

SURVEY REVEALS WIDENING GENDER GAP IN UGANDA'S WORKFORCE

By Umaru Kashaka

The latest labour market survey shows that Bunyoro sub-region has the highest share of people in work, with an employment-to-population ratio (EPR) of 57.3%. Kampala follows at 51.8%, while Buganda stands at 49.8%.

EPR measures the proportion of people (working age) who are employed. In simple terms, it shows how many people in a given population have jobs, implying that Bunyoro has more employed people than any other sub-region in Uganda.

Analysts say this indicator helps show how well an economy is using its productive labour resource.

Nationally, EPR among persons aged 15 and above stands at 44.7%, up from 43% in 2021, with 53.1% of males employed, compared to 37.4% of females, reflecting a significant gender gap.

According to the 2021 labour market survey, about two out of every five people aged 14 to 64 were employed. This was a slight increase from 39% recorded in 2019/2020.

Other sub-regions with above national average EPR ratios include Ankole (48.3%), Toro (47.4%) and Karamoja (47.1%).

On the other hand, Bukedi has the lowest ratio (28.0%), followed by Acholi (33.9%), Elgon (34.4%) and Teso (35.2%).

This is according to the 2025 labour market survey report released by the Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS) in Kampala last Thursday.

The survey, which was conducted between March and September last year, comprised the household module of the questionnaire and the establishment module.

It covered households, informal and formal establishments with the main objective of providing insights into the composition and dynamics of labour market indicators and the associated statistics for assessing labour market supply and demand.

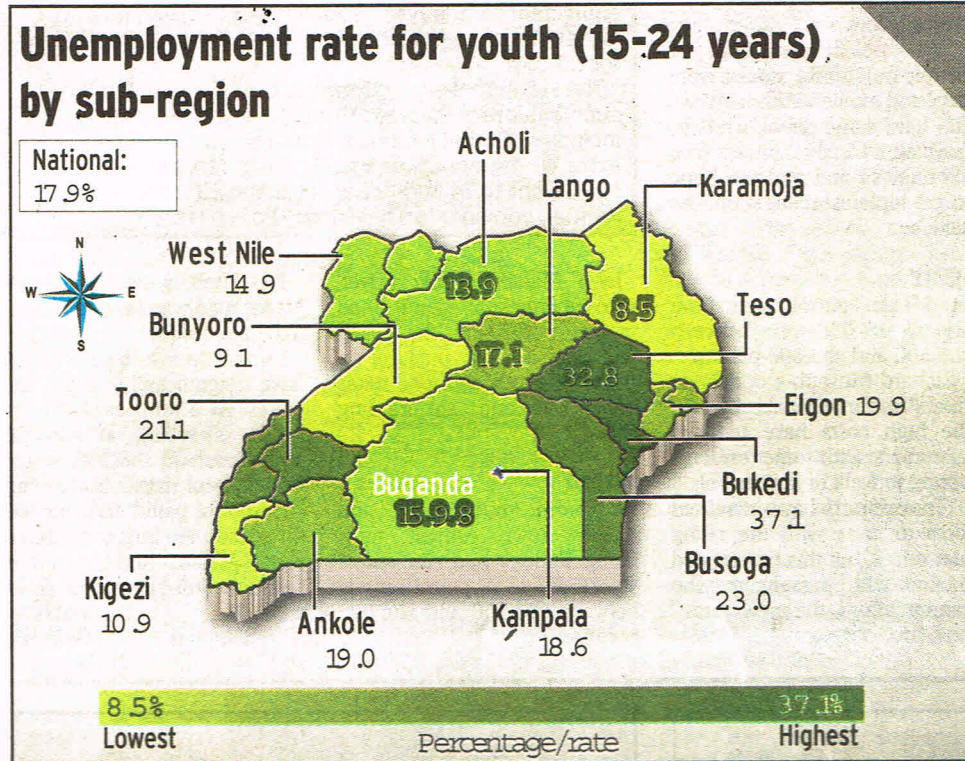
The report also shows that more people in urban areas are employed than those in the rural settings. In towns and cities, 56.9% of men and 39.9% of women are employed, compared to 50.3% of men and 35.6% of women in rural areas.

ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES

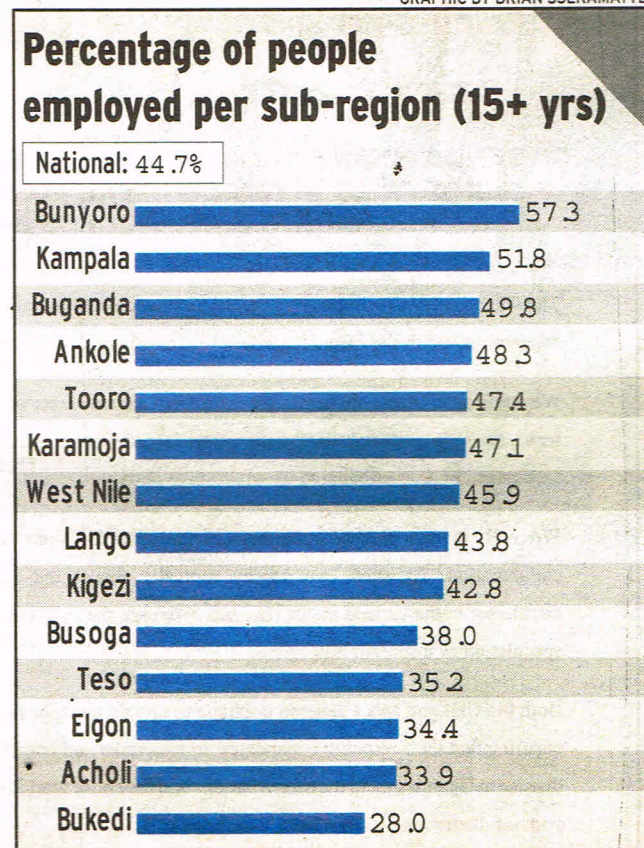
The report also shows that the distribution of employment by sector, that is: agriculture, forestry and fishing, industry and services. At the national level, employment was dominated by the services

EMPLOYMENT: REGIONS WITH HIGHEST, LOWEST RATES NAMED

GRAPHIC BY BRIAN SSEKAMATTE



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remains an important source of employment, particularly in rural areas," UBOS senior statistician Elizabeth Nyarantwari said while presenting the findings.

Analysis by gender shows that males were mainly engaged in services and agriculture, whereas females were concentrated in services, with a smaller share in industry.

Female employment in agriculture stood at 36.7%. Rural-urban disaggregation indicates that rural populations were predominantly employed in agriculture (46.9%), while the urban populations remained concentrated in services (60.4%).

Informality emerged as a

METHODOLOGY

Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS) used the sampling frame of the 2024 National Population and Housing Census. It selected 1,035 enumeration areas and out of each area, they selected 10 households, giving them a sample of 10,350 households. An enumeration area which had a big population had a higher chance of being selected into the sample.

Based on 1,035 enumeration areas, UBOS covered 4,161 informal establishments out of a sample of 4,951, and the response rate was 84.0%. In formal establishments, the sampling frame was the 2019/2020 Census of Business Establishments updated to 2024 using administrative data sources.

Out of a sample of 2,985 formal establishments, they covered 2,635, and the coverage rate was 88.3%.

defining feature of the labour market, with 87.6% of the employed persons engaged in informal employment, excluding agriculture, compared to only 12.4% in formal employment.

Karamoja sub-region had the highest number of people (15 years and above) in the informal sector at 96.8%, followed by Kigezi (93.7%), Teso (93.0%) and Bunyoro (92.9%).

Kampala stood lowest in informal employment at 73.5%.

YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT

The latest report also indicates that nationally, the youth unemployment rate stood at 17.9%, up from 17% in 2021, with a higher rate among females (21.0%) compared to males (15.2%).

By rural-urban, the unemployment rate was higher in urban areas (18.7%) compared to rural

areas (17.2%). However, unemployment rates among female youth were higher in the rural areas (21.6%) compared to the urban areas (20.3%).

Sub-regional findings showed that youth unemployment was highest in Bukedi (37.1%), Teso (32.8%), and Busoga (23.0%) and lowest in Karamoja (8.5%) and Bunyoro (9.1%). The report notes, that youth unemployment in Kampala (Capital City Authority) stood at (18.6%), which was slightly above the national average (18.6%).

INDUSTRIAL PARKS

A total of 29,705 persons were employed in industrial and business parks and agricultural parks in Uganda. More than half of the employees (15,099) were employed in the Kampala Industrial and Business Park in Namanve, Mukono district.

There were more males, accounting for 66.9% (19,870 employees) than females, who accounted for 33.1% (9,835) in the industrial and agricultural parks. The manufacturing sector employed most of the persons (13,354 employees) while transport and the storage sector employed the least number of persons (447).

There were more permanent employees (15,929) than casual employees (13,776) in these parks.

REACTIONS

Amos Lugoloobi, the finance state minister (planning), said of the approximately 2.3 million formal employees, nearly 30,000 (1.3%) are in industrial parks.

"This shows that the government initiative is in the right direction. In the long run, we shall be able to capitalise on these developments to ensure that every Ugandan is gainfully employed, well remunerated and motivated to spur high labour productivity levels," Lugoloobi said, while launching the report.

He also said the report assists the Government to effectively plan and implement policy shifts necessary to reduce unemployment by supporting the skilling of labour.

"So, the permanent secretary of the labour ministry [Aggrey Kibenge] needs to promote this culture of productivity. How productive are we? How skilled is my labour force? Sometimes we assume that they are very productive - even in civil service, you find so many people employed but they are producing completely nothing," Lugoloobi said.

Chris Mukiza, the UBOS executive director, said they have noted that unemployment is a key problem in the country