

Unemployed Women on the Gori Labor Market



TBILISI / GORI
2009



Polish aid

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*The project is financed by the Polish aid Programme 2009 of the
Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland*



*The publication expresses exclusively the views of its authors and cannot be
identified with the official stance of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs
of the Republic of Poland*

**Project Implementers:
Partners – Poland Foundation & Partners-Georgia**



Published in Women's Polygraphic Service

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Introduction

The research into the situation of unemployed women from the Georgian town of Gori was conducted for the Partners Poland Foundation in June 2009. The analysis consists of quantitative research (150 questionnaires) and a qualitative study (6 in-depth interviews and 4 focus groups). All activities were carried out within the framework of the project Strategies against Poverty. Increasing the potential of local organizations in Gori in the field of economic empowerment of women, co-financed as a part of the Polish Development Assistance program of the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The main goal of the report is to establish a foundation for a diagnosis which would be useful to local and international organizations working for the benefit of women and local development in the Shida Kartli region. The issues in question are:

1. To increase the knowledge of the situation of women on the labor market and their prospects of professional development with particular attention paid to refugees.
2. To identify inner and outer obstacles that women encounter when seeking employment.
3. To develop a concept of providing aid that would be in accordance with the inner characteristics of the three analyzed groups of women: the inhabitants of Shida Kartli (on a sample of unemployed women from Gori), women from older

refugee groups and the new wave of IDPs, and other unemployed women.

Research questions that were addressed by the questionnaires and interviews concerned the following issues:

1. What are the activities that job seeking women from Gori undertook or planned to undertake to find employment?
2. How do unemployed women perceive their skills and qualifications in relation to the job market? What is the level of their readiness to raise qualifications?
3. What do women see as a prerequisite for finding work? What traits or skills do they see as particularly attractive on the labor market? Do their expectations coincide with the expectations of the employers?

150 unemployed women aged 25-45 answered the questionnaires, including a group that had arrived to Gori with the first wave of refugees in the early 90's, women that arrived with the second wave of refugees after the Georgian-Russian conflict in 2008, and other unemployed women from Gori. 20 local women leaders of NGOs from Gori working for the benefit of women or children participated in the focus groups. Individual interviews were conducted with the representatives of local NGOs and the workers of the local Migration Office in Gori.

Data from the field office of the Ministry of Refugees and Accommodation (MRA) was used to form the focus groups and in the recruitment for the quantitative research. The quantitative research among the refugees was conducted in

refugee settlements. One member of any given family participated in an interview. The results of the quantitative research were produced using SPSS statistic software. The Georgian company ARC from Tbilisi conducted the surveys and in-

depth individual interviews. The focused group interviews with women leaders of NGOs were conducted by Dominika Cieślowska and Ilona łowiecka-Tańska. This report concentrates mainly on the outcome of the quantitative research.

Gori – the background

Gori is the largest city in the region of the same name situated in Eastern Georgia, to the Northwest of Tbilisi. The region borders with South Ossetia to the North, with Kartli to the East, Kareli to the West, Borzhomi and Tsalka to the South. More than 50,000 people live in the region. Traditionally, fruit and vegetable production was well developed in Gori, providing for the whole Georgia. In the Soviet times wool was also produced in Gori and a precision instruments factory was operational. In general, until the 1990s both the city and the region offered relatively good living conditions.

During the last twenty years the Shida Kartli region, mainly Gori, experienced two waves of refugees. The first group came from Tskhinvali in the 90s, and the second in August 2009 mostly from the territory of South Ossetia. The influx of refugees looking for employment changed the structure of the local labor market. The local labor market has become saturated with people looking for employment willing to accept any work conditions, even those which the locals found unacceptable. It is worth mentioning that most of the refugees (contrary to the local stereotypes) have a level of qualifications that, at least formally, is on par with the local average. Higher education and experience in agriculture are prevalent. According to the local labor market experts these areas of expertise are not in high demand. There

are no jobs for people with higher education in Gori and there were significant reductions in jobs due to the armed conflict as well as the world economic crisis. If there is any demand, it is for low-paid and unqualified workers, mainly men. Government infrastructure programs do fill this gap to some extent, for example by providing jobs in road construction.

In the region of Gori, as in the whole of Georgia, the labor markets for men and women were traditionally much different. There were jobs «appropriate» for women and those «suitable» for men and, until the 1990s, mostly men were professionally active. That means that when a man was not working, he was considered lazy, while a woman staying at home was fulfilling social and cultural expectations. According to the traditional role model the woman was expected to raise children and take care of the household. Having a job outside of the traditional gender role was considered inappropriate and participation in the generation of income of the family was seen as unnecessary. The task of supporting the family was often shared by the husband and his father. A situation when a son's father contributed to the family income by direct financial help or, for instance, purchasing a car or other goods was perceived as perfectly normal.

Despite the fact that the main role of a wife/daughter in law was to take care of the family, her education was also appreciated. It was, however,

considered more as a matter of prestige than as something which should bring profit. University degree would help to gain the respect of the parents in law and more distant relatives, as well as neighbors.

In connection with that, there was a whole range of jobs which were recognized as suitable for women, such as medical doctor, nurse, paramedic, school or kindergarten teacher, librarian, etc.

The criteria for a suitable job were rather clear and connected with widely conceived decency. It meant that a job for a woman should be characterized by minimal contacts with men and should adhere to the codes of traditional lifestyle. It was not common therefore, for example, for women who were medical practitioners or nurses to work during night shifts. As the respondents said, in a situation when such a request was the condition of holding a post, women would have changed the place of work from a hospital

to a health center or have resigned from work altogether.

The economic crisis of the 1990s and the resulting mass unemployment completely changed the structure of home budgets of Georgian families. Men's earnings ceased to provide enough funds for households. Due to the closing down of Soviet factories many of them lost their jobs. The economic slump resulted in a sudden growth of professional activity of women, also in areas that were marginal prior to the crisis. Commerce became a very common occupation, stimulated by the free market and the possibility to travel abroad. However, the changes had much less effect on women in rural areas, where agriculture was the predominant form of occupation. The region of Gori (excluding the city itself) is an example of such area. Let us have a look at how women who are looking for a job talk about work and how they perceive their chances to find employment.

Education without benefits

As much as 37% percent of the population in Georgia starts university education¹. As the interviewees from the expert group (composed of the representatives of NGOs and public administration) believe, the primary criterion for the choice of the field of study is fashion. Much less frequently the choice is based on a sound assessment of the needs of the labor market. In the Soviet times medicine, law and history

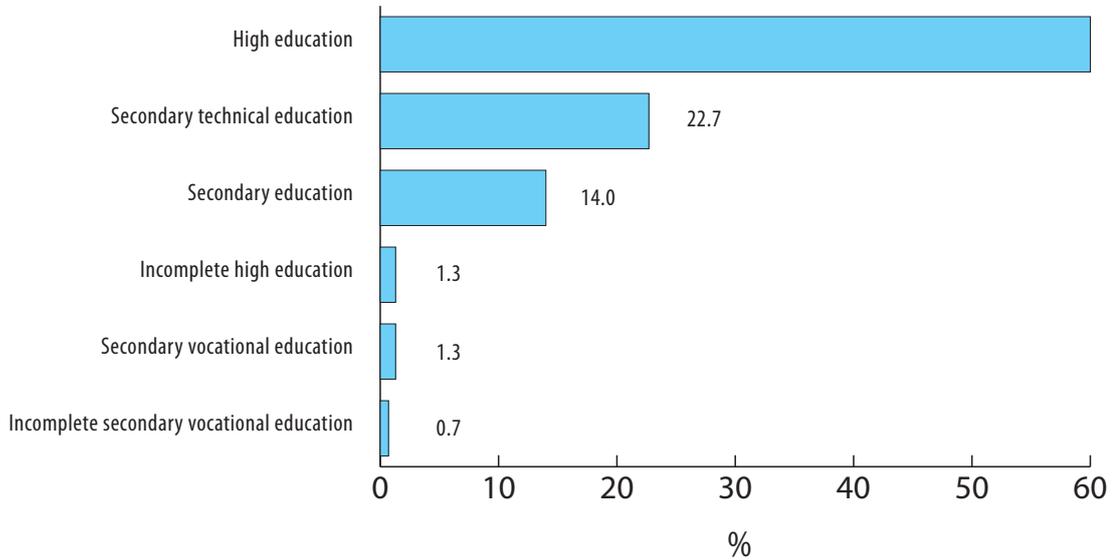
were considered as fashionable fields of study. At present, business education, banking, and finance are more popular. The graduates of these departments have hopes of finding good (meaning better paid) jobs. What may come as a surprise, the level of education of the respondents is much higher than the Georgian average. As much as 60% of the interviewees graduated, mostly from universities. Unfortunately, this research does not investigate the reasons for this phenomenon. However, the random selection of respondents allows us to assume the possibly that the refugees who remained in Gori are the best educated. This group can hope to get acclimatized and find work there. Their qualifications, however, seem inadequate. Employers in Gori complain about the

¹ World Bank, Education Statistics, 2007

lack of well qualified personnel and consequently, the need to employ professionals from Tbilisi. In the case of higher ranking jobs, this is connected mainly with the need to employ people with better

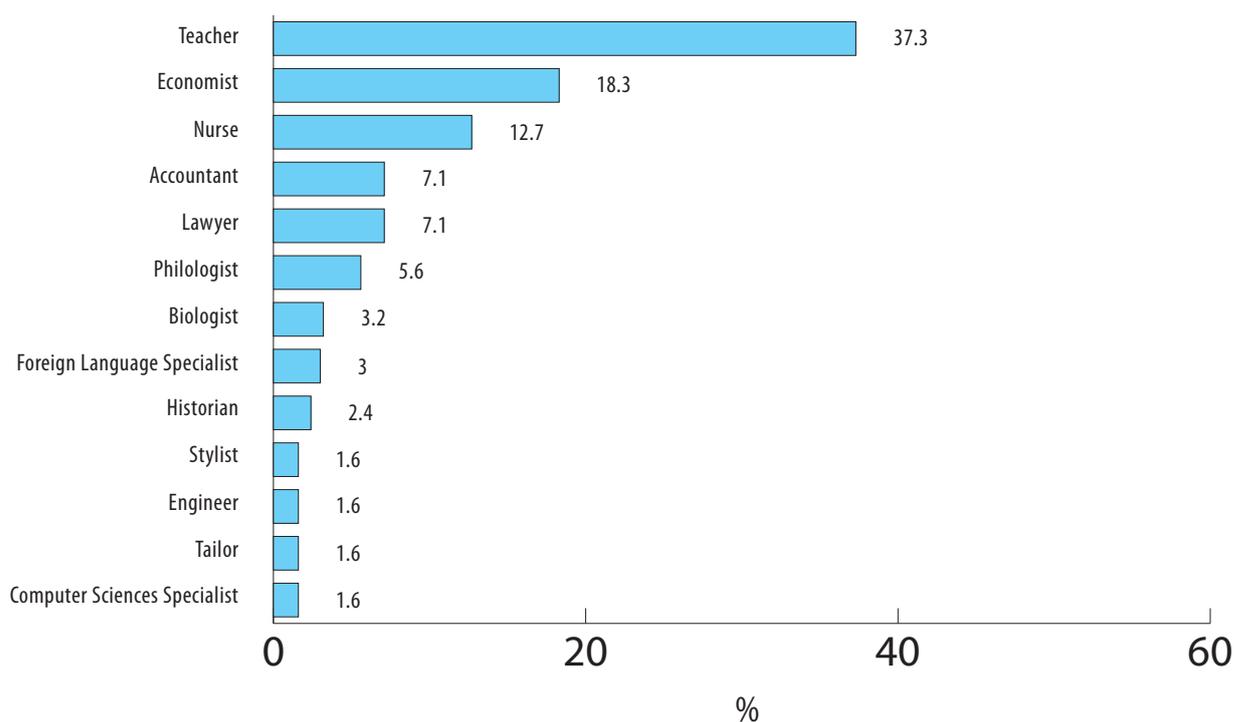
qualifications: accountants, bankers etc., who have better skills and experience, as compared to what the graduates from Gori can offer.

Figure # 1. Percentages of respondents according to the level of education



Occupations which are considered as desirable for women in Gori today are: teacher, accountant and economist. Certainly, the selection is connected with the profile of the Gori University, which offers education in these fields. For the unemployed looking for jobs it almost always means the need to change qualifications, as the demand for these professions is limited and competition among the graduates of subsequent years is high. The

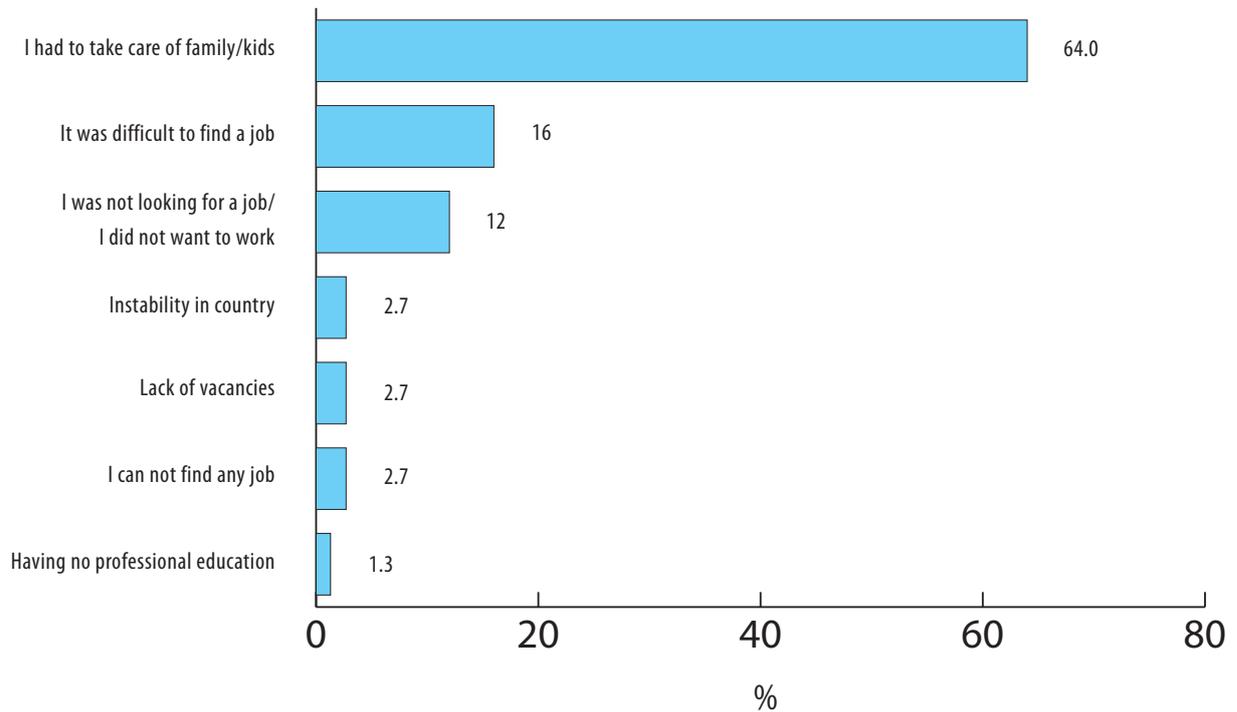
situation is particularly difficult for refugees, who have to compete on a very shallow market with the local graduates and professionals with obviously better networks of personal contacts. For an effective implementation of the unemployment reduction programs it is critical to set a direction of professional assistance that could help unemployed people profile their qualifications according to the demands of the labor market.

Figure #2. Percentages of respondents with higher education according to profession

Difficulties due to the lack of professional experience

It is possible that the specific characteristics of the unemployment of women in Gori are due to the coincidence of the following two factors: firstly, as it was mentioned above, there are a high percentage of job seekers with higher education; during the research as much as 60% of randomly selected unemployed respondents declared higher education, mostly of university type. At the same time, however, more than 50% of the surveyed women have never been professionally active! Secondly, the most frequently cited cause of this situation was devotion to family duties, especially the raising of children (64% of the respondents).

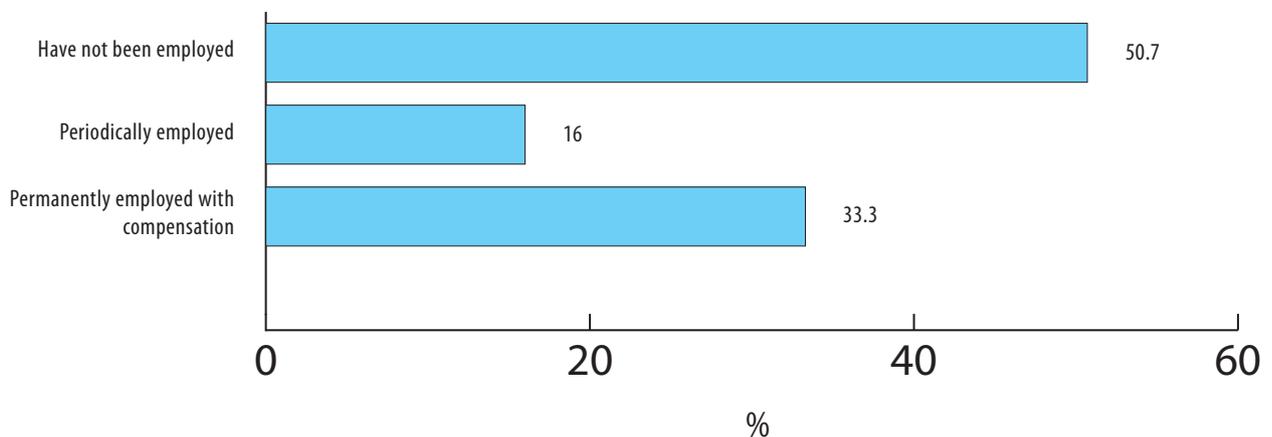
Figure #3. Reasons of unemployment



For organizations which focus on reducing unemployment among women this may mean that their efforts should concentrate on redefining the professional role of women. This role should coincide with the perception that women have of themselves: mostly as wives and mothers. In other words, the professional work as well as its consequences for the family should be shown not only as an enforced and thus unwanted necessity,

but rather as a new way of living. The experience coming from professional development projects in Poland as well as the other countries which have undergone economic and political transformation shows that one of the most important factors preventing women from becoming professional active is a feeling of guilt towards the family. It happens even when the generated income has a significant impact on the family budget.

Figure #4. Percentages of respondents according to employment status



On the basis of the research findings we can see that the relationship between the high level of formal education and the lack of professional experience has twofold results. Firstly, the research reveals a discrepancy between the high level of declared individual aspirations (white collar, high-qualified jobs) and the lack of knowledge about particular jobs or skills required. This severely limits the possibilities of finding the desired position.

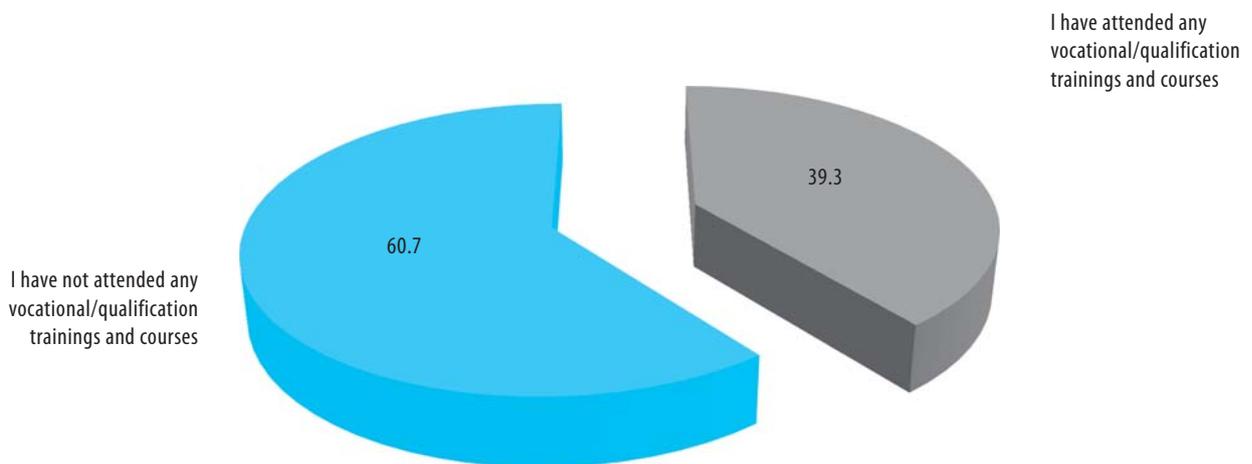
It means that the women from the above mentioned group do not intend to apply for jobs requiring low qualifications (i.e. physical, as this is not the reason why they obtained a degree). On the other hand,

the positions for professionals are out of their reach because priority will be given to applicants with better professional experience. An additional factor which should be indicated here is the gap between the demands of the labor market and the qualifications of the applicants. For instance, the demand for teachers is rather limited. It is worth mentioning here that readiness to improve qualifications is mostly exhibited by women with some sort of professional experience. As much as 47% of women who had worked before and only 31% of women without professional experience participated in qualification raising courses.

Differences in readiness to raise qualifications

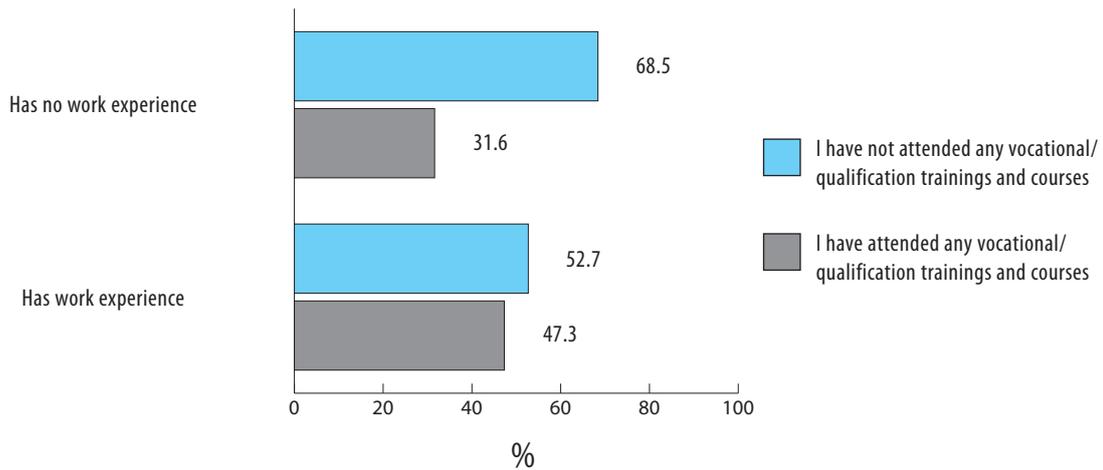
A little less than 40% of the questioned women participated in trainings which they perceived as an element of raising professional qualifications. On the basis of the data gathered from the research it is difficult to judge about efficiency of trainings as far as the chance of being employed is concerned. The data shows two trends in the group of women who seek employment. The first trend is the tendency to raise qualifications in general; the second trend shows that improving qualification is aimed at increasing the attractiveness of the unemployed person on the labor market.

Figure #5. Participation in vocational training courses



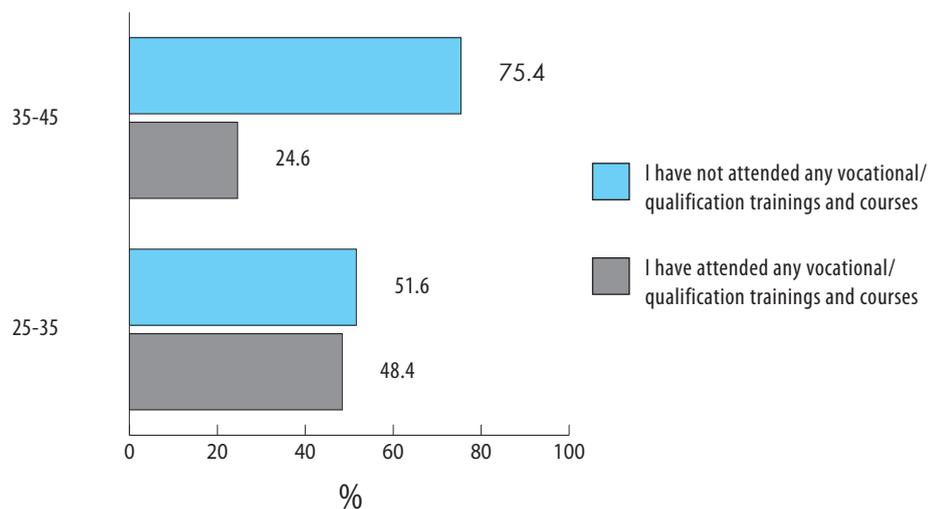
From the point of view of the organizers of the training courses the key question is: what is the reason why women participate or do not participate in a given course. The data shows clear correlation between participation in courses and the level of professional experience. As it is shown on Figure 6, women with prior work experience undertake training much more often than the ones without such experience. The second differentiating factor is the age: higher number of younger women participates in training courses.

Figure #6. Participation in vocational training courses according to job experience



As Figure 6 shows, women aged 25-35 with a stable family situation are most eager to participate in training courses. The lowest level of readiness is characteristic for women over 45 without any professional experience. Paradoxically, this is the group that has to put the most effort into finding employment. It can be assumed that the organizers of professional training courses face a dilemma as far as the target group is concerned. Should the courses be aimed at the group that participates more eagerly, or maybe they focus more on the second group, whose chances to find work decrease year by year.

Figure #7. Participation in vocational training according to age groups



On the basis of our results, we assume that the differences in the declared readiness to participate in training courses might be due to two partially overlapping factors. Firstly, women who were professionally active in the past are more aware of the requirements of the labor market, and that is why they want to raise their qualifications. Secondly, as they are familiar with the labor market they have better access to information about the available courses and training programs.

The second factor is confirmed by the results of our research, as 54% of women stated that they did not participate in any training courses, because they did not have the information about such possibilities. Both factors should be a topic for a separate analysis. The fact that 54% of the respondents stated that “training” increases the chances to get a job clearly shows that this factor should be taken into account when drafting plans aimed at raising the professional qualifications of women seeking jobs.

Figure # 8. Reasons for participating in vocational training

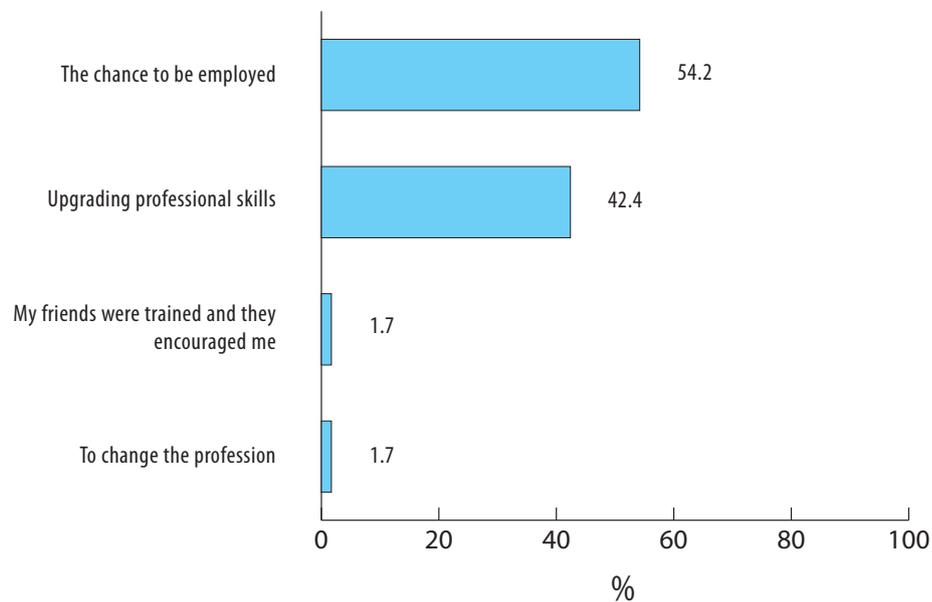


Figure # 9. Reasons for not participating in vocational training

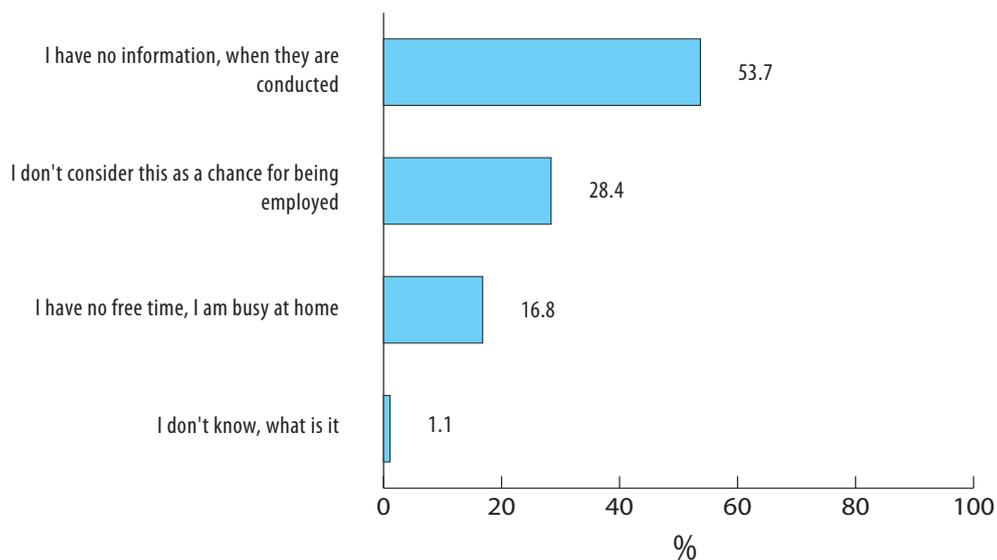


Figure #9 illustrates an important issue which seems to have been overlooked until now in the programs aimed at the economic empowerment of women in Gori: the circulation of information about training courses in particular and about the labor market in general. There is no institution or system that would support unemployed people looking for a job by gathering information such as planned trainings, recruitment offers, etc., which is of interest to the unemployed.

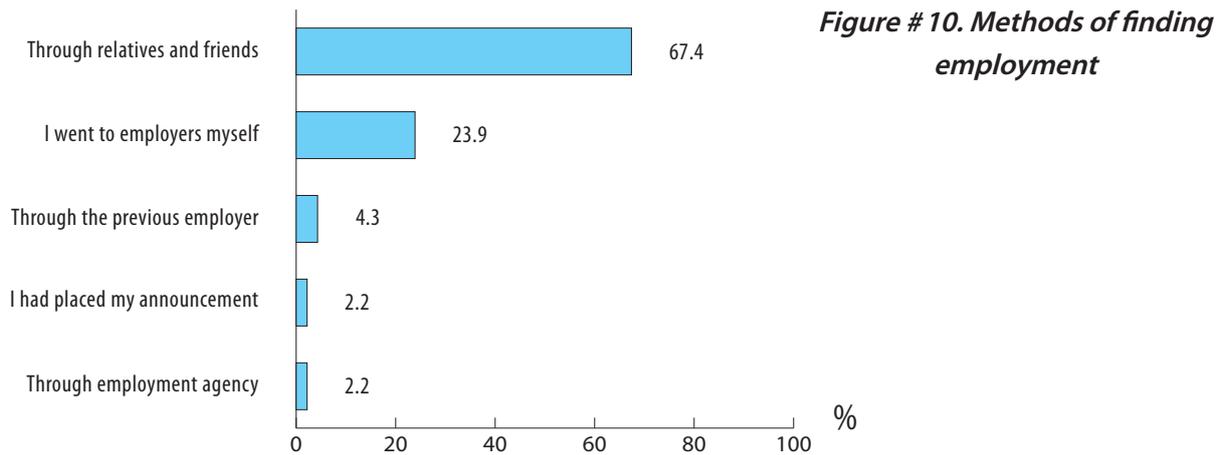
Table #1. Types of training courses in which the respondents participated

Free courses	% of participants
Computer courses	48,8
Teaching courses	14,0
Course for stylists	7,0
Courses for masseurs	7,0
Paid courses	
Computer courses	75,0
Psychological courses	8,3

As much as 67% of women who found temporary employment were able to obtain a job due to personal contacts, by being recommended by friends or relatives. At the same time about 24% of the respondents were able to find work thanks to their own efforts only, thorough direct contact with the employer, without being introduced by any middlemen.

The importance of information flow between the employer and the job seeker

Altogether, only a little more that 4% of the respondents found jobs with the help of employment agencies or advertisements. The most common obstacle in finding a job is the lack of information about vacancies. The respondents indicated the above factor more often that the claim “there is no demand for my profession”.



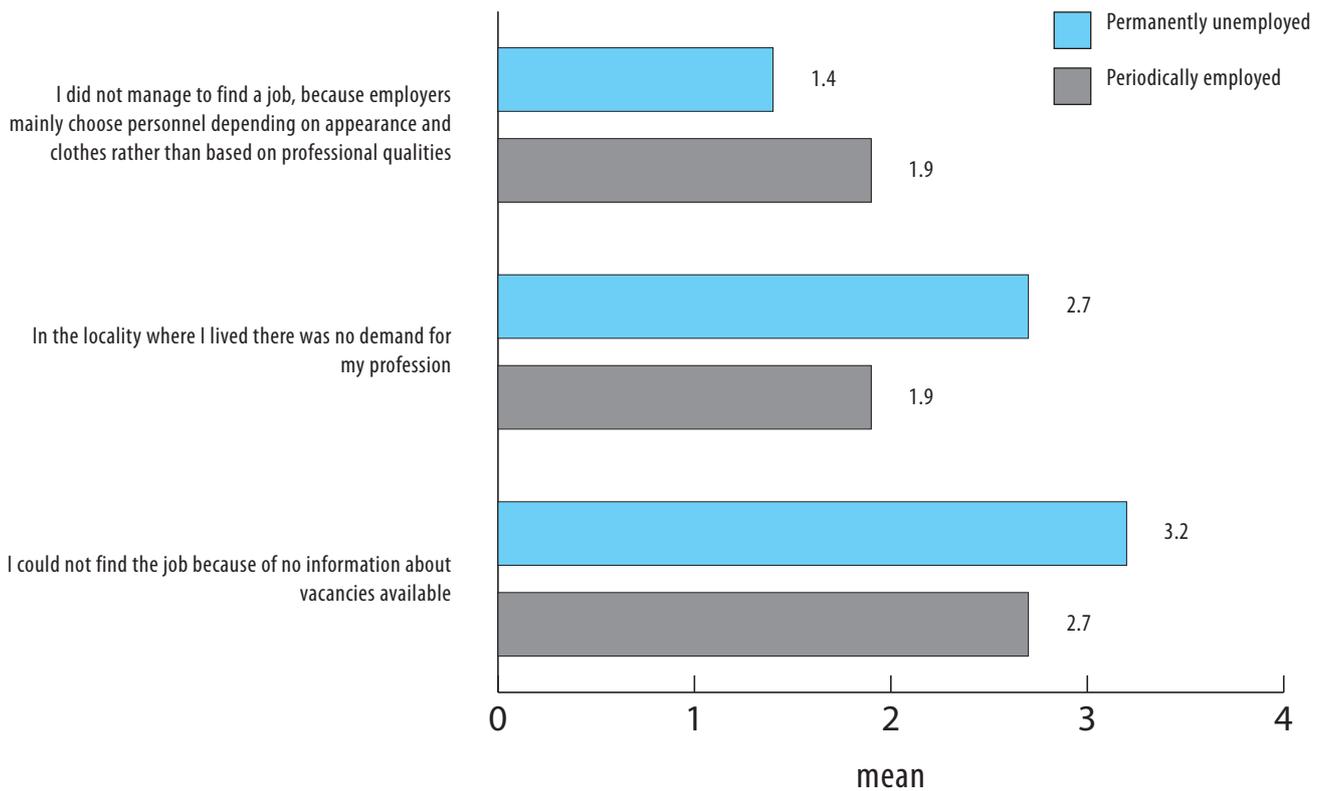
The above situation means that in the region of Gori the unemployed exhibit the following pattern of behavior: when talking about finding a job they most often do so... with other unemployed. If, according to the research, in two-thirds of the families there are no employed adults and the main source of information about the labor market are friends and relatives then this situation is a vicious circle, since the people that are asked for help cannot provide any, as not only they are unemployed, but also have no relevant contacts. The challenge for professional empowerment programs is, therefore, to facilitate the flow of information between potential employees and employers and to enable the contact of the two groups. On the one hand it means that training courses for the unemployed should be organized which would focus on active approach to job searching: communication with

potential employers, presentation skills, etc. On the other hand it is necessary to establish mechanisms of effectively informing the unemployed about the available vacancies corresponding to their level of competence and qualifications. The designers of such mechanisms should take into account the fact that most of the unemployed do not read newspapers and rarely use the Internet. Programs aimed at unemployment reduction should, on one hand, support women through a system of adequate trainings, while taking into account the high intellectual potential of the target group. On the other hand such programs should attempt to readjust the aspirations of women to the reality of the local labor market. While planning the activities aimed at the unemployed women one should also take into account the differences in life style due to age and ... marital status.

Perception of the labor market and employment conditions

Figure # 11 shows the reasons for the lack of employment as perceived by the respondents. It is difficult to assess if the most often quoted reason, i.e. the lack of information about current vacancies, is a real difficulty in finding employment. What is important here, however, is the fact that the respondents see the above mentioned factor as the most significant impediment to job seeking.

Figure # 11. Perception of the reasons for unemployment



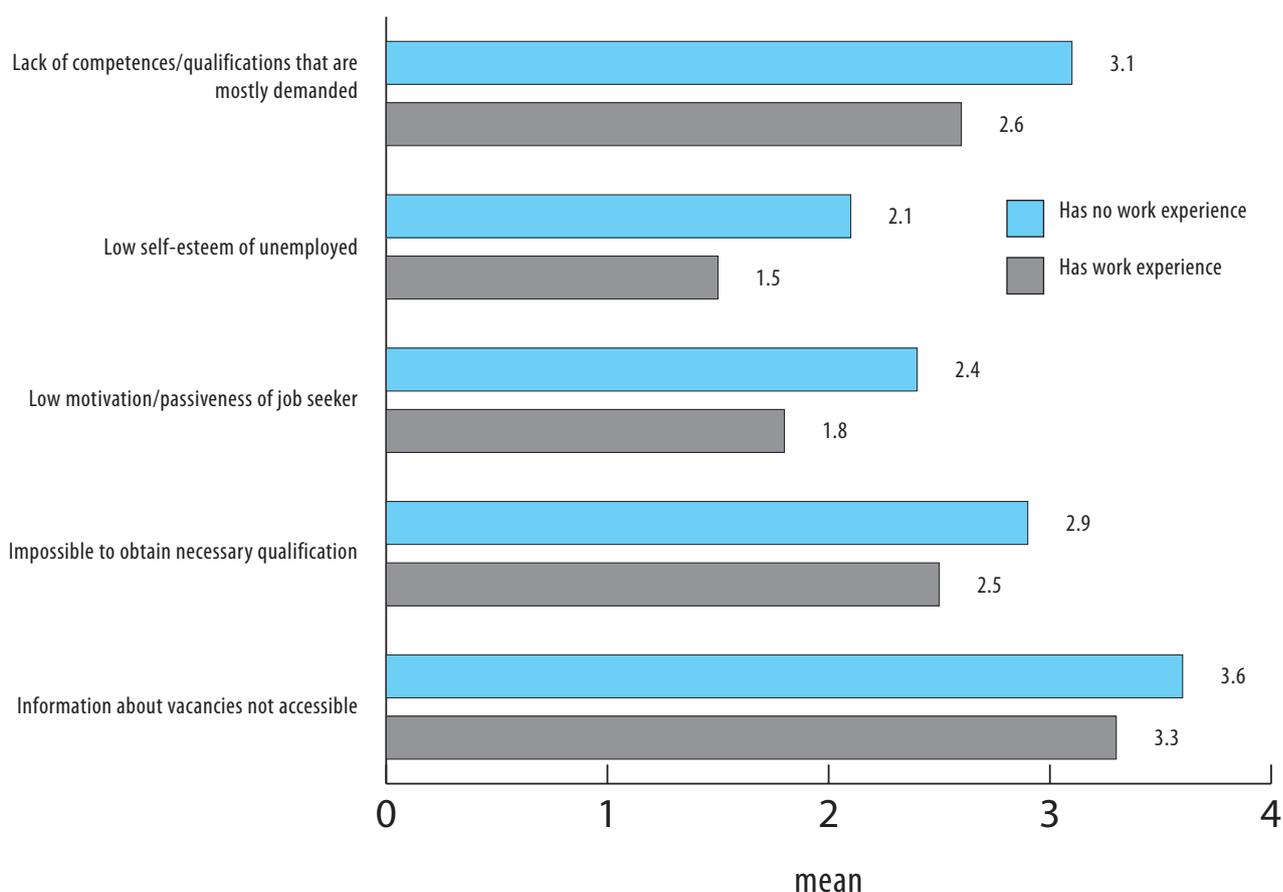
It is worth mentioning that in the analyses of job-seeking failures higher priority is given to limited information about job offers than to the demand for a particular profession. According to the opinion of the respondents the jobs are available, but there is a problem with obtaining information about them. This opinion is expressed more often by the respondents who do not work at all.

As can be seen from the second group of bars on Figure 11, the belief about low demand for specialists in a particular field is stronger among the permanently unemployed people than among those who have been employed even temporarily. Thus, we can assume that higher level of optimism is linked with the fact of obtaining a job, which in consequence confirms the value of a person as a worker. On the other hand, we cannot exclude the fact that people with more optimistic attitude to

life are able to find employment more easily than others, as well as that their perception of the labor market is better in general.

The issue of the relationship between appearance or outfit and the ability to obtain a job is also interesting. Surprisingly, good looks seem to be more important to people who have already found temporary employment, than to those who are still searching for a job. Taking into account the above result we derived the following hypothesis: women who have temporary employment and are unable to find a permanent one link this situation with the importance of appearance or outfit. This kind of justification is, paradoxically, the easiest to accept, as it is easier to assume that employers want to hire a top model and not a "normal woman" than to question one's qualifications.

Figure #12. Statistical differences in the perception of obstacles in finding employment between people with and without job experience



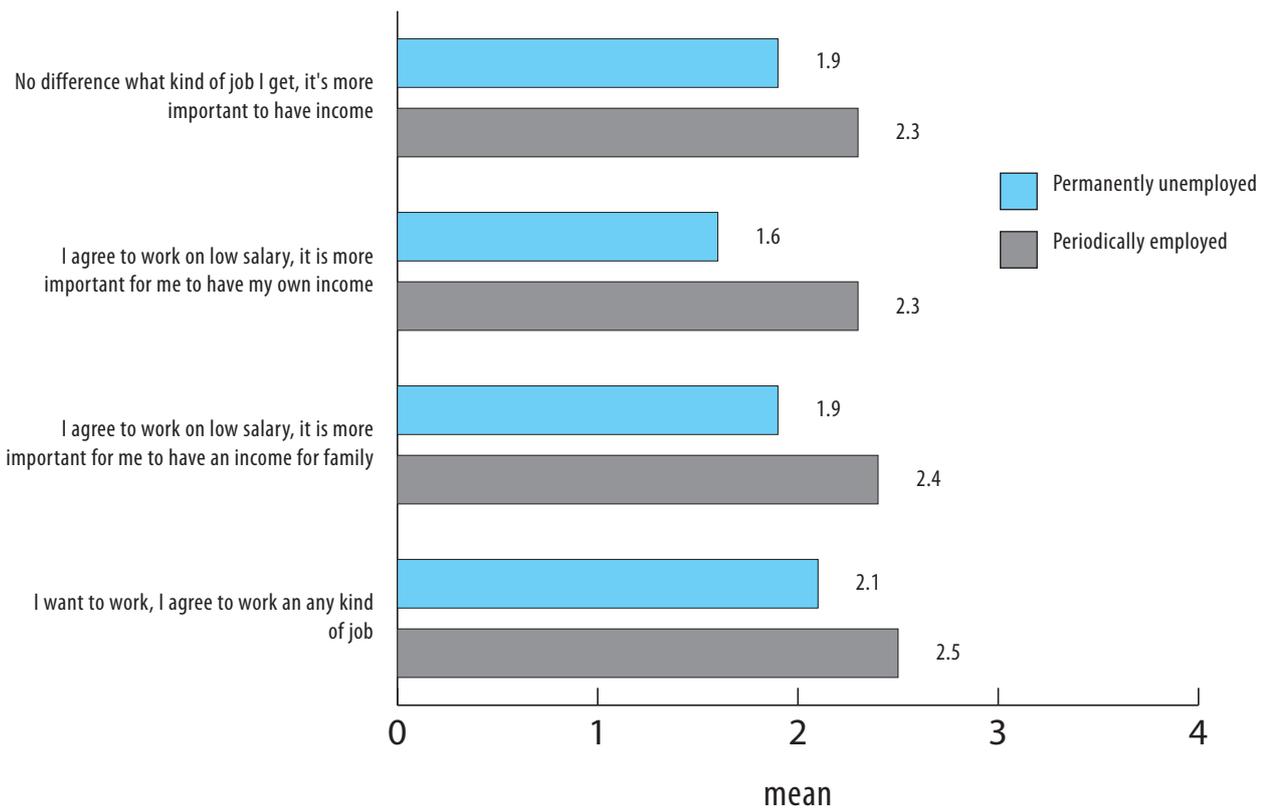
What then is the value of being employed? Why do women search for a job? If we look at the data describing the motivation for finding a job it becomes clear that the economic criterion is the most important reason: women want to work to support their families and are ready to accept any paid vacancies. However, equally strong is the tendency to get a job only in the appropriate professions. According to Figure 13, the motivation to accept any job is higher among people who do not work even temporarily. Generally speaking, within the framework of this study we were not able to specify a dominant trend that would clarify the issues of motivation for finding employment.

Table #2. Motivation for finding employment

	Minimum	Maximum	Average	Standard deviation
I want to work only in my profession	1	4	2,1	1,3
I want to work and I will accept any job	1	4	2,2	1,1
I agree to earn little money, for me it is most important to have an income to support my family	1	4	2,0	1,2

I agree to earn little money, for me it is most important to have my own income	1	4	1,8	1,1
If I get a prestigious job, I agree to work for little money	1	4	1,5	0,9
High income is most important for me. The kind of work is not important	1	4	2,0	1,0

Figure # 13. The important statistical differences in the motivation for finding employment between women with and without a temporary job



Women who want everything

We asked the respondents about the hierarchy of various values in their private lives. The point value attributed to particular values range from 1 – “not important at all” to 7 – “very important”.

Table #3. The hierarchy of values

	Minimum	Maximum	Average	Standard deviation
Family, marriage	1	7	6,9	0,7
Sex life	1	7	6,3	1,4
Children	1	7	7,0	0,5
Education	5	7	7,0	0,2
Relationships with people	6	7	7,0	0,1
Financial situation	6	7	7,0	0,1
Cultural life	1	7	6,2	1,4
Work	6	7	7,0	0,1
Career	1	7	6,3	1,5
The future	7	7	7,0	0,0
Place of living	7	7	7,0	0,0
The country	1	7	6,8	0,8

The most interesting observation one can make on the basis of the data in Table 3 does not concern the average values of the responses. These might indicate that nearly everything is equally important to the respondents. However, the overall range of the responses may lead to interesting conclusions. While there are responses (very few, but still) indicating that family, children, sex life, career, and cultural life are totally unimportant, none of the respondents questioned the value of the place of

living and the significance of the future.. These two issues should be kept in mind during programs which encourage women to participate in training courses or undertake professional activity.

The uniformly high average results acquired in the research mean that it would be difficult to design a program that would address a homogeneous system of values or attitudes.

Table #4. Satisfaction from Life

	Minimum	Maximum	Average	Standard deviation
Family, marriage	1	7	5,9	2,0
Sex life	1	7	5,9	1,9
Husband	1	7	2,0	2,0
Children	1	7	6,5	1,6
Education	1	7	6,2	1,5
Relationships with friends	2	7	6,8	0,6
Relationships with neighbors	3	7	6,8	0,5
Relationships with relatives	6	7	6,9	0,3
Relationships with husband's relatives	1	7	6,4	1,5
Financial situation of the family	1	7	2,9	2,1
Cultural life	1	7	2,9	2,0

Work	1	7	1,8	1,6
Achievements	1	7	3,2	2,1
Future perspectives	1	7	4,3	2,2
Place of living and surroundings	1	7	2,7	2,5
Situation in the country	1	7	1,3	1,1

The results of this part of the research may be surprising. One should bear in mind that issues which are not openly discussed in Gori (such as sex life) were addressed. Some of the answers, including the ones concerning sex life or relationships with relatives should be treated rather as a sort of auto presentation than the description of the real state of mind.

As can be seen, at least on the level of declarations, the respondents are women satisfied with their relationships with people who constitute their social

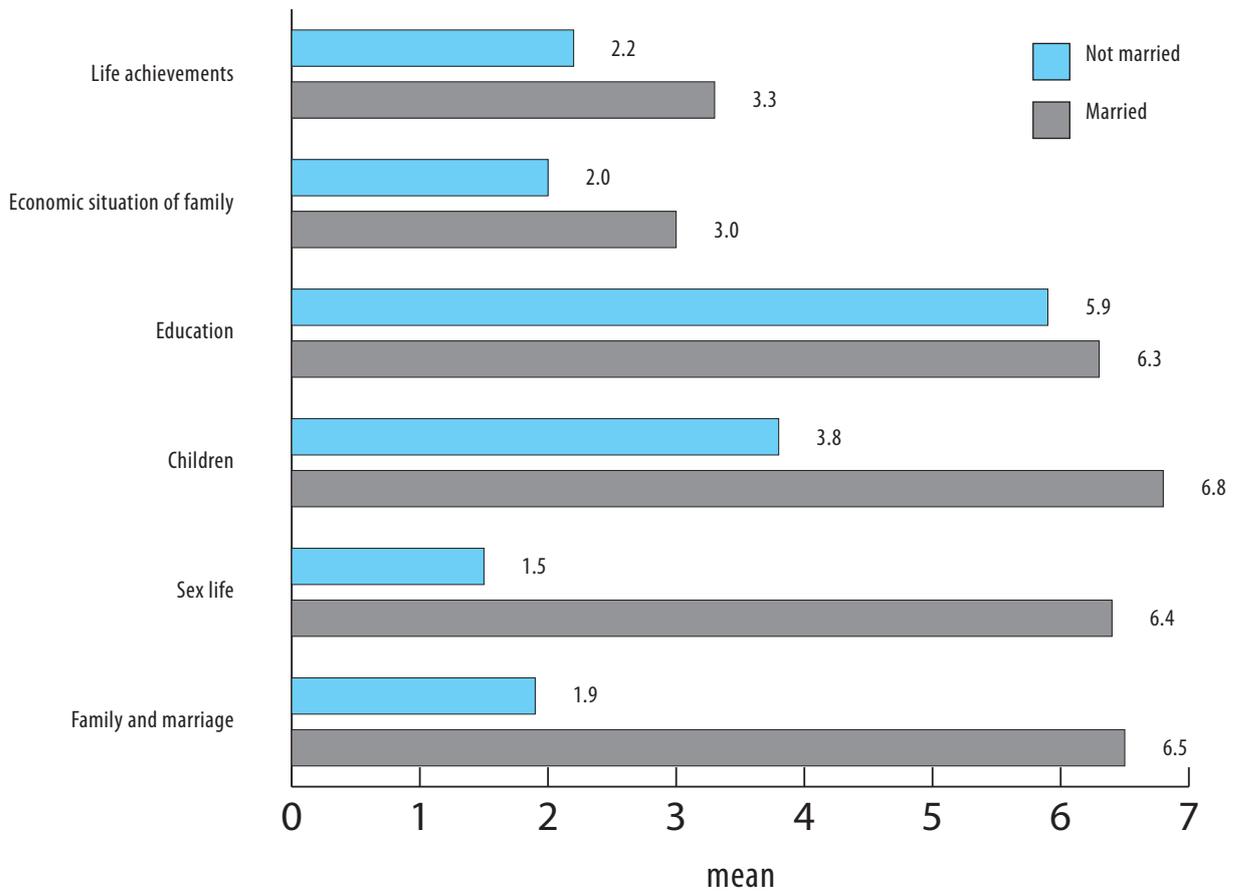
... sphere: friends, relatives, even neighbors. They rate their sex life is equally high. However, the level of satisfaction from the husbands is low. In relation to low ratings given to the place of living, work and economic situation of the family (although, this is rated a little higher) it can be assumed that the women are disappointed with the present role and low status of their partners. During group interviews with the representatives of the expert group (representatives of local administration, NGO leaders) the respondents were asked to produce portraits of men from Gori and Tbilisi.

Table #5. Questions and answers regarding the difference between Gori men and Tbilisi men

Gori man	Tbilisi man
He smokes cigarettes, After waking up in the morning he eats his breakfast brought to him by his wife, He dresses up in clothes prepared by his wife, goes to work where he is talking over the phone with all the members of his family. He watches TV. He behaves in a totally different manner in relation to strangers than towards his relatives. He goes out with male friends	He wakes up in the morning and goes swimming and to the hair dresser. He thinks what to do in the evening. He works for someone and, in addition, has his own business. He often uses the Internet and spends time at work (7-8 hours, sometimes more). He does not have time for his family (in Tbilisi they have more work because there are more opportunities). He has a different attitude to life, i.e.; he would be able to spend the last penny on a swimming pool, which would not be acceptable in Gori. The Tbilisi man is closer to cultural life, which is more easily accessible.

On the basis of the data from Table 4 one can see the difference between the everyday reality and the imagined world. The difference between the horizon of aspirations and the reality is as painful as it is a source of frustration. In some fields connected with the declared level of satisfaction there is a major difference between the ratings given by married and single women. Such fields include life achievements, material situation, education, children, sex life, family / marriage. In all these, the level of satisfaction of married women is higher, which is understandable if one takes cultural factors into account.

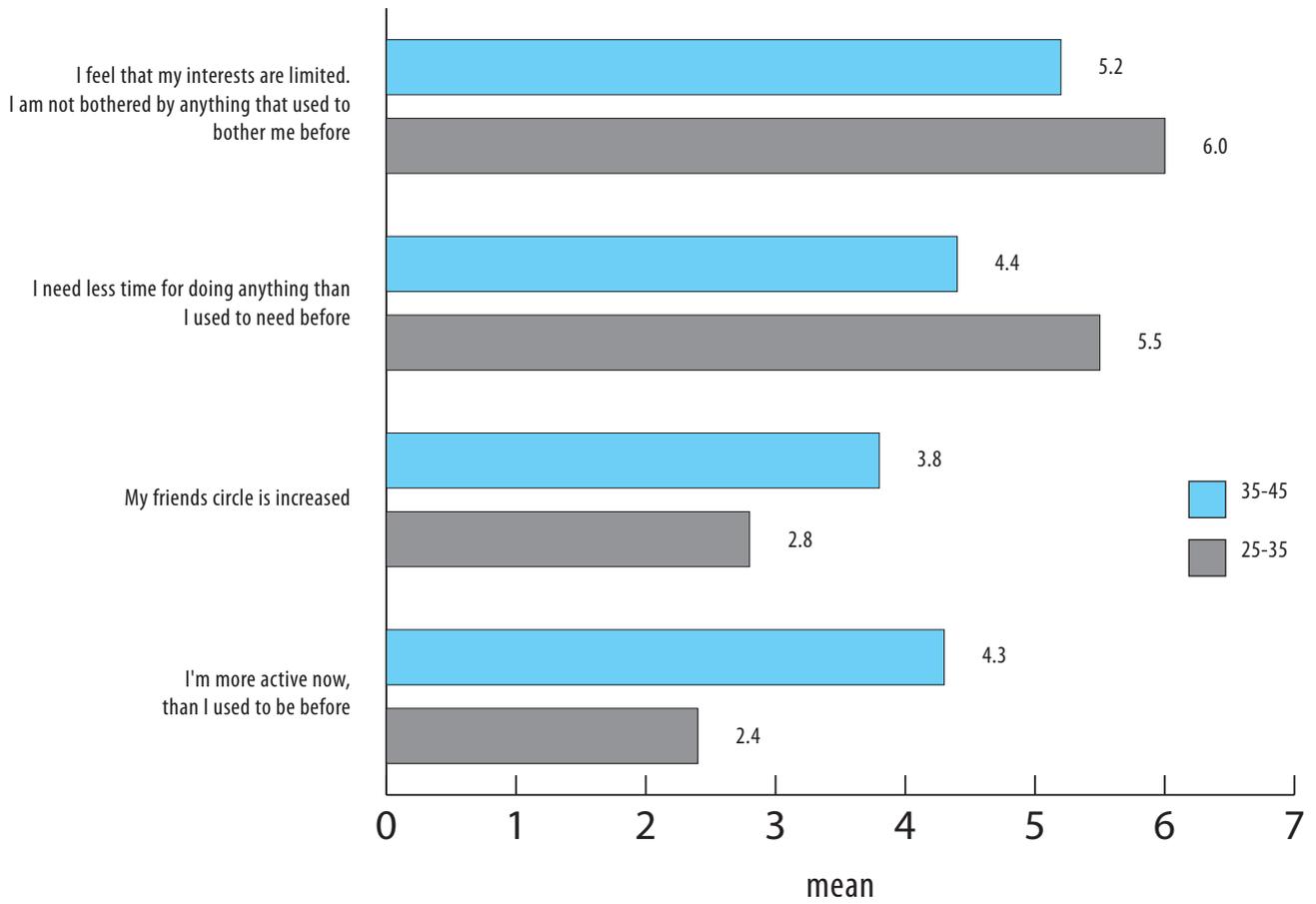
Figure # 14. Important statistical differences in satisfaction with life between married and unmarried women



The factor that needs to be taken into account in designing programs aimed at unemployment reduction among women is the psychological dimension of having or not having a job. Being employed, also in Georgia, decisively raises self-esteem and self-confidence. The psychological explanation of this phenomenon seems to be simple. One of the hypotheses is that women who do not have professional experience are less self-confident, as they failed to confirm their value by finding a job.

As can be seen on Figure 15, younger women cope much worse with unemployment. They more often admit to the feeling of apathy, declare superfluous time, and claim that their circle of friends is getting smaller. Women above 35 seem to be much more at peace in these aspects. The reasons vary. The most important ones are different economic aspirations, differences in defining social roles, higher importance of professional career. In other words, young women with university degrees believe that they obtained a degree not only to gain prestige, but also to find employment.

Figure # 15. The important statistical differences in the scale of psychological consequences of being unemployed between two different age groups



Conclusions and recommendations

The main purpose of this report was to improve the knowledge about job seeking women in Gori. The report is addressed to the local administration and NGOs that implement or plan to implement initiatives combating unemployment in Georgia. On the basis of the data obtained we conclude that during the planning phase of the programs it is essential to take into account the following factors:

1. **The critical importance of professional experience for the success on the labor market.** It plays a much more significant role than the kind of education or social status. Therefore, while planning unemployment reduction programs it would be valuable to create opportunities which would allow the unemployed to gain such experience in various forms, as well as confront the rather theoretical ideas about jobs with the reality of the market and expectations of the employers.
2. **In view of the high level of formal education of a large percentage of the respondents, one should consider the planning of professional development and re-training programs in the sphere of services.** At the same time it is worth to take into account the unwillingness to undertake physical work, which is also characteristic for the unemployed from both refugee groups.
3. **The major obstacle, frequently pointed out by the respondents, is the inefficiency of the flow of information about the available job vacancies and professional trainings.** Without solving

this problem it would be extremely difficult to professionally activate these groups of the unemployed, who are already marginalized by assistance programs: women without professional experience aged 35 and more. Their social contacts are usually limited to groups who look for jobs in the same manner and their interactions with people who are employed or employers are very limited.

4. **The activities promoting professional development should be accompanied by a system of psychological support for women who have to cope with fulfilling the expectations linked with two social roles:** that of wife/mother and a working woman. Within the framework of the planned programs special modules should be designed which, on the one hand, would help women cope with the conflicting roles, and, on the other, would offer an adequate system of support for men. From the experience of the Partners Poland Foundation it can be seen that professional development programs aimed solely at women frequently fail to exploit the competences, strengths and capabilities of men. It would be beneficial to avoid such a mistake.
5. **During the planning of professional trainings the real competences of job seeking women** have to be identified together with the adequacy of their qualifications to the demands of the labor market. This question concerns not the analysis of the formal level of education but the practical skills which are useful on the labor market.

If you are interested in the experience of the Partners Poland Foundation in professional development programs for women please contact us at partners@fpp.org.pl



***Evaluation questionnaire for the publication
“How to help to find employment: a guide for NGOs and local institutions
working in a field of unemployment reduction”
and the research “Unemployed Women on Gori Labor Market”***

Dear reader!

Authors of the publication will appreciate if you find couple of minutes to provide your valuable feedback about the publication and research report:

1. What is your opinion about the report and publication:

2. How you can make use of information included in the publication and report in your work

3. Which particular problems/aspects of work with unemployed people should be additionally raised in the publication/or in the report

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Thank you very much for your help!

