

Job openings for female graduates rising in Iran

ANALYSIS

The surge in female employment over the last three years has led to a notable increase in the involvement of university-educated women in the job market of the country. Out of 100 employed women, more than 50 possess university degrees. It is important to highlight that the number of female graduates in the year to December 22, 2023, which was the start of the winter of the previous Iranian calendar year of 1402, experienced a 7.5 percent growth. Women's employment in Iran has experienced acceleration during the past three years, particularly following the containment of COVID-19. Remarkably, the most significant aspect of this development is the increase in women's employability. During this period, women's employment in entrepreneurship and self-employment sectors has witnessed growth, bolstered by government support.

The share of university-educated women's employment reached 50.9% of the total workforce in the winter of 1402. In other words, one out of every two working women in the labor market had higher education qualifications. Interestingly, the participation rate of female graduates also increased as their hope of securing employment aligned with their education levels motivated them to actively engage in the country's economy, thereby raising their job-seeking aspirations. This trend is reflected in the high share of the unemployment rate among female graduates compared to the total number of unemployed women. In the winter of 1402, the unemployment rate share of female graduates decreased by 0.8%, falling from 70.3% to 69.5%, indicating a rise in the employment share of female graduates.

Reasons for increased participation

Under the current administration, policies focused on developing information technology



The decrease in women's unemployment rate and the increase in their participation and employment rates in the winter of 1402 indicate that the women's labor market has prospered. As previously mentioned, the rise in women's engagement in domestic employment and participation in cooperatives and entrepreneurship reflects successful endeavors in this regard. Women's economic participation climbed to 13.8%, marking a 0.5% increase compared to the winter of 1401, while their employment rose to 11.6%, a 0.4% boost. During this period, total female unemployment also experienced a decline.

Growing employment of educated women

However, the expansion of service employment — a vital support system for the country's industrial and productive sectors, and an area that primarily necessitates education and skills — highlights that educated women have managed to bolster their employability in this sector, thanks to the provision of essential platforms and opportunities.

In the winter of 1402, the women's sector employed over 2,407,000 women, while the industrial sector engaged more than 950,000 women.

Although the women's share in the industrial sector experienced a slight decline in the winter of 1402, the service sector — the backbone of the country's economy — successfully attracted this demographic.

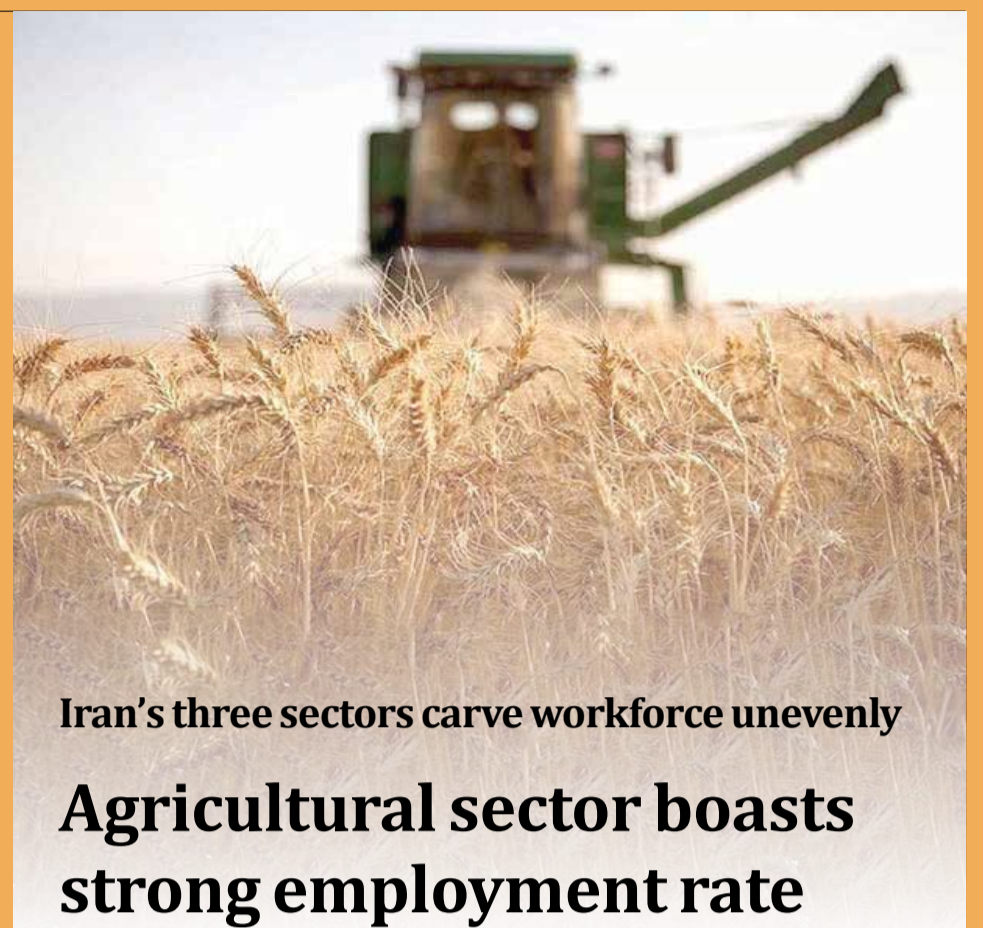
Educated women played a significant role in this sector. University-educated women held a larger portion of the labor market during the winter of 1402 compared to the same period in 2022. Analysis of statistical data from the winter of 1402 indicates that out of every 100 employed women, more than 50 had a university education — an upward trend from the winter of 1401.

infrastructure have generated multiple job opportunities for university-educated individuals.

The emergence of modern services, such as consulting and marketing, has attracted a skilled workforce in various sectors. Moreover, the growth of modern private sector industries requiring educated, skilled professionals familiar with cutting-edge technologies has contributed to reducing university graduate unemployment rates. On the one hand, many barriers to production growth have been removed by the government because without addressing these obstacles, the possibility of developing sustainable employment does not exist.

The rapid increase in educated women's share of the labor market has transformed job structures, facilitating women's entry into the workforce.

Critics often criticize the current government for the significant disparity in the employment market between women and men. It should be noted in response that there is a gradual need for social attitudes to change and for public opinion to accept that women should have access to various professions. This was highlighted by Mahmoud Karimi Biranvand, the Deputy for Entrepreneurship and Employment Development at the Ministry of Cooperatives, Labor, and Social Welfare, in an interview with "Iran Cultural and Press Institute." The societal perspective has not evolved much compared to previous decades, resulting in limited acceptance of women's participation in many job roles. Over the past two and a half years, the proportion of women, particularly graduates, in employment has increased, indicating that the government has facilitated women's employment and established the necessary infrastructure for their inclusion. These efforts represent the government's dedication to advancing opportunities for women in the workforce.



Iran's three sectors carve workforce unevenly

Agricultural sector boasts strong employment rate

ANALYSIS

An analysis of labor market statistical data from the closing months of the last Iranian year (ended on March 19, 2023) reveals that the agricultural sector's contribution in 21 provinces exceeded the national average of 12.9 percent. Attention to rural employment, the growth of ancillary and transformational industries in the agricultural sector over the past three years, has been one of the key factors contributing to the rise in the agricultural sector's share in the provinces, despite the persistent drought. Upon reviewing the report from the Statistical Centre of Iran, it is clear that the unemployment, employment, and economic participation rates in the provinces have shown improvement, resulting in favorable conditions across different economic sectors.

Comparing the final quarter of the last Iranian year to the same period two years ago, the participation rate was 40.8%, with an employment rate of 37.3%. This shows a decrease in unemployment and growth in both participation and employment rates. Studies indicate that the unemployment rate saw a balanced 8.6% decrease at the end of the last Iranian year compared to the same period two years ago. The unemployment rate decreased in 20 provinces, with 16 provinces witnessing a more significant drop than the national average. Moreover, the increase in participation rates across 19 provinces indicates that the labor market was dynamic, spurred by the growth in the active population over the past year.

Employment figures across three sectors

According to data from the Statistical Centre, the country's economy is classified into three sectors: Services, industry, and agriculture. Each sector's growth has the potential to drive the overall economy and contribute to the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). In the previous year's winter, the services sector maintained its position as the highest employment generator in the country, accounting for 53.6% of total employment. The industry sector ranked second, with 33.5% of the workforce employed in this sector last winter. Interestingly, this sector's share saw a 0.3% increase compared to March 19, 2022 (two years ago), while the services sector saw a slight 0.1% decrease.

During the last winter, more than 311,000 job seekers found employment in the industrial sector, and an additional 390,000 individuals secured jobs within the services sector. In contrast, the agriculture sector's share of overall employment reached 12.9% during this period, representing a 0.1% decline when compared to

the winter of 2022. Despite this marginal decrease, the agricultural sector still saw an increase in workers, with approximately 52,000 individuals joining its ranks. Out of the total 24,193,000 workers in the winter of last year, 3,110,000 workers were engaged in the agriculture sector. This highlights the significance of all three sectors in contributing to the country's workforce and overall economic growth.

Some provinces pick up the slack

During the winter of 2023, the majority of the country's provinces saw a higher concentration of employment within the agricultural sector than the national average. An analysis of labor market data from the Statistical Center's report reveals that 21 provinces boasted an employment share in agriculture surpassing the 12.9% national average.

With the exception of five provinces, the remaining 26 provinces exhibited an agricultural sector employment share of over 10%. Notably, Yazd had a 7.6% share, Isfahan 6.9%, Qom 2.8%, Alborz 1.9%, and Tehran 1.5%, representing the lowest agricultural sector employment shares among all provinces.

Kerman leads in employment

Provinces with the highest job creation within the agricultural sector include Kerman, North Khorasan, Ardebil, Lorestan, and West Azarbaijan.

In these five provinces, the agricultural sector's employment share exceeded 22%. Notably, Kerman Province boasted the highest share at 40.4%, significantly outperforming the other economic sectors in job creation. Furthermore, Kerman's agricultural sector average employment was 27.5% higher than the national average.

North Khorasan secured the second spot with a 29.1% share, followed by Ardebil at 26.4%, Lorestan at 23.2%, and West Azarbaijan at 22.8%. Provinces such as Kermanshah and Kurdistan also saw notable shares, reaching 19%.

In Hamedan, Zanjan, Hormuzgan, and Golestan, the agricultural sector's average employment reached 18%, marking a 6% higher contribution than the national average.

Next in line were Ilam, South Khorasan, and Gilan, boasting a 16% share and 4% increase above the national average. East Azarbaijan, Khuzestan, and Mazandaran provinces fell within the 14% range, while Fars and Qazvin provinces reached the 13% mark. South Khorasan and Sistan and Baluchestan provinces held steady at 12%. The current administration's proactive labor market policies have fostered an environment conducive to labor market equilibrium. This strategic approach, encompassing mechanisms such as job search platforms, vocational training, and direct or self-employment opportunities, has effectively influenced labor supply and demand.