) of the rural population was living below the national poverty line, compared with eight percent of those living in urban areas. Higher rural poverty is evident in all countries of the region, where data is available. In 2012, 40 percent of rural residents in Kyrgyzstan were living in poverty, compared with 35 percent of those in urban centres. In Tajikistan in 2009, the poverty rate was 49 percent in rural areas, compared with an urban poverty rate of 42 percent.<sup>15</sup>

13 Ibid  
14 United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)/FAO. (2006). Time for action: Changing the gender situation in forestry.  
15 International Labour Organization. ILOSTAT Database: Poverty headcount ratio at national poverty line by rural/urban areas (%). Please note, the years vary between countries and are included in the text.

## WOMEN'S ACCESS TO AND CONTROL OVER RESOURCES

Knowledge about ownership and access to and control over resources – and how this differs between women and men – provides a useful insight into contemporary gender relations. A major challenge relates to the collection of statistics on assets such as land and livestock. These are typically collected at household level, rather than individual level, which constrains effective gender analysis. Furthermore, published data on land ownership is difficult to source.

The National Bureau of Statistics in Moldova published a gender analysis of their first agricultural census, conducted in 2011.<sup>16</sup> This booklet contains valuable information about gender similarities and differences in agricultural production, and is a good example of the gender statistics that can be produced from these censuses. Key findings include:

- 36 percent of agricultural holdings are headed by women;
- Men manage larger land holdings than women, with an average land size of 1.21 hectares for male holders and 0.86 for female holders;
- Male-headed holdings have more livestock than those headed by women.

We also know that women experience lower rates of access to agricultural technology, with tractors being the most commonly owned type of equipment. Around 22,000 or four percent of male-headed holdings own a tractor, compared with 2,000 or less than one percent of female-headed holdings.

However, there is little difference in terms of the receipt of financial support, with eight percent of male-headed holdings receiving some form of subsidy or credit, compared with seven percent of female-headed holdings.

In Albania, there has been significant land registration reform since 1991. Over 80 percent of agricultural land parcels are located in rural areas, and both women and men can be registered as land owners and have equal ownership rights over land. However, during the registration process, only one person is registered as the owner. This person is identified as the head of the household and is usually a man. Even though no official data is available on the land that is registered or co-registered by women and by men, estimates suggest that over 90 percent of land is registered in a man's name.<sup>17</sup> By comparison, official data suggests that only 6.47 percent of farms are managed by women.<sup>18</sup>

Most other countries in the region share similarities with Albania in relation to women's de facto enjoyment of their ownership rights over land. The main reasons that explain the unequal enjoyment of land rights are: 1) registration processes that favour the registration of land in the name of men; 2) inheritance practices that favour sons over daughters; 3) less access to economic resources to buy land; and 4) patrilocal marriages in which women leave their household to live with the husband's family once married. In the latter case, women do not usually claim their share of land from their family and they do not have property rights over the land of their new step-family. This is the case in Georgia and Macedonia, for example. In countries where women do have rights over the land of their new step-family, they rarely claim their share of land. The main reasons for this include women's avoidance of confrontation within their families and a general lack of knowledge about women's ownership rights over land.

<sup>16</sup> National Bureau of Statistics, Republic of Moldova et al. (2014). *Women and Men in Agriculture in Moldova*.

<sup>17</sup> UN Women. (2011). *National Report on The Status of Women and Gender Equality in Albania in 2011*. Albania.

<sup>18</sup> INSTAT and UN Women, 2015.

Some of the most significant consequences of not having ownership rights over land registered are:

- The de facto denial of women's rights over land;
- Limited access to credit (collateral);
- Land insecurity leading to vulnerability in the event of male migration, divorce or widowhood and insecure access to food production;
- Reduced participation in decision-making on the use of land, and limited access to irrigation and extension services, as well as to other benefits derived from land ownership;

Furthermore, land ownership by women can result in the following outcomes:

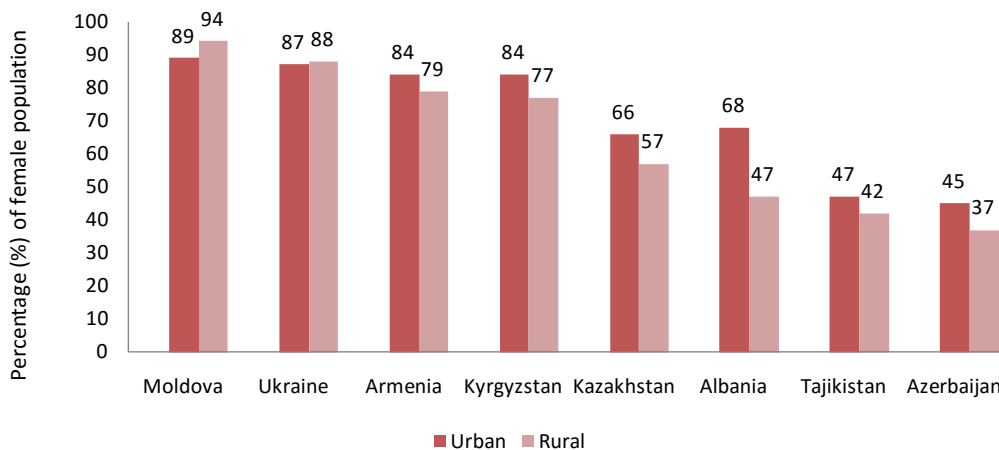
- Greater capability to exit situations where domestic violence occurs<sup>19</sup>;
- Increased agricultural production and food security<sup>20</sup>;
- Enhanced bargaining power within the household, which usually results in an increased allocation of resources to children, and better nutrition of the whole family<sup>21</sup>.

Women are also generally disadvantaged in terms of access to and control over farm machinery, farm livestock, fertilizers and water for irrigation. This is becoming a significant challenge for women and for rural development in the Region, since more men gravitate to urban areas for work and women are often left behind to manage agricultural holdings.

The involvement of women and men in household decision making is an important indicator of women's status and their role in control over assets. In most countries where data are available, women in rural areas are less likely to be engaged in all major decisions that impact on them, for example, deciding on personal healthcare, making major household purchases and visiting family or relatives (see Figure 8).

### Women's involvement in household decision-making

Figure 8: Percentage (%) of women who are involved in all decisions measured



Note: the decisions measured include women's own healthcare, making major household purchases, making purchases for daily household needs, and visiting her family or relatives. The DHS conducted in each of the shown countries asked about either three or all of these decisions and the graph above shows the percent of women involved in all the three or four decisions measured.  
Source: Demographic and Health Surveys.

Women's levels of involvement in household decision making are highest in Moldova, which is also one of the few countries where rural women are more likely than urban women to contribute to the final decision that is made. In all of the other countries, with the exception of Ukraine, women in rural areas are less likely than their urban counterparts to be involved in household decisions. The gap is widest in Albania, where only 47 percent of rural women are involved in decision making, compared with 68 percent of urban women.

<sup>19</sup> Evidence from this survey shows that women-owners of land may be more capable of exiting situations where domestic violence occurs. COHRE. (2006). A Survey of Law and Practice related to women's inheritance rights in the MENA Region.  
<sup>20</sup> UNECE, UNDP & UN Women. Expert group meeting on "The impact of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action on the Achievement of the Millennium Development Goals" (11-13 November, 2009, UNOGE). EGM/BPFA-MDG/2009/EP.1  
<sup>21</sup> UN Economic and Social Council Commission on the Status of Women. (1998). Report of the forty-second session (2-13 March 1998). Supplement No. 7. E/CN.6/1998/12 - E/1998/27.

## HEALTH ISSUES FOR RURAL WOMEN IN THE REGION

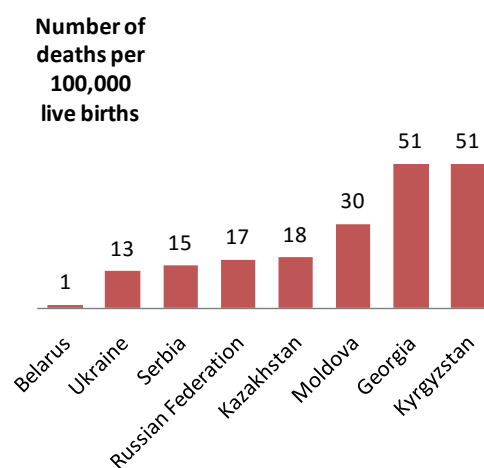
Delivering comprehensive health services to rural communities can be challenging. Limited resources, access issues and the opportunity costs of seeking healthcare can impede timely delivery and prevent services from reaching those most in need. A survey in Albania found that women and men in urban areas reported better levels of health (based on self-assessment) than their rural counterparts. Almost half (48 percent) of women aged between 15 and 49 years in urban areas assessed their health as 'very good', compared with only one third (33 percent) of rural women, who were more likely to rate their health as 'good' or 'fair'. Rural men also reported lower levels of perceived health status, with 41 percent rating their health as 'very good', compared with 51 percent of urban men.<sup>22</sup>

Additional gender and health concerns for women include accessing adequate care during pregnancy and childbirth. Providing healthcare to children, particularly during the first year of life when they are most vulnerable to disease and infection, is another gender issue, because women tend to be the primary caregivers and take the lead in monitoring children's health.

High rates of maternal mortality remain a key issue in the region, particularly in Georgia and Kyrgyzstan, where around 50 women die in pregnancy or childbirth for every 100,000 live births, and in Moldova which has a maternal mortality ratio of 30 (see Figure 9). Within the region, the country with the lowest number of maternal deaths is Belarus.

Most maternal deaths are preventable and a lack of access to services and the capacity of medical practitioners to deal with complications contribute to higher death rates. Such issues are more likely to occur in rural areas. Rural disadvantage is also indicated by the under-five mortality rate. In most countries, the probability of dying before age five is higher in rural than in urban areas. For example, in Tajikistan infant mortality is 39 per 1,000 in rural areas, compared with 35 per 1,000 in urban areas. The Khatlon region has the highest childhood mortality level, which is double the level in Dushanbe.<sup>23</sup>

Figure 9: Number of women's deaths in pregnancy or childbirth for every 100,000 live births

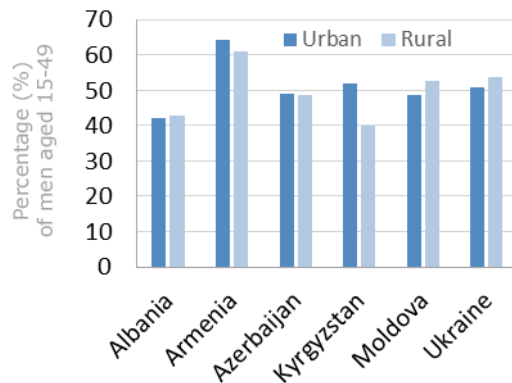


Note: Data were obtained for the following years: Belarus and Georgia, 2009; Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and the Russian Federation, 2010; Republic of Moldova, Serbia and Ukraine, 2012. Source: UN Demographic Yearbook 2013.

<sup>22</sup> Albania 2008-09 Demographic and Health Survey.  
<sup>23</sup> Tajikistan 2012 Demographic and Health Survey.

Other health concerns within the region relate to disease and premature death as a result of poor diet, smoking and alcohol consumption, especially amongst men. Smoking is widespread amongst men and there is little difference between the urban and rural populations (see Figure 10). Smoking rates are highest in Armenia, where 64 percent of urban men and 61 percent of rural men smoke. Within this group of countries, Kyrgyz men based in rural areas are the least likely to smoke, but the rates are still very high at 40 percent of men.

Figure 10: Percentage of men aged 15-49 who smoke cigarettes



Note: Data were obtained for the following years: Albania, 2008-09; Armenia, 2010; Azerbaijan, 2006; Kyrgyzstan, 2012; Moldova, 2005; and Ukraine, 2007.

Source: Demographic and Health Surveys.

Causes of death and the burden of disease highlight the growing concern about, and gender gap emerging from, alcohol use, smoking and diet. Between 1990 and 2010, risk factors for premature death and disability due to alcohol use rose by 38 percent and dietary risks by 14 percent. Whilst mortality rates for women in Eastern Europe and Central Asia have declined over this period, men have made little or no progress. Mortality rates for men aged between 45 and 59 years rose between 1970 and 2010,<sup>24</sup> and this phenomenon requires further study, alongside analysing rural and urban differences.

The sex ratio for the population aged 65 years and above highlights the lower life expectancy for men and the ways in which population structures can vary between urban and rural areas (see Annex 1, Table 2). A sex ratio of 100 indicates roughly the same number of men as women. Where the ratio is higher than 100, there are more men than women; lower than 100 indicates more women than men.

In countries where life expectancy at birth is higher for women by 10 or more years (for example, Russian Federation, Belarus and Ukraine), the sex ratio for the older population shows significantly more women than men (see Annex 1, Table 1). The differences between rural and urban areas are not highlighted, except in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, where urban areas have a much higher concentration of elderly women.

Providing social protection is an important strategy for poverty alleviation in rural areas and supporting disadvantaged groups. Data suggest that both rural / urban and gender gaps exist in some countries. For example, in Tajikistan approximately 75 percent of rural women of pensionable age are in receipt of the old age pension, compared with 93 percent of rural men. Moreover, whilst the urban population in Tajikistan is only slightly less likely to be in receipt of the pension, the gender gap remains significant with 73 percent of urban women and 88 percent of urban men receiving the old age pension in 2009.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>24</sup> World Bank. (2013). Rising Chronic Disease and a Gender Gap in Health Take a Growing Toll in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. Press Release 2014/057/HDN, 4 September 2013.

<sup>25</sup> ILO Online Database: Share of population above statutory pensionable age receiving a contributory old age pension by sex and rural / urban areas (%).

# KEY ISSUES IN GENDER AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:

Gender equality is key to eliminating poverty and hunger, and is one of the preconditions for ensuring sustainable rural development. This brochure highlights some of the key issues that need to be addressed in order to reduce the gender gap in rural areas of Eastern Europe and Central Asia:

## ***Limited data availability:***

- One of the main issues highlighted in this document is the lack of relevant statistics and information on gender disparities in agriculture, livestock, fisheries and forestry, at country and regional levels. Even though gender statistics are currently being produced in a number of countries within the region, this process needs to be extended to agriculture and rural areas in a more consistent manner. This is particularly relevant for statistics on forestry, fisheries, aquaculture and also for women's and men's access to resources such as land, technology, agricultural inputs and credit.

Recommended actions: Improving data production and dissemination practices. All countries of the region need to adapt to UN recommended standards and principles for data collection, and standardise their statistical systems to meet the indicators of the SDGs and requirements of CEDAW.

## ***Demographic patterns:***

- Due to higher fertility rates in rural areas, greater attention needs to be paid to the delivery of basic services, such as education and health;
- Without sufficient social services in rural areas, larger families in some cultural settings may prioritise the education of boys over girls in times of economic hardship, further limiting girls' opportunities;
- A lack of jobs and economic opportunities have made migration an option for women and men who need to support their families. Rural communities are affected when large numbers of women and men move away, resulting in ageing populations, fertility reduction and a declining rural labour force;<sup>26</sup>
- Rural women who are left behind are at a higher risk of poverty, due to their reduced access to economic opportunities, resources and agricultural inputs compared with men. This becomes particularly relevant in situations where remittances become sporadic or stop entirely.

Recommended actions: In any rural development strategy, it is essential to consider migration patterns. This needs to be done from a gender perspective. Moreover, support needs to be provided to those who are left behind. This includes ensuring that women who remain in their home countries have access to productive resources and economic opportunities. The provision of equal economic opportunities for both women and men in rural areas can stop or slow down migration and contribute to rural development.

## ***Education:***

- Access to primary, secondary and vocational education is relatively equal for women and men in the region. However, a strong segregation in subjects persists. Men predominate in areas with higher professional salaries, and in some countries, women are significantly underrepresented in engineering and agriculture studies;
- Social expectations related to gender, family, work and education involve assumptions about women's and girls' prioritisation of family over professional careers, resulting in less provision and uptake of educational opportunities. This is especially relevant for rural women and girls.
- In patrilocal societies, because women move to the families of their husbands, there is evidence that in many cases, less value is attached to daughters compared with sons, and as a result, families tend to invest less in their daughters' studies.

<sup>26</sup>FAO. (2014). Rural Women in Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

Recommended actions: Encouraging and promoting rural women's presence in technical studies (STEMs: Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics), not only at vocational level, but tertiary level as well, and especially in agriculture. This is key to ensuring that women contribute to rural development and agriculture production, and that they are economically empowered. This needs to be coupled with fighting against persistent gender-based stereotypes, as required by Article 5 of the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

### ***Employment and family farming:***

- Employment in agriculture, forestry and fishery is shaped by gender roles. There are jobs that are stereotypically perceived as "men's jobs" or "women's jobs". Men are usually associated with capital-intensive activities, and those that involve greater engagement in decision-making. Women are usually associated with labour-intensive work, and work which requires less mobility, less use of technology, and less voice in decision-making at community level. Women typically combine this work with domestic and reproductive responsibilities;
- In rural areas, limited economic opportunities are reflected in higher poverty rates. Poverty affects women more severely than men, because of women's significantly reduced economic opportunities, especially in off-farm employment;
- Limited economic opportunities make women more dependent on agricultural production. A high number of women typically work as contributing family workers;
- The high level of informality in agriculture (for example, 87 percent of women who work in agriculture in Albania are engaged in informal roles), results in higher levels of economic insecurity and reduced access to contributory pension schemes;
- Because domestic and reproductive work is socially linked with female gender roles, the inferior levels of infrastructure and technology in rural households have a direct impact on women's unpaid workload.

Recommended actions: In any rural development strategy, specific actions to support rural women's economic empowerment need to be included. Increasing rural women's economic opportunities involves addressing patterns of informal employment, increasing women's access to credit and entrepreneurship, and establishing measures to reduce the gender pay gap and to support income diversification. It is also necessary to improve rural infrastructure, including improving access to water in rural households and increasing the presence of medical centres and kindergartens. Measures to promote responsible fatherhood and fight against gender stereotypes are also needed.

### ***Access to and control over productive resources:***

- Most agricultural holdings are owned and managed by men. Men also manage larger land holdings than women, and have more livestock and advanced machinery;
- Women's de facto enjoyment of their ownership rights over land is limited due to registration, marriage and inheritance practices;
- This not only leads to the de facto denial of women's rights over land, but also to women's limited access to credit (collateral) and land insecurity leading to vulnerability in the event of male migration, divorce or widowhood. Furthermore, it results in insecure access to food production, reduced participation in decision-making on the use of land, and limited access to irrigation and extension services among others;
- Women are generally disadvantaged in terms of access to and control over farm machinery, livestock, fertilizers and water for irrigation.

Recommended actions: In any rural development strategy, gender-based differences in access to productive resources need to be identified and addressed. Policy on rural development must address these differences so that it can benefit the whole community, including both women and men, and reach its full potential in reducing poverty and boosting growth.

### ***Health:***

- High rates of maternal mortality remain an issue in some countries of the region. This is especially the case in rural areas, where a lack of access to services contribute to higher death rates;
- Smoking and alcohol consumption is widespread among men;
- Providing social protection is an important strategy for poverty alleviation in rural areas and supporting disadvantaged groups.

Recommended actions: Improving the presence of health care facilities in rural areas is needed, alongside enhancing women's access to transportation and care services. It is also essential to combat the harmful practices that are mainly associated with masculine gender roles, such as tobacco and alcohol consumption.



# ANNEX 1

Table 1: Sex ratio for population aged 65 and above, and life expectancy at birth, for selected countries

	Sex ratio for population aged 65+ (males per 100 females)			Life expectancy at birth (years)				
	Year	Total	Urban	Rural	Year	Men	Women	Years difference between women and men
Albania	2012	92	90	94	2008	72.9	77.8	4.9
Armenia	2011	67	68	66	2009	70.5	76.7	6.2
Azerbaijan	2012	72	73	70	2012	71.6	76.6	5.0
Belarus	2012	46	48	44	2012	66.6	77.6	11.0
Georgia	2002	63	57	68	2011	70.1	78.6	8.5
Kazakhstan	2008	54	49	61	2010	63.7	73.5	9.8
Kyrgyzstan	2012	65	54	72	2010	65.5	73.7	8.2
Moldova	2012	60	61	59	2012	67.2	75.1	7.9
Russian Federation	2012	46	46	47	2013	65.1	76.3	11.2
Serbia	2012	73	71	76	2012	72.2	77.3	5.1
Tajikistan	2012	97	88	100	2012	71.1	74.6	3.5
Ukraine	2013	49	51	47	2012	66.1	76.1	10.0

Sources: United Nations Demographic Yearbook (2013) for data used to calculate the sex ratio; UNECE Population and Gender database for data on life expectancy at birth.

# ANNEX 2: KEY POPULATION, HOUSEHOLD AND LAND INDICATORS

Notes: '-', ' ' indicates data are not available.  
Source: Population data are from the United Nations Demographic Yearbook, 2013; Household and land-related data from the World Bank Development Indicators database.

	Year	Population						Sex ratio (males per 100 females)			Urban pop- ulation (% of total)	Households		Land	
		Total population		Urban population		Rural population		Total	Urban	Rural		Female headed house- holds (%)	Land area (2013) Square kms	Agri- cultural land (% of total)	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female									
Albania	2012	1,404,175	1,397,506	750,821	763,925	653,354	633,582	100	98	103	541	2008	15.6	27,400	43.3
Armenia	2011	1,448,052	1,570,802	895,372	1,015,915	552,680	554,887	92	88	100	63.3	2010	371	28,470	59.1
Azerbaijan	2012	4,616,139	4,679,645	2,435,213	2,501,709	2,180,926	2,177,936	99	97	100	53.1	2006	24.7	82,659	57.7
Belarus	2012	4,397,910	5,066,585	3,324,299	3,874,276	1,073,611	1,192,309	87	86	90	76.1			202,910	43.0
Bosnia and Herzegovina	2010	1,877,587	1,965,539	..	..	..	..	96	..	..	..			51,200	42.1
Georgia	2002	2,274,988	2,650,440	1,137,361	1,392,863	1,137,627	1,257,577	86	82	90	51.4			69,490	36.7
Kazakhstan	2008	7,541,053	8,132,947	3,877,559	4,453,471	3,663,494	3,679,476	93	87	100	53.2			2,699,700	77.0
Kyrgyzstan	2012	2,770,269	2,837,242	887,727	990,916	1,882,542	1,846,326	98	90	102	33.5	2006	25.3	191,800	55.2
FYR of Macedonia	2012	1,032,532	1,028,512	..	..	..	..	100	..	..	..			25,220	80.4
Moldova	2012	1,712,038	1,847,486	699,881	789,087	1,012,157	1,058,399	93	89	96	41.8	2005	33.7	32,880	74.8
Russian Federation	2012	66,264,910	76,936,820	48,419,208	57,510,914	17,845,702	19,425,906	86	84	92	74.0			16,376,870	13.2
Serbia	2012	3,505,713	3,693,364	2,040,826	2,230,789	1,464,887	1,462,575	95	91	100	59.3			87,460	58.0
Tajikistan	2012	3,987,517	3,909,796	1,054,904	1,030,794	2,932,613	2,879,002	102	102	102	26.4	2012	21.4	139,960	34.8
Turkmenistan		..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..			469,930	72.0
Ukraine	2013	20,962,744	24,409,948	14,259,600	16,863,407	6,703,144	7,546,541	86	85	89	68.6	2007	49.4	579,320	71.2
Uzbekistan		..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	2006	17.8	425,400	62.9



