

## 11.3 THE MAIN CHARACTERISTICS OF WOMEN IN PUBLIC WORKS

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The public works scheme was established as an answer to the unfavourable employment situation which came about due to the financial and economic crisis commencing in 2008. The scheme restarted in 2011 in a new form with special programmes including the ‘Start model programmes’ and the national and longer-term public works programmes.

Its initial goal was the activation of the inactive and the long-term unemployed and it also aimed at ensuring a transitional labour opportunity for those who had lost their jobs due to the economic crisis. The public works scheme plays an important role in the activities of the municipalities, especially where market-based labour demand is weak. With the change and improvement of the economic situation public works also has gone through continuous transformation: the number of public works participants has significantly decreased and currently its main goal is to ensure that public works participants attain a transition into the open labour market.

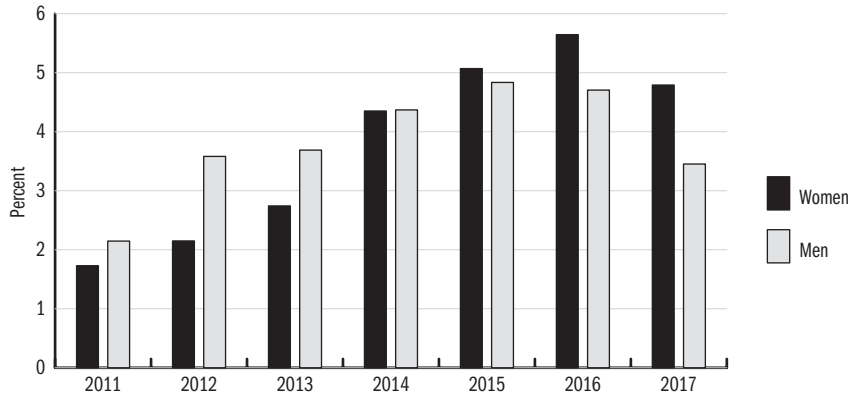
The data of the process-supporting integrated system (BM-IR) of the National Employment Service and the Labour Force Survey (LFS) of the CSO contain information on the characteristics of women enrolled in public works. The number of female public workers reached its peak in 2016 – by exceeding 112 thousand individuals and since then their number has been continuously shrinking (*Figure 11.3.1*). While the proportion of women within the total number of public workers was slightly above one-third in 2012 their number already exceeded the number of male public workers in 2016 and since that time there have been constantly more women involved than men.

Until 2013 the weight of public work in female employment lagged behind that of men. Then, in 2014 the participation rate of both men and women was 4.4 percent. It could be established that the role of public works played a more important role in female employment than in the case of men. The share of women within the public works was the highest – 5.6 percent – in 2016. Since that time their participation rate fell below 5 percent.

Over recent years the change in the composition of the educational attainment of women clearly demonstrates that public work programmes involve indeed the most disadvantaged individuals. Since 2011 the share of participants with less or no more than primary education (8 grades in Hungary) is more and more significant while the weight of women with a secondary vocational qualification and tertiary qualification shows a declining trend. The participation in public works became a less and less real alternative for younger or better educated women while at the same time this kind of employment

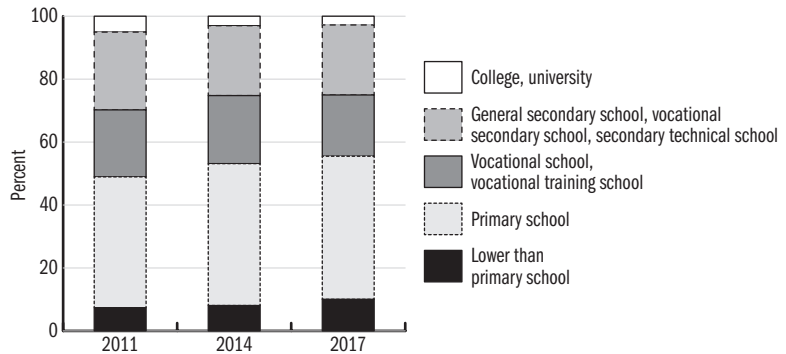
provides a sort of safety net for the unskilled or the older workers as well as for those living in a settlement which is lagging behind.

**Figure 11.3.1: The share of women within public workers according to the BM-IR compared to the number of employed women according to the LFS (percent)**



Source: Own editing based on BM-IR and LFS.

**Figure 11.3.2: The share of female public workers by educational attainment (percent)**



Source: Own editing based on the data set of BM-IR and the National Info-communication Service Zrt. (NISZ).

As well as the decline in the number of public works participants – and thus the decline of the female participants – those individuals have to be mentioned too who in spite of the favourable labour market conditions and the labour shortage in certain sectors are not able to leave public works. This is measured by the so-called locking-in indicator, which shows the number of months spent in public works by the individual before entering into public works referring to a certain period of time. If this indicator exceeds 12 months in the last three years the individual is considered to be locked-in in public works. In 2017 59.1 percent of women and 69.7 percent of men were recorded as locked-ins in the public works. Consequently, the long-term par-

ticipation in public works is less typical for women than men. Locking-in, however is more frequent among women over the age of 50 out of whom 72 percent belonged to this category. (In the case of 50+ men this proportion was 77.4 percent.) In 2017 the share of women below the age of 25 who were considered as locked-ins was 24.0 percent while in the case of women of the best working age (25–50 years) this proportion was 57.9 percent. After six months of leaving the public works 23.7 percent of women below 24 and 12.3 percent of women above 50 were in employment in the primary labour market. The same exit rate was only 4.8 percent among women with less or no more than primary education while among women with a tertiary qualification it was 44.5 percent.

In the labour force survey of the CSO the number of individuals<sup>1</sup> who chose ‘public works participant’ as labour market status was 190.9 thousand in the third quarter of 2017<sup>2</sup> which is 8 percent higher than the average staff number according to the administrative register on public workers in the same period however it was broadly consistent with the data calculated from the monthly average staff numbers.

Out of the 190.9 thousand public workers 104.5 thousand were women. More than half of female public workers lived in a household where they were the single person in employment (in a low-paid job). Or if there was another employed person in the household he/she was public worker too. This leads directly to the consequence that the per capita income in the majority of the households of public worker women was only enough to join the lowest income deciles. The proportion of those household members who work in the primary labour market was the highest in the age group 30–49 – to which half of the public worker women belonged. Nevertheless, this proportion barely reached 50 percent. The labour market characteristics of the households of male public workers seems to be even more unfavourable. Only less than one-third of their households had a ‘normal’ (primary labour market) employee and – not entirely independent of this – the proportion of households where the employed person was hired in the framework of public works was even larger than in the case of women.

Over the study period a child below the age of 15 was growing up in 45 percent of the households of female public workers while at least three children lived in 13 percent of the households. An undeniable advantage of the public works for mothers is that the employment is ensured at the place of residence and therefore it is more reconcilable with their child-care duties than a normal market job which in spite of the higher potential income would require daily commuting. 15 percent of the public worker women claimed themselves to be Roma. Public worker women were the single earners in 30 percent of the non-Roma households while this proportion was 38 percent in the case of Roma women.

1 As the result of the weighting  
2 Due to the rotation-panel nature of the survey the analysis was limited to a typical quarter from the respect of public work.