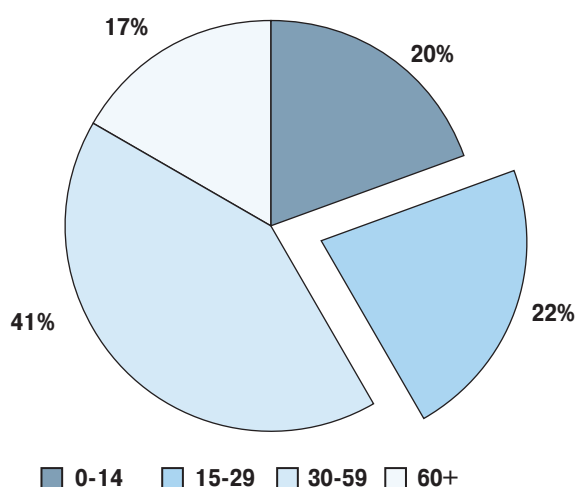


# YOUTH IN THE COMMONWEALTH OF INDEPENDENT STATES: A STATISTICAL PORTRAIT

## STRONG YOUTH POTENTIAL IN THE COMMONWEALTH OF INDEPENDENT STATES

More than **60 million young people** aged 15-29 years live in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), accounting for one-fifth of the region's total population.

**Age structure of the population of the CIS**  
(percent, 2014)



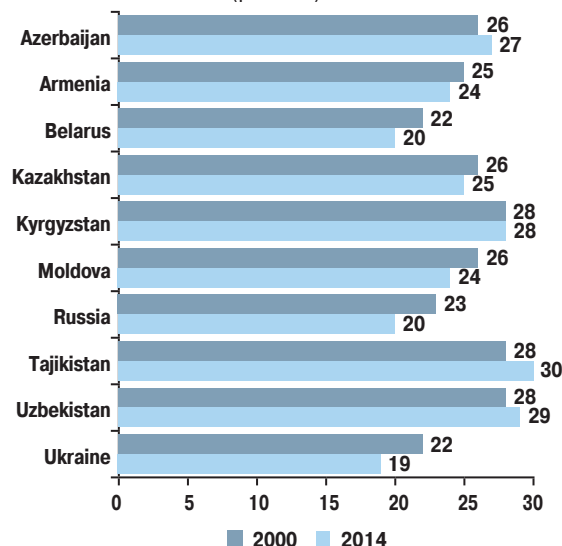
Most young people in the CIS have a relatively high level of education and enjoy a greater degree of freedom than their parents did. But the potential of the region's youth is not sufficiently recognised or invested in, with young people facing a high risk of becoming unemployed after they leave school. A significant number of young people, particularly those who become parents at an early age, experiences financial difficulties, and even poverty.

In addition, young people's interests are poorly represented in the legislative bodies of the CIS. Only one in 14 deputies of single-mandate Parliaments (or Lower Chambers) in the region is under the age of 35, and young women are even more under-represented in legislative bodies than are young men.

## DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF CIS COUNTRIES

The share of young people in the total population of CIS countries varies from 19 to 30 per cent and is largely dependent on the trends in birth rates. In recent years, the birth rate has been increasing in all CIS countries.

**Share of youth aged 15-29 in the total population**  
(percent)



### Age-specific fertility rates

(number of births per 1000 women of corresponding age)

|                   | < 20 |      | 20-24 |       | 25-29 |       |
|-------------------|------|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
|                   | 2000 | 2014 | 2000  | 2014  | 2000  | 2014  |
| <b>Azerbaijan</b> | 29.0 | 52.9 | 131.2 | 168.6 | 98.5  | 125.0 |
| <b>Armenia</b>    | 31.6 | 23.4 | 120.0 | 122.3 | 63.6  | 102.3 |
| <b>Belarus</b>    | 27.4 | 20.5 | 109.8 | 91.6  | 75.5  | 113.8 |
| <b>Kazakhstan</b> | 32.9 | 34.7 | 132.8 | 161.9 | 104.6 | 161.4 |
| <b>Kyrgyzstan</b> | 33.8 | 43.3 | 161.6 | 200.9 | 133.4 | 174.6 |
| <b>Moldova</b>    | 36.3 | 26.7 | 103.7 | 79.3  | 67.8  | 76.4  |
| <b>Russia</b>     | 27.4 | 26.0 | 93.6  | 89.8  | 67.3  | 110.2 |
| <b>Tajikistan</b> | 41.8 | 46.7 | 207.5 | 236.6 | 188.2 | 168.0 |
| <b>Uzbekistan</b> | 21.1 | 24.2 | 205.4 | 192.4 | 161.4 | 162.3 |
| <b>Ukraine</b>    | 32.1 | 27.0 | 94.9  | 89.9  | 57.8  | 91.3  |

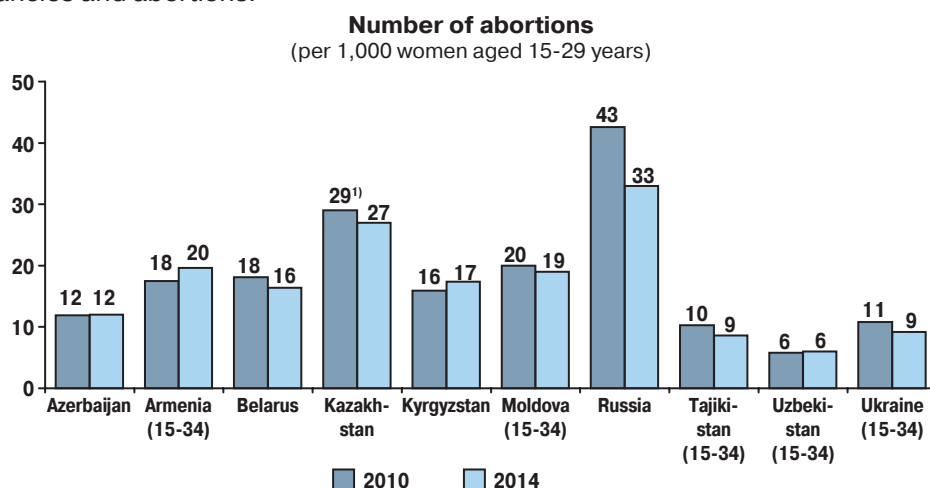
With an increasing average age of first marriage in the CIS countries, the average age of a mother at the first birth is also on the rise. A growing number of young people are postponing family formation and childbirth until they have secured work or formed their own business and experienced a stable salary and the career advancement they desire.

The CIS countries are characterized by high rates of divorce, including among young people, and of children born outside of a stable relationship. These circumstances can make young families more vulnerable, especially those with children, a considerable number of which experience poverty. They also increase the risk of legal insecurity for divorced or unmarried young mothers and their children.

## HEALTH PROTECTION AND PREVENTION OF EARLY MORTALITY

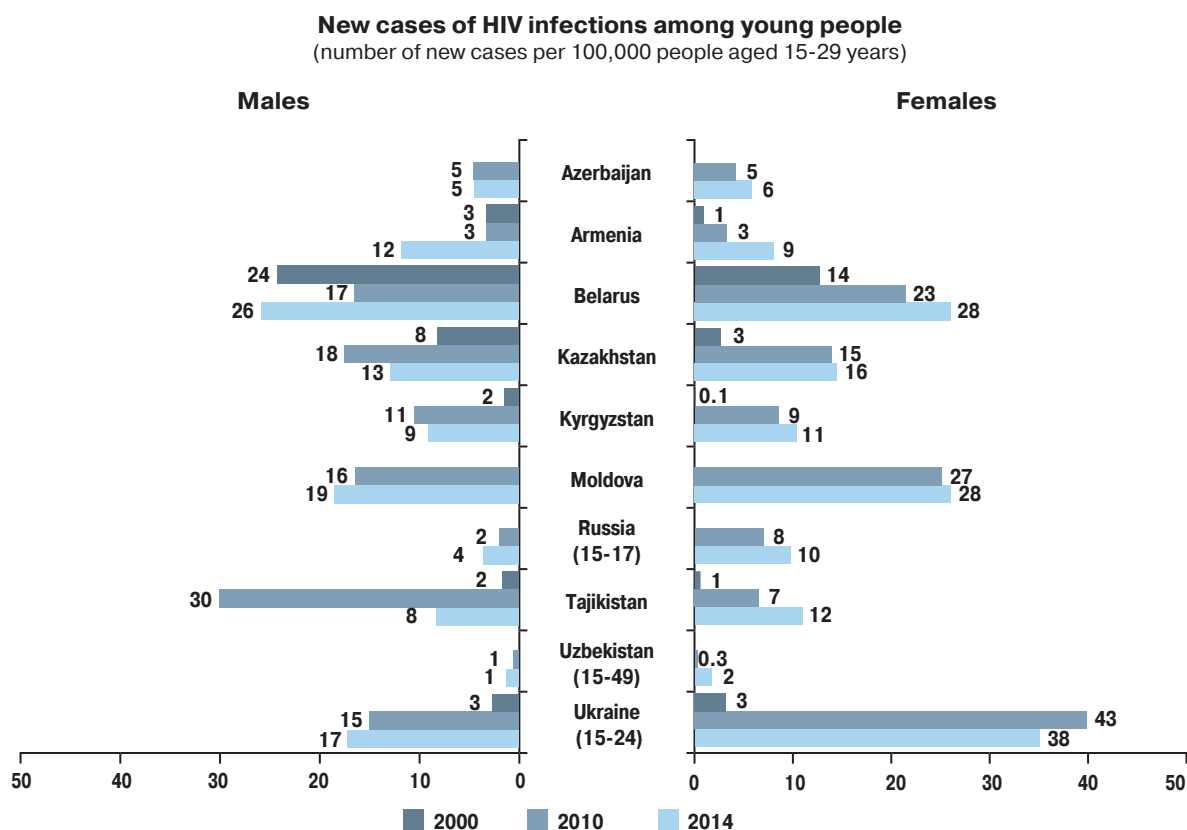
Statistics for CIS countries point to the need for additional measures aimed at improving health and a decrease of mortality.

Despite a steady downward trend, **the rate of teen pregnancies and abortions** in the CIS still significantly exceeds the corresponding indicators in most European Union countries and other developed nations. It is important to note that increasing the use of modern contraceptives in the CIS would help in the prevention of unwanted pregnancies and abortions.

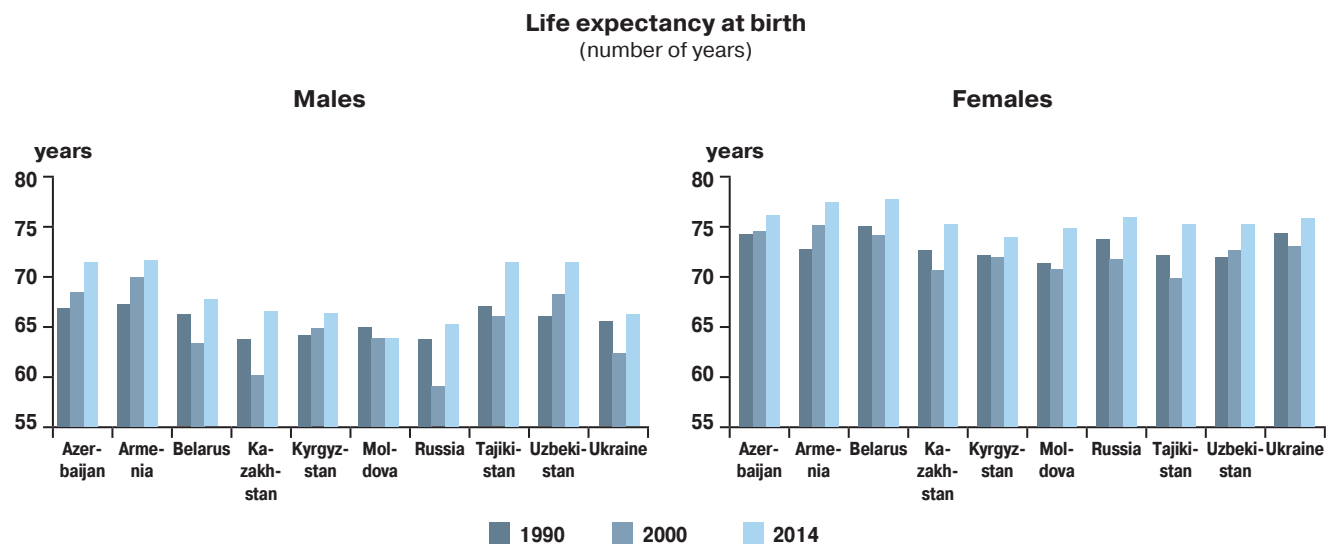


<sup>1)</sup> 15-34 years.

Greater attention needs to be paid to the protection of reproductive health of the population, especially that of young people, in the CIS countries, where the rates of **HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections** have seen a significant increase.



Over the past 15 years, life expectancy increased in all of the CIS countries, exceeding the level seen in the 1990s, with improvements ranging from three to six years. But despite these overall positive trends, there is still a significant gap in life expectancy between males and females, with women living on average 4 to 11 years longer than their male counterparts due – in part – to a much higher mortality of young men, especially from external causes.

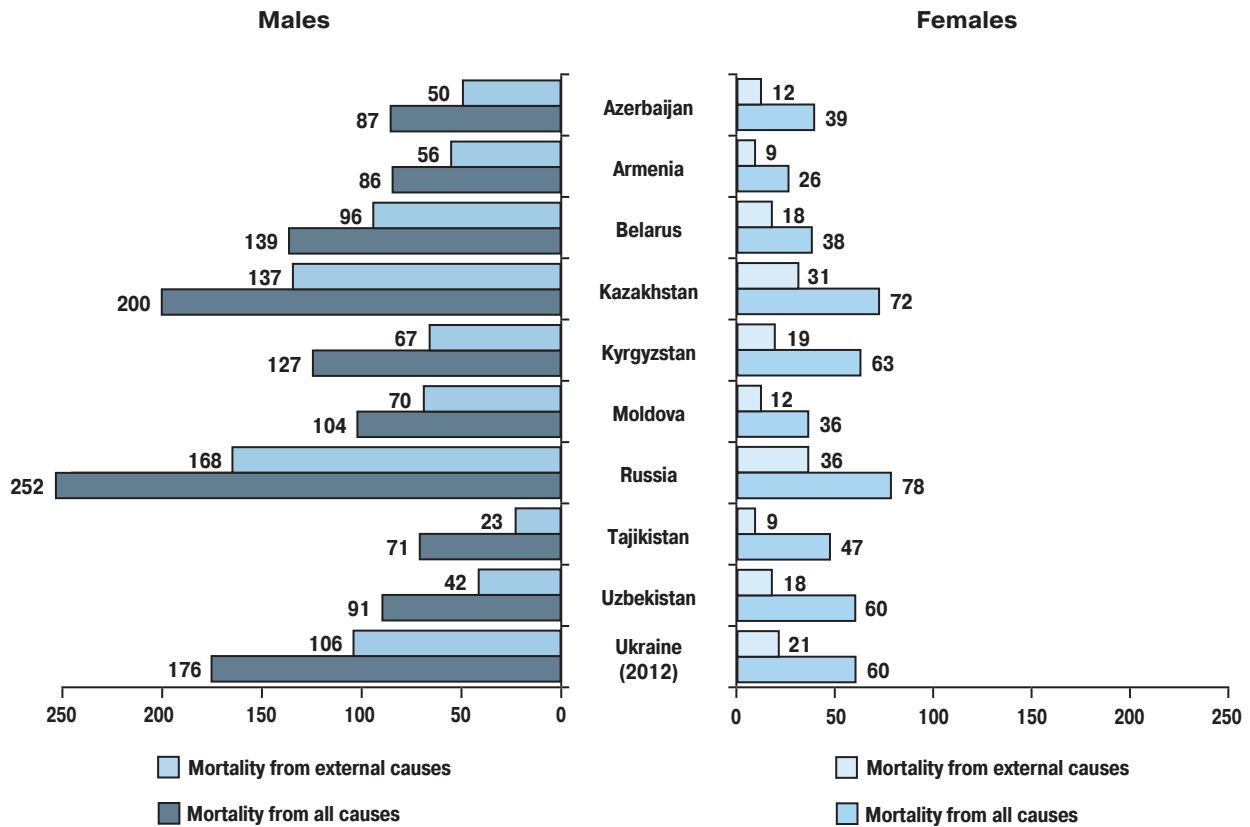


The increased **risk of mortality from external causes** – accidents and injuries, including injuries resulting from traffic accidents, poisoning, homicide, and suicide – faced by young people in the CIS requires additional efforts on the part of governments to establish and strengthen social and psychological support services. Such measures include expanding and improving the quality of helpline services for adolescents and young people who find themselves in difficult life situations; improving emergency medical services; and implementing educational programmes on safe behaviour, including road safety. It is crucial to improve the literacy and responsibility of drivers and pedestrians on safety issues, along with the quality of roads and the technical condition of vehicles.

Alcoholism, drug addiction, and substance abuse are serious manifestations of unhealthy lifestyles among some groups of young people, with those who are unemployed or otherwise marginalized especially vulnerable. Each year, some 0.1 mln young people aged 15-29 in the CIS receive a first-time diagnosis of alcoholism, drug addiction, or substance abuse; 80 per cent of these patients are males.

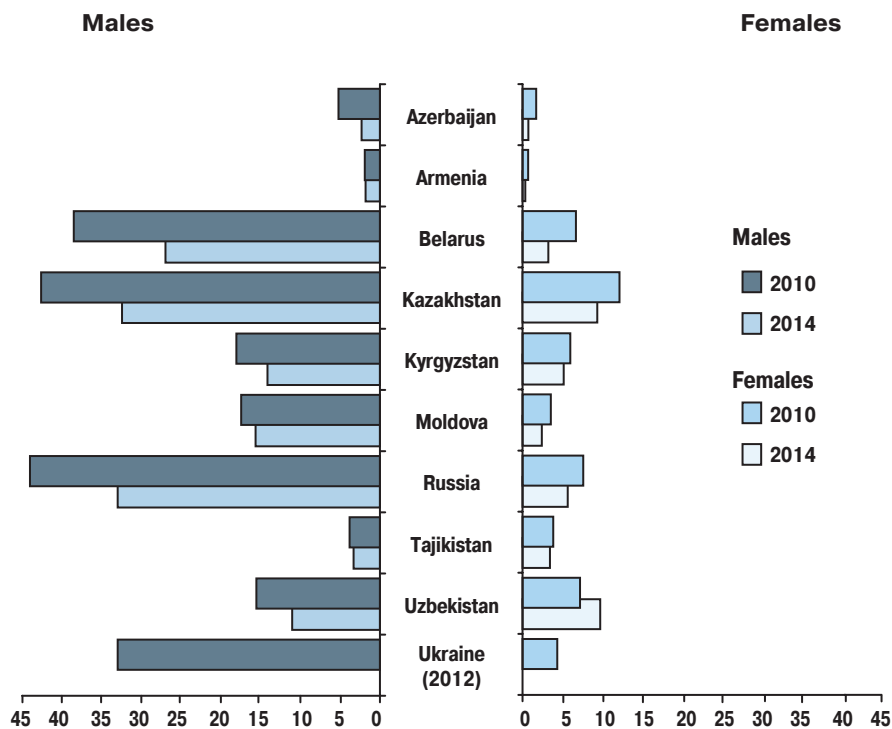
### Mortality due to external causes

(number of deaths per 100,000 people aged 15-29 years, by gender; 2014)



### Mortality from suicides

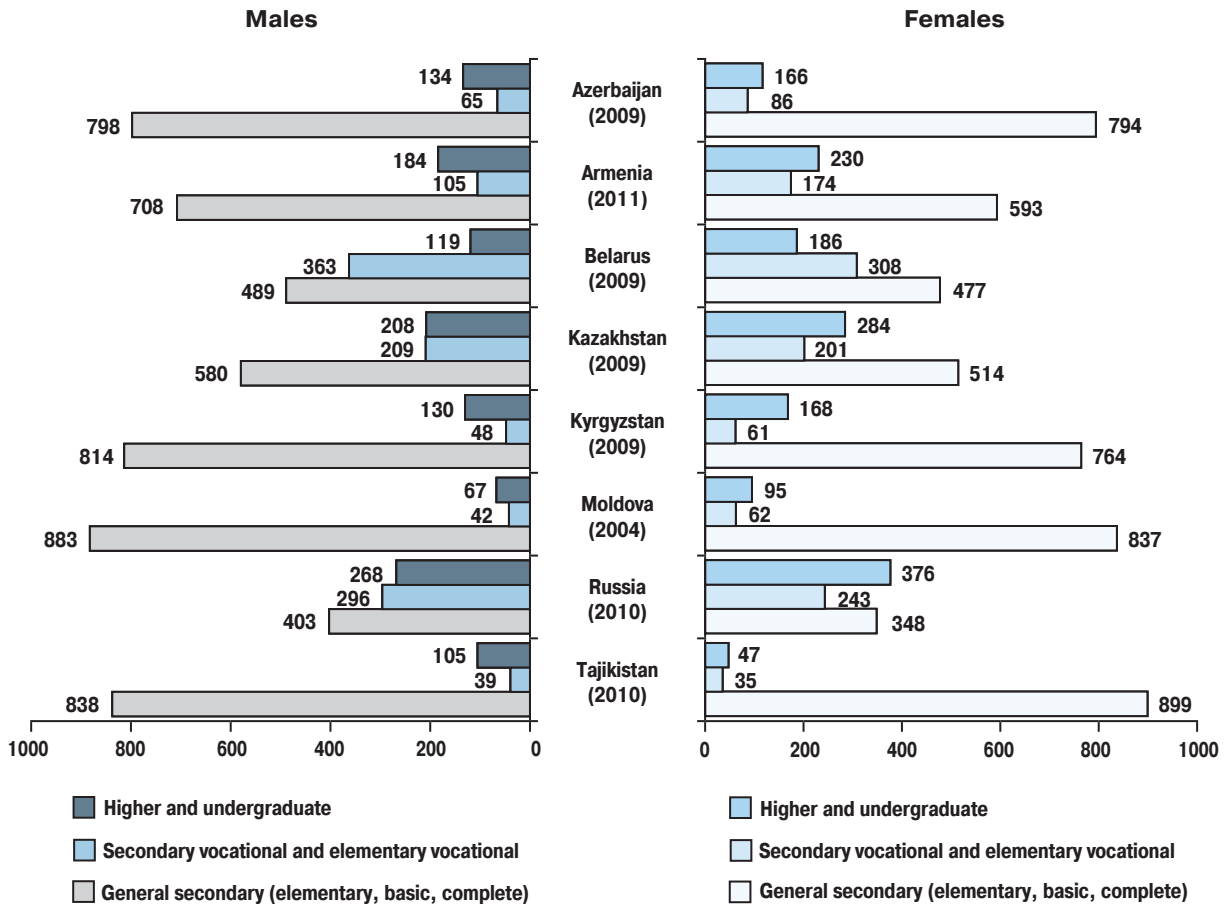
(15-29 years; number of deaths per 100000 population at the corresponding age and sex)



## EDUCATION LEVELS

**Women and men have equal rights to education** in the CIS, where relatively high levels of education have been attained among the youth and the population in general. In most CIS countries, females outnumber males in the student bodies of institutions of higher and secondary professional education.

**Education levels of males and females**  
(per 1,000 people aged 15-29, by gender, according to census data)



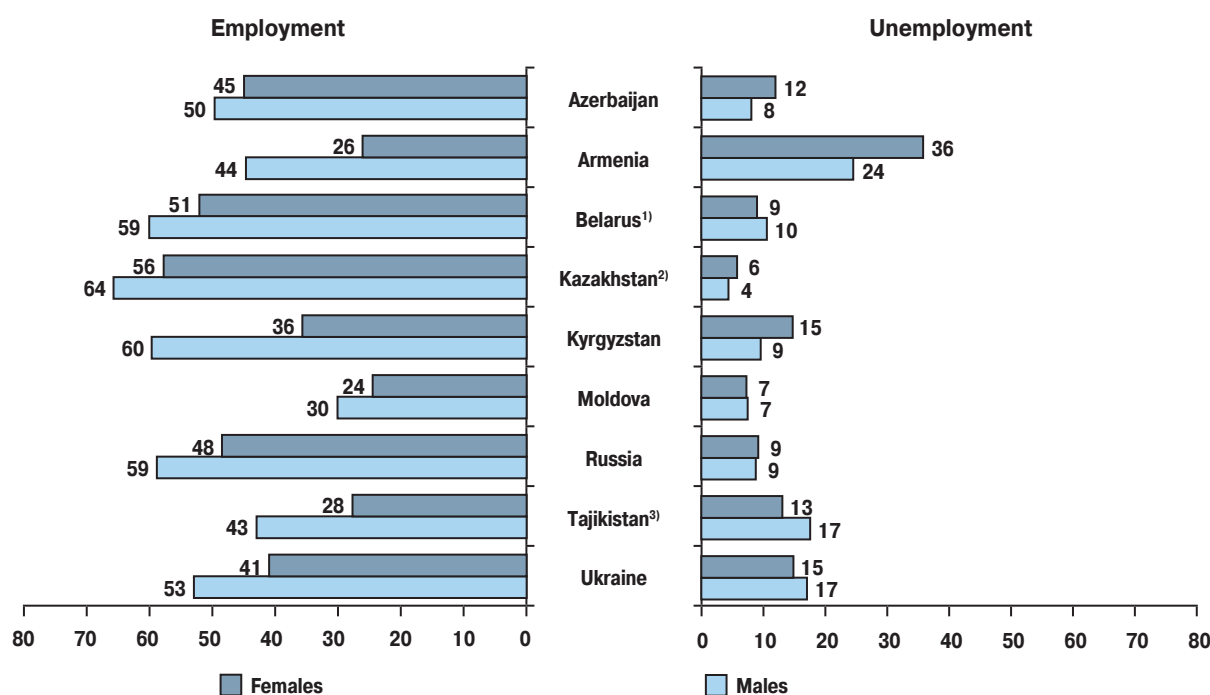
## YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN THE LABOUR MARKET

The high educational level of young people in the CIS does not, however, guarantee their success in the labour market. In most of the region's countries (except for Kazakhstan), there is a **high youth unemployment rate**, exceeding the general unemployment rate by 1.3 to 2 times. This situation is, to a certain extent, due to a structural imbalance between the needs of the economy, primarily of the manufacturing sector, for qualified specialists, and the supply of job-seeking young graduates from vocational schools, which exceeds the demand of the labour market.

As a result, in some countries there is a high proportion of young people, primarily women, who are neither working nor studying. For young mothers, their employment prospects are further hindered by a long waiting list for preschool institutions. As a result, women with young children tend to leave the labour market for several years, losing qualifications and necessary professional skills.

Among young people who are working in the CIS, most are employees, though a growing number are now employers. For example, in Kyrgyzstan, 46 per cent of employers are young men aged 15-29 and 23 per cent are young women in the same age group; in Azerbaijan, these figures are 45 per cent and 10 per cent, respectively; and in Kazakhstan, 19 per cent and 12 per cent.

**Youth employment and unemployment levels**  
(among people 15-29 years, according to labour force surveys; 2014)



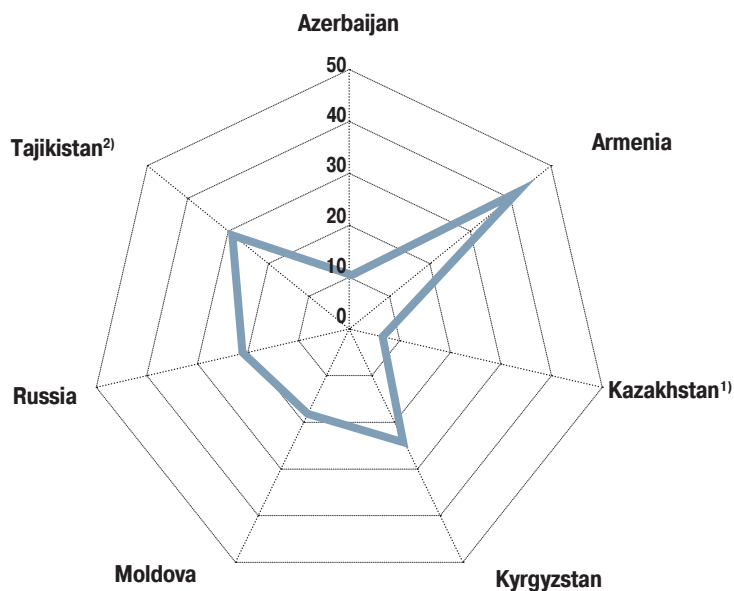
<sup>1)</sup> Source: Population Census 2009.

<sup>2)</sup> 15-28 years.

<sup>3)</sup> 2009.

Many young people in the CIS spend a year or more seeking work. Youth unemployment has significant negative impacts on society, especially when compounded by factors such as the lack of free access to sports and active recreation.

**Number of young people aged 15-29 seeking work for 12 months or more**  
(percentage of all unemployed of corresponding age, according to sample surveys of labour force; 2014)



<sup>1)</sup> 15-28 years.

<sup>2)</sup> 2009.

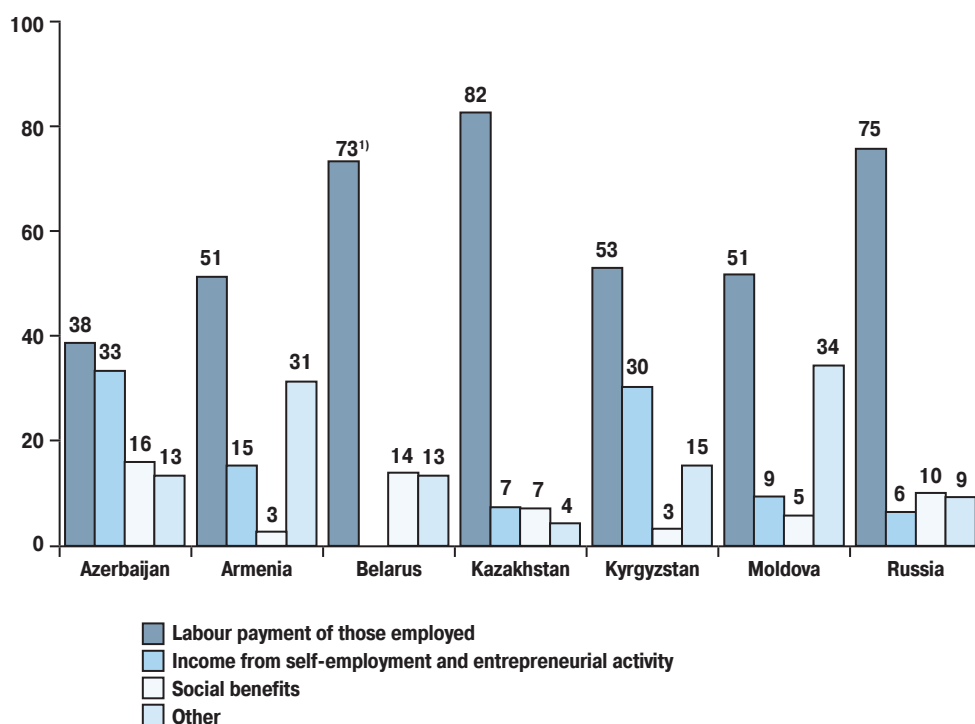
Youth unemployment also contributes to out-migration as many young people move to other countries in search of work, mainly within the CIS. These young people account for 20 to 40 per cent of the total number of migrants originating in the region. Though open labour markets have many beneficial aspects, a significant out-flow of a country's labour force, including its young people, impoverishes the human potential of these countries of origin, since it is generally the most enterprising and often the most educated members of a society who seek better prospects elsewhere.



## LIVING STANDARDS AMONG YOUNG FAMILIES

Youth in the CIS countries, like young people in many other parts of the world, are experiencing great difficulties in ensuring the material support of themselves and their families in the first years of their independent lives. The level of material well-being of young families often decreases significantly with the birth of children. The main source of income for young families in the CIS countries is income from employment.

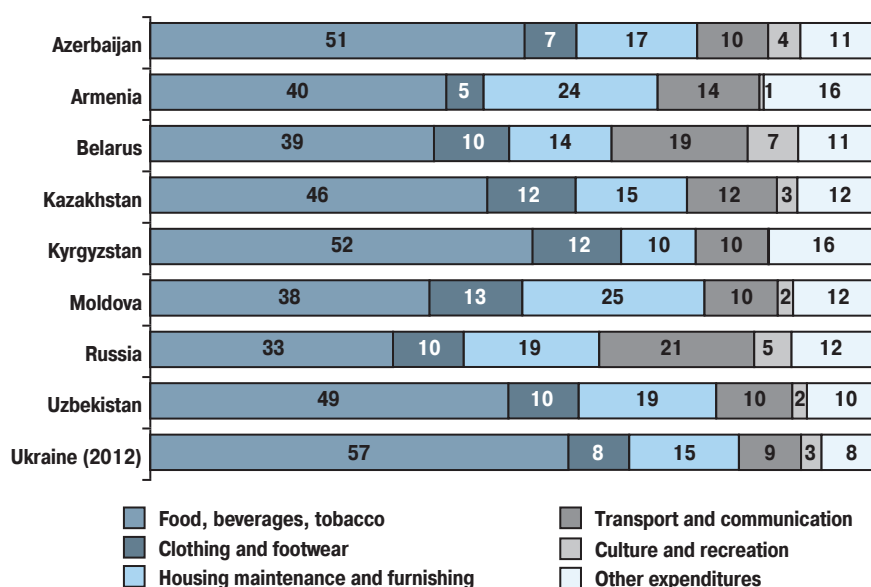
**Main income sources of households headed by a person aged under 30**  
(in percentage of total monetary income, according to sample household surveys; 2014)



<sup>1)</sup> Including income from self-employment and entrepreneurial activity.

Young families spend the majority of their budget on food, housing, and home furnishings and maintenance.

**Consumer expenditure of households headed by a person aged under 30**  
(in percentage of total expenditures, according to sample household surveys; 2014)



Compared to the general population in most CIS countries, young families on average spend less of their budget buying food and a greater share on clothes, footwear, transport, and communications. In some CIS countries, youth dedicate a higher share of their expenditures to culture, recreation, and leisure, including spending at hotels, cafes, and restaurants. These spending patterns represent differing priorities from those of older generations, rather than higher levels of discretionary income. According to time budget surveys carried out in the region, young people spend three to six hours a day in leisure pursuits, primarily watching TV, practicing sports, and engaging in other recreational activities.

**BUILDING A BETTER FUTURE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE**

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development opens up new possibilities for the youth of the CIS countries to fully realize their potential and the observance of their rights. Success in achieving the set goals of the Agenda and helping young people overcome the challenges they face in their lives requires the development and implementation of efficient national programmes based on an in-depth assessment of the current situation. Accurate, up-to-date statistical information plays an important role in this process, and must be strengthened in order to cover different aspects and challenges in the lives of young people.