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# COUNTRY GENDER PROFILE ARMENIA

EU4GENDEREQUALITY  
REFORM HELPDESK

FEBRUARY 2024



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# ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

<b>ADB</b>	Asian Development Bank
<b>CEDAW</b>	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
<b>CGP</b>	Country Gender Profile
<b>CLIP</b>	Country Level Implementation Plan
<b>CSO</b>	civil society organisation
<b>EUD</b>	European Union Delegation
<b>GAP</b>	Gender Action Plan
<b>GBV</b>	gender-based violence
<b>GDP</b>	gross domestic product
<b>GEWE</b>	gender equality and women's empowerment
<b>GRB</b>	gender-responsive budgeting
<b>ICT</b>	information and communications technology
<b>IFC</b>	International Finance Corporation
<b>LGBTQI+</b>	lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender queer and intersex
<b>NAP</b>	National Action Plan
<b>NEET</b>	not in employment, education or training
<b>NSC</b>	National Statistical Committee
<b>NSS</b>	National Security Service
<b>SDGs</b>	Sustainable Development Goals
<b>SGBV</b>	sexual and gender-based violence
<b>SME</b>	small and medium-sized enterprise
<b>SRB</b>	sex ratio at birth
<b>SRHR</b>	sexual and reproductive health and rights
<b>STEM</b>	science, technology, engineering and mathematics
<b>UPR</b>	Universal Periodic Review
<b>WPS</b>	women, peace and security

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Country Gender Profile (CGP) of the Republic of Armenia has been developed in the framework of the EU4 Gender Equality Reform Helpdesk project, funded by the European Union (EU) and implemented by NIRAS. It addresses the main areas of the EU Action Plan III 2020–2025 on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment in External Relations (GAP III). The goal of the present assessment is to provide the European Delegation to Armenia with comprehensive information and recommendations to guide decision-making with respect to the development of the Country Level Implementation Plan (CLIP) for the GAP III.<sup>1</sup>

This Country Gender Profile is an updated version of the profile developed in 2021, and focuses on the 2021–2023 period.

## Main findings

In recent years, Armenia has made some progress on the [Global Gender Gap Index](#), calculated each year by the World Economic Forum. Its ranking rose incrementally rise from 102nd position in 2016, to 97th in 2018, and 98th in 2019 and 2020.<sup>2</sup> The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Nagorno Karabakh in 2020 affected Armenia’s ranking on the Global Gender Gap Index 2021, which fell to 114th place.<sup>3</sup> Significant progress since then has led to Armenia’s ranking rising to 61st among the 146 countries in the Global Gender Gap Index 2023.<sup>4</sup>

Significant changes have occurred in terms of Armenia’s performance on the Global Gender Gap’s sub-index of economic participation, with the country’s ranking rising from 96th place in 2021, to 84th in 2022, and 52nd in 2023 on the sub-index. This reflects important progress on women’s labour force participation rate. Armenia ranks first among countries with respect to the percentage of the workforce who are women (52.7% on average), far above the world average (39.5%).<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> All of the sources for the data included in this executive summary are presented below in the body of the report.

<sup>2</sup> World Economic Forum, *Global Gender Gap Index 2021*, 2021. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/244387/the-global-gender-gap-index>

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> World Economic Forum, *Global Gender Gap Index 2023*, 2023. [https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_GGGR\\_2023.pdf](https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2023.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Countries ranked by the percentage of the workforce who are women, September 2023. [https://www.qualtrics.com/blog/countries-ranked-by-female-workforce/?fbclid=IwAR1jxGIBnXaYlfa0YdH0Sc91\\_yocz1NCVM9VN3gnOWQc4boeZRc7aGvw4xs](https://www.qualtrics.com/blog/countries-ranked-by-female-workforce/?fbclid=IwAR1jxGIBnXaYlfa0YdH0Sc91_yocz1NCVM9VN3gnOWQc4boeZRc7aGvw4xs)

During the 2020 war in Nagorno Karabakh, about 80% of the persons displaced from the conflict-affected region to Armenia were women and children. In 2023, persons forcibly displaced to Armenia arrived with their entire families. Since 24 September 2023, the Government of Armenia has reported the arrival of 100,631 new refugees, 50% of whom are women and girls. Among these refugees are an estimated 2,000 women pregnant women, 1,400 of whom were expected to give birth within six months of their displacement.

There are **relatively more extremely poor women than men in Armenia**. The poorest households in Armenia are women-headed households, and households with children under 6 years old. There are twice as many women-headed households (25%) among extremely poor households than households headed by men (12%). Over two-thirds of women-headed households do not include an employed family member.

Approximately 30% of households in Armenia are food-insecure. Among **households affected by food insecurity, 33% are headed by women (among all women-headed households) and 24% by men** (among all households headed by men).

A baseline study on social norms by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (UN Women) indicates that 59% of men are the main breadwinners in Armenian families. Roughly 30% of the study's respondents report that both men and women contribute equally to the household.

Gender differences also exist in terms of child poverty, as there are relatively more girls among extremely poor children (2.8%) than boys (2.3%).

**Women's political participation remains relatively low**, although the number of parliamentary seats held by women has increased significantly, rising from 9.9% in 2017 to 35.5% in 2023. Only two women are ministers, and there are no women among the governors of Armenia's regions. Some changes have been reported in terms of the **gendered aspects of voting behaviour**. Compared to elections in 2018, women's participation increased by 3.8% in the 2021 elections, whereas men's participation decreased by 4.3%. Some differences have also been reported among employed and unemployed women in this regard. **Employed women are more active in elections** and make more active, conscious choices.

Social attitudes toward gender roles remain rigid. Despite some positive changes in social attitudes towards women's leadership, social stereotypes persist with regard to women's role in politics. The Gender Social Norms Index shows that 92% of Armenia's population hold at least one **gender-related bias**. More men share at least two biases (82%) than women (68%),<sup>6</sup> and twice as many women have no biases (10%) than men (5%). Prevalent biases concern economic participation and physical integrity, while the fewest biases are recorded with respect to education and gender.

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<sup>6</sup> Gender Social Norms Index, June 2023. <https://hdr.undp.org/content/2023-gender-social-norms-index-gsni#/indicies/GSNI>

**One major reason for women's absence from the labour market is their engagement in unpaid household activities.** The number of women outside of the labour force among 25–49-year-olds has increased since 2021. In 2021, 70% of persons in this age group who not in the labour market were women.<sup>7</sup> In 2022, this proportion increased to 82% among 25–29-year-olds, and 80% among 25–49-year-olds.<sup>8</sup>

For men, employment reaches its peak among 25–39-year-olds, while for women, employment reaches its peak among 40–54-year-olds.<sup>9</sup> This means that women are out of the labour market during their most employable years, which puts them at a considerable disadvantage in terms of employment overall. Women tend to have fewer skills, less working experience, and employers are more reluctant to hire women over the age of 40.

**Marital status** plays a role in employment opportunities. Among all groups of women, divorced women represent the majority of employed women in Armenia. Among men, married men are the group most involved in the labour market. The greatest discrepancies are apparent among couples with children. The number of children a woman has affects her labour market-related activities, whereas the number of children a man has does not affect his activities in the labour market. **Mothers of two children have a non-participation rate in the labour market that is six times higher than the rate for fathers of two children.** This situation is clearly reflected in social perceptions, as 66% of Armenian women, and 75% of Armenian men, believe that pre-school children are better off if their mother does not work.

**Armenia's unemployment rate is fairly high (16.6%).**<sup>10</sup> This is the highest unemployment rate among countries that are members of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). Women comprise 51% of the long-term unemployed population.<sup>11</sup> Among beneficiaries of the Annual Programme of State Regulations of Employment, there are far more women (63%) than men (37%). The rate of lowest unemployment rate is among widowed women (9%), almost half the rate recorded for widowed men (16%).

In 2022, 38% of young women and 16% of young men between 15 and 29 years old were not in employment, education or training (NEET).<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia, *Women and Men in Armenia 2022*, Government of the Republic of Armenia, Yerevan, [armstat.am/file/article/gender\\_2022\\_n.pdf](https://armstat.am/file/article/gender_2022_n.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia, *Women and Men in Armenia 2023*, Government of the Republic of Armenia, Yerevan, <https://www.armstat.am/file/article/gender-2023.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> Honorati, M., et al., *Work for a Better Future in Armenia: An Analysis of Jobs Dynamics*, World Bank, Yerevan, 2019. <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/387401564380250230/pdf/Work-for-a-Better-Future-in-Armenia-An-Analysis-of-Jobs-Dynamics.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> Oxygen Foundation, *Road Map for Ensuring Equal Labor Rights for Women and Men in Armenia*, Oxygen Foundation, Yerevan, [https://oxygen.org.am/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Labor-Market-Armenia-Road-map-main.pdf?fbclid=IwAR0X6C2ZDYuuuDygKXQ0\\_rN9OkTJqUXd5i6XyG2w\\_ZMB2qbmXvZm1hRtyBE](https://oxygen.org.am/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Labor-Market-Armenia-Road-map-main.pdf?fbclid=IwAR0X6C2ZDYuuuDygKXQ0_rN9OkTJqUXd5i6XyG2w_ZMB2qbmXvZm1hRtyBE)

<sup>11</sup> Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia, *Women and Men in Armenia 2023*, Government of the Republic of Armenia, Yerevan, <https://www.armstat.am/file/article/gender-2023.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

According to the National Statistical Committee, the overall **gender pay gap** in Armenia in 2022 was 39.2%.<sup>13</sup> The **gender pay gap** in the country has increased since 2018 by 3.9 points, meaning that women earn, on average, 61% of what men earn for the same work or work of equal value. Armenia's gender pay gap is 2.5 times higher than the EU average, and is the second greatest gender wage gap among 17 upper-middle-income countries.

There is a large **gender gap in favour of men among employers** in Armenia, as 86% of employers are men, whereas only 14% are women. Women are almost twice as likely to be engaged as contributing family workers (65% of whom are women) than men (35%).

Overall, there is **horizontal and vertical gender segregation** in Armenia's labour market, which favours men. Horizontal segregation refers to segregation within certain professions and specialisations, whereas vertical segregation refers to segregation among the positions occupied. Managerial positions are occupied by men 2.4 times more often than by women. For example, among production and operations managers, there are almost twice as many men (68%) as women (35%). Similar trends are apparent among the managers of small enterprises (73% of whom are men, while 27% are women).

Moreover, 60% of women work in sectors that are not particularly lucrative, including agriculture, education and health. Fewer women than men are employed in technical fields, such as manufacturing, transportation, storage, construction, mining, electricity, gas, and the steam sector. These technical sectors tend to pay higher wages than agriculture, education or health care, the sectors in which women are concentrated. The effects of the glass ceiling (vertical segregation) are also prevalent across Armenia's labour market, with women unable to rise to senior positions.

Girls' enrolment in **vocational education** remains low. Three times more boys than girls are enrolled in preliminary vocational education.<sup>14</sup> The manufacturing and production sector is the only area of preliminary vocational education in which more girls are enrolled than boys. At the level of middle vocational education, there are more girls (16.7%) than boys (14.1%),<sup>15</sup> and at this level there are more women than men in almost all specialisations.

**More women than men obtain bachelor's and master's degrees** in Armenia. The gender parity index for the first stage of higher education (bachelor's degree) increased from 1.10 in 2013 to 1.46 in 2022.<sup>16</sup> Since 2010, more women are enrolled, studying in and graduating from master's degree programmes. In 2022, more than twice as many as women (69%) than men (31%) graduated from master's degree programmes.

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia, *Women and Men in Armenia 2020*, Government of the Republic of Armenia, Yerevan, <https://armstat.am/en/?nid=82&id=2322>

<sup>15</sup> Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia, *Women and Men in Armenia 2023*, Government of the Republic of Armenia, Yerevan, <https://www.armstat.am/file/article/gender-2023.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

**Abortion rates among rural women are twice as high as among women in urban areas.**

The number of abortions among women of reproductive age is highest in the regions of Yerevan and Lori, and lowest in the Vayots Dzor region.<sup>17</sup>

Men are twice as likely (18%) as women (9%) to think that a woman should never have a choice when it comes to abortion.

Among the greatest challenges that women and girls face in terms of exercising their sexual and reproductive rights is the **absence of comprehensive sex education** in Armenia. In Armenian schools, the sexuality education programme is called Healthy Lifestyle, and is taught as part of physical education for grades 8 to 11.

According to consolidated data from hotlines run by women's organisations, in 2022 these hotlines received 3,876 calls, 624 of which were on cases of **domestic violence**. In 2023, the hotlines received 3,307 calls, 597 of which were on domestic violence cases.

According to the data provided by the Investigative Committee of the Republic of Armenia, the committee investigated 1,051 cases of domestic violence in the first term of 2023, 140 of which have been completed with a bill of indictment, and in 144 of cases persons have been sent to court.

Some positive changes are afoot in perceptions of sexual violence. Focus group discussions conducted with women in different regions of Armenia show that 84% of women agree with the statement, "sexual violence does not have any justification", with no age differences among the respondents.<sup>18</sup>

According to the 2021 Women Entrepreneurship Study in Armenia, **relatively fewer stereotypes exist in the information and communications technology (ICT) sector** due to more open work environments, young staff, and opportunities for remote work. Despite this favourable environment, only 11% of leaders in the ICT sector are women. A considerable gender pay gap also exists in the sector, as women earn 63.8% of what men earn, on average. This is slightly higher (39.2%) than the median gender pay gap in the country.

Overall, there is a **lack of sex-disaggregated data** on the shadow economy, multidimensional poverty, and the impact of recent crises on the lives of men and women in Armenia.

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<sup>17</sup> Women's Resource Center, *The Invisible Rights of Women in the Republic of Armenia: The Overall State of Reproductive Health and Rights among Various Groups of Women*, Women's Resource Center, Yerevan, 2018, <https://www.moj.am/storage/uploads/101010verart.pdf>

<sup>18</sup> Socioscope, *Women about Sexual Violence: Perceptions and Experience*, December 2023, <https://socoscope.am/archives/3846>



# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1. Context and justification

The Republic of Armenia faced immense challenges in 2022–2023, including the post-war situation marked by political instability, tensions on the borders and within the country, attacks on its sovereign territory and the mass displacement of ethnic Armenians from Nagorno Karabakh in September 2023 which led to a humanitarian crisis.

In the aftermath of the Velvet Revolution of 2018, the Government launched a series of innovative reforms. These come in the wider context of the past decade, in which Armenia has undergone reforms that aim to uphold the principles of democracy, human rights and a free market economy. Several improvements are apparent in terms of gender equality, such as changes in attitudes toward sexual and gender-based violence, amendments to the Law on Domestic Violence and the establishment of regional support centres for survivors of gender-based violence. Nevertheless, challenges remain with regard to establishing comprehensive national policies on gender equality and anti-discrimination. Progress on gender equality has also been affected by challenges since 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, war, post-war recovery, displacement, and internal political instability.

During the 2020 war in Nagorno Karabakh, about 80% of those who were forcibly displaced from Nagorno Karabakh were women and children. In 2023, displaced persons arrived in Armenia with their entire families. As of 24 September 2023, the Government of Armenia reported the arrival of 100,631 new refugees, 50% of whom are women and girls. Among the refugees who have arrived in Armenia, an estimated 2,000 are pregnant women, including approximately 1,400 pregnant women due to give birth within the six months of their displacement.

In the aftermath of the attacks on the sovereign territory of Armenia, the European Union (EU) established an EU Monitoring Mission within Armenia in response to an official request by the Armenian authorities in December 2022. This non-executive and non-armed civilian Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) Mission includes human rights and gender advisers who cooperate with local women's organisations in Armenia's regions.

Despite major obstacles, the World Bank reports that Armenia's economy has shown resilience due in large part to prudent macroeconomic management and a sound financial sector.

However, in spite of impressive double-digit gross domestic product (GDP) growth and a falling unemployment rate, poverty and remittance dependency remain high, alongside declining satisfaction with indicators on housing conditions and living in dignity.<sup>19</sup>

The United Nations (UN) Annual Report on its work in Armenia states that, in 2022, Armenia's economy experienced an impressive annual growth rate of 14.8%, and the country ranked 58 out of 177 countries in the world on economic freedom. The significant flow of immigrants has contributed to this growth, accounting for a 2.2% annual increase in the population, and providing a boost to the country's external, macroeconomic and fiscal performance. This positive impact has been recognised by the international rating agency, Fitch, which has revised its outlook on Armenia's long-term foreign currency issuer default rating (IDR) from "stable" to "positive". The country's dynamic business environment has also proven attractive to entrepreneurs, as evidenced by the Agency for State Register of Legal Entities reporting the registration of 950 new businesses and 1,800 individual entrepreneurs in the first few months of 2022 alone.<sup>20</sup> In 2023, Armenia was also among the fastest growing economies in the world.<sup>21</sup>

Gender equality and women's rights have improved slightly in Armenia. However, the percentage of people who ascribe to gender biases remains quite high (92%).<sup>22</sup> In the current context, it is crucial to focus not only on discussions of gender inequality at the individual level, but also to employ a holistic approach for improving policies that affect the lives of women and girls, including those from marginalised communities. They include women and girls living in poverty, women and girls with disabilities, women and girls from the Yezidi community of Armenia, women living with HIV/AIDS, and women in the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex (LGBTQI+) community.

It is also imperative to focus on the rights of women and girls among the displaced population. In this regard, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW Committee) calls for sustainable solutions to ensure their rights. As it notes,

*"[The] State party has been facing a volatile situation marked by human suffering, forced displacement, economic instability and the rise of violence and insecurity, including sexual and gender-based violence. The State party has also experienced the hardening of traditional and patriarchal attitudes that limit the enjoyment by women and girls of their rights, particularly in the case of disadvantaged groups of women, such as internally displaced women, women in a refugee-like situation, rural women, older women, women with disabilities, women belonging to ethnic minorities, and lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women.*

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<sup>19</sup> United Nations, *UN Country Annual Results Report Armenia 2022*, March 2023, [https://armenia.un.org/sites/default/files/2023-05/UN%20Annual%20Report%202023\\_Digital.pdf](https://armenia.un.org/sites/default/files/2023-05/UN%20Annual%20Report%202023_Digital.pdf)

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> World Economic Forum, *Global Gender Gap Index 2021*, Cologny, WEF, 2021, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/244387/the-global-gender-gap-index>

<sup>22</sup> Gender Social Norms Index, June 2023, <https://hdr.undp.org/content/2023-gender-social-norms-index-gsni#/indicies/GSNI>

*Nevertheless, it considers that implementation of the Convention, especially at times of conflict, is the most effective means of safeguarding full respect for, and the realization of, women's rights, given that women are a driving force of the country's socioeconomic development.”<sup>23</sup>*

## 1.2. Goals and objectives

The goal of this Country Gender Profile is to provide the European Delegation to Armenia with comprehensive information and recommendations to guide decision-making with regard to the development of the Country Level Implementation Plan (CLIP) for the EU Action Plan III 2020–2025 on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in External Relations – the Gender Action Plan III (GAP III).

The **specific objectives of this Country Gender Profile** are to:

- Inform the EU Delegation about Armenia's national context, as well as the legal and institutional framework on gender equality and women's empowerment (GEWE).
- Provide gender analysis on a sector-by-sector basis.
- Offer up-to-date information with respect to the gendered impact of the mass displacement of ethnic Armenians from Nagorno Karabakh in September 2023.
- Provide information on good practices related to gender equality and women's empowerment.
- Present key findings and develop recommendations for further action on gender equality and women's empowerment covering the new thematic areas of engagement included in the GAP III. These include climate change, the gender-related aspects of digital transformation, and women, peace and security (WPS).

## 1.3. Methodology

This Country Gender Profile was developed in the context of the EU4 Gender Equality Reform Helpdesk project, funded by the European Union and implemented by NIRAS. The methodology of this Country Gender Profile is based on a thorough desk review of existing research, statistics, state programme documents and reports, as well as data from the National Statistical Committee. It also incorporates data from recent country gender profiles prepared by the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Bank, alongside sectoral analyses by civil society organisations. It further uses data from the mapping of reforms performed by the EU4 Gender Equality Reform Helpdesk in 2021. It is important to note the data limitations that affect this assessment. Armenia lacks sex-disaggregated data on the shadow economy, multidimensional poverty, and the impact of recent crises on the lives of men and women.

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<sup>23</sup> CEDAW Committee, *Concluding observations on the seventh periodic report of Armenia*, CEDAW/C/ARM/CO/7, 2022, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/concluding-observations/cedawcarmco7-concluding-observations-seventh-periodic-report>

## 2. NATIONAL CONTEXT

### 2.1. Gender aspects of the demographic situation

As of the beginning of 2023, women accounted for 53%, and men for 47%, of Armenia's population. The average age of the population is 36.9 years old, and 64% of the population live in urban areas.

While the **life expectancy** rate has increased in recent decades, it fell sharply between 2020 and 2022 due to both the 44-day war and the COVID-19 pandemic, especially among men.<sup>24</sup> In 2022, four times more men than women died from exogenous system diseases caused by accidents, intoxication, or injuries. However, life expectancy at birth has been increased since 2022. On average, girls born in 2022 can expect to live for 78.3 years, compared to 77.4 years in 2021, 75.9 years old in 2001–2002, and 75.1 years in 1991–1992. In 2022, male life expectancy at birth was 71.4 years, compared to 67.4 years in 2021 (an increase of 4 years), 70.0 years in 2001–2002, and 68.3 years in 1991–1992.<sup>25</sup> The mortality rate in urban areas is relatively higher than in rural communities.

According to the data obtained from the National Statistical Committee, the **fertility rate** has declined drastically over the years, with no significant differences between rural and urban areas. As of 2023, the fertility rate is 1.71 in rural areas and 1.70 in urban centres.<sup>26</sup> The **average age of first-time marriage** has been increasing, rising to 27.9 years old for women and 31.4 years old for men.<sup>27</sup> In addition, women are more likely to be divorced than men, which may point to a greater tendency among men to remarry following a divorce.<sup>28</sup>

The **average number of household members** in Armenia is 3.6. The **sex ratio at birth**, which has been reported as a major problem in the country for several years, appears to be stabilising. The ratio was 1.8 in 2021 (the lowest it had been in the previous seven years) compared to 1.13 in 2014.

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<sup>24</sup> Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia, *Women and Men in Armenia 2022*, Government of the Republic of Armenia, Yerevan, [armstat.am/file/article/gender\\_2022\\_n.pdf](http://armstat.am/file/article/gender_2022_n.pdf)

<sup>25</sup> Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia, *Women and Men in Armenia 2023*, Government of the Republic of Armenia, Yerevan, <https://www.armstat.am/file/article/gender-2023.pdf>

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

However, in 2022 sex ratio rose again to 1.12.<sup>29</sup> Between 2012 and 2017, the indicator decreased from 115 boys per 100 girls, to 110 boys per 100 girls. Between 2018 and 2020, the indicator was stable at 111 boys per 100 girls. In 2021, the ratio decreased to 108.8 boys per 100 girls. According to the data on the first semester of 2022, the indicator increased again, reaching 111, which is 3 points higher than in the same period in 2021. The natural level of the sex ratio at birth (SRB) in the world is 104–106 boys per 100 girls. Statistical data shows that the highest SRB rate in Armenia in 2021 was recorded in Armavir and Lori, followed by Shirak and Syunik.<sup>30</sup> The biggest difference in the SRB occurs is in the case of the third and fourth child. However, in the case of third and fourth children, the SRB has decreased between 2005 and 2021. The ratio for a third child in 2005 was 183 boys per 100 girls, which decreased to 121 boys per 100 girls in 2021. In the case of the first child, the SRB has not changed notably, but it has declined for the second child, from 110 boys per 100 girls to 103 boys per 100 girls. In 2021, the SRB was 108.8 boys per 100 girls.<sup>31</sup>

The **preference for boys** is more widespread in rural areas, and among people with low levels of education. Among the main reasons for this preference are the perception that parents' security in old age will be guaranteed if they have a son, and the perception that sons will ensure the continuity of the family lineage.<sup>32</sup> The older women are, the higher the likelihood that these women will have sons.<sup>33</sup> According to the Law on "Human Reproductive Health and Reproductive Rights", abortion from between the 12th and 22nd week of pregnancy is allowed only for medical reasons or "social indications", with the written consent of the woman. If there are no valid reasons, abortion in any other unplanned case, including sex-selective abortion, between 12 and 22 weeks of pregnancy is prohibited. The law also stipulates that abortion can be performed only in institutions with a medical license.<sup>34</sup> Administrative liability and a fine are levied in the case of a breach of the requirements established by the law in the process of abortion, which is permitted by the legislation.

Levels of education are directly linked to the decisions that couples make about the number of children they will have. Women with low levels of education are more inclined to think that they do not have the opportunity to decide on how many daughters and sons to have. The percentage of women with low levels of education is also high among women who do not undergo an ultrasound examination during pregnancy.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> UNFPA, *Prevalence and Causes of Gender-Biased Sex Selection in the Republic of Armenia: Research Report, 2022*, [https://armenia.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/gbss\\_report\\_2022\\_eng\\_0.pdf](https://armenia.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/gbss_report_2022_eng_0.pdf)

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia, *Nationwide Survey on Domestic Violence against Women in Armenia, 2010*, [https://www.armstat.am/file/article/dv\\_executive\\_summary\\_engl.pdf](https://www.armstat.am/file/article/dv_executive_summary_engl.pdf)

<sup>34</sup> UNFPA, *Prevalence and Causes of Gender-Biased Sex Selection in the Republic of Armenia: Research Report, 2022*, [https://armenia.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/gbss\\_report\\_2022\\_eng\\_0.pdf](https://armenia.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/gbss_report_2022_eng_0.pdf)

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

Armenia has a **low-level concentrated HIV epidemic** with an estimated HIV prevalence of 0.2%. From 1988 to 2021, 4,579 cases of HIV were registered in Armenia among 3,174 men (69%) and 1,405 (31%) women. Just under half (49.4%) of people receive their HIV diagnosis between the ages of 25 and 39, and 78 cases of HIV (1.6%) were registered among children between 0 and 15 years old. As of 31 December 2021, the number of people living with HIV in Armenia was 3546. In 2021, the prevalence of HIV was 2.6% among people who use drugs, 2.5% among trans women, and 0.2% among women sex workers.<sup>36</sup>

## 2.2. Gender-sensitive country poverty profile

The poverty rate in Armenia in 2022, calculated with respect to the average poverty line, was 24.8%. This is 1.7 percentage points lower than in 2021 (26.5%). The extreme poverty rate in 2022 was 1.2%, reflecting a decrease by 0.3 percentage points compared to 2021 (1.5%).<sup>37</sup>

In 2022, the upper, lower and extreme poverty lines were AMD 63,060 (equivalent to USD 144.70), AMD 42,708 (USD 98) and AMD 29,934 (USD 68.70) per adult equivalent per month, respectively, while the average poverty line was AMD 52,883 (USD 121.4).<sup>38</sup>

Among all of Armenia's regions, the three **poorest regions** are Armavir, Shirak and Kotayk (with 16%, 14% and 11% of people living in poverty, respectively) while the least poor region is Syunik (0.9%). Most extremely poor people live in the regions of Armavir, Shirak and Gegharkunik.<sup>39</sup>

Among people living in poverty, 55% are women, and 45% are men.<sup>40</sup> Within Armenia's adult population (aged 18+), **there are more poor people in the 35–39-year-old age range and among persons over 65 years old**. The poverty rate increases with the number of members in a household. There are poor and extremely poor people among households composed of seven or more members. Households with five members are poorer than households of other sizes. Similarly, households with three or more children make up the majority among the extremely poor. **People with only a secondary level of education are the poorest people** in Armenia.<sup>41</sup>

Since 2016, the Statistical Committee of Armenia has calculated the rate of **multidimensional poverty** in the country, but without taking into account sex-disaggregated data.

<sup>36</sup> EWNA Women-led Gender Assessment, *How Countries Address Barriers to HIV Services for Women Living with HIV, Sex Workers and Women who Use Drugs*, 2023, [https://ewna.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/ewna-gender-assessment-report\\_2023\\_eng.pdf?fbclid=IwAR0dZUdVkrP2GdpYuTFOYIAspLD5Zisfly9Pn8Ympp8y1YXmJA8vuoyUW4](https://ewna.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/ewna-gender-assessment-report_2023_eng.pdf?fbclid=IwAR0dZUdVkrP2GdpYuTFOYIAspLD5Zisfly9Pn8Ympp8y1YXmJA8vuoyUW4)

<sup>37</sup> Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia, *Poverty Snapshot*, 2023, [https://armstat.am/file/article/poverty\\_2023\\_en\\_2.pdf](https://armstat.am/file/article/poverty_2023_en_2.pdf)

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

Nevertheless, some trends shed light on the intersections between gender, economic status and vulnerability. More individuals living in households that are considered multidimensionally poor reside in rural areas (23%) than in the capital city of Yerevan (14%) and other urban areas (16%).<sup>42</sup> Multidimensional poverty indicators reveal that the most significant deprivations in Armenia are related to: 1) decent jobs, 2) a dignified life, with the funds to buy, when necessary, food and/or clothes, 3) adequate heating (i.e. households which use wood, carbon or other sources as their primary source for heating), and 4) centralised sanitation and garbage disposal.<sup>43</sup>

In 2021, almost **one-fifth of Armenians lived in multidimensional poverty**, with spatial disparities across urban and rural areas. Between 2020 and 2021, the living conditions of households in Yerevan improved, whereas rural areas and other secondary cities observed slight increases in their multidimensional poverty indicators. In 2021, rural populations were most likely to suffer multidimensional poverty (23.5%), while Yerevan had the lowest multidimensional poverty rate (14.4%).<sup>44</sup>

Up to 40% of the population live in a household lacking access to decent jobs, and 35% of households face underemployment. More than twice as many people were lacked access to humanitarian aid in 2021 compared to 2020.<sup>45</sup>

A quantitative survey of 2,000 women in Armenia between 18 and 49 years old, conducted by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), finds that all respondents own a mobile phone, 97% have internet access, 64% have a car, 42% have agricultural land, 22% have a landline phone, and 6% have agricultural equipment.<sup>46</sup>

Almost three times more men (12.6%) than women (4.2%) have credit cards. The percentage of men who conduct online transactions (19.2%) is also higher than the percentage of women who do so (12.2%).<sup>47</sup>

Multidimensional poverty assessments conducted by National Statistical Committee offer data on a number of indicators on social vulnerability among households:<sup>48</sup>

- 15.3% of households receive family benefits, twice as many of which are women-headed households (25%) than households headed by men (12%).
- Over two-thirds of women-headed households do not include an employed household member.
- 17.3% of households include members with disabilities, and 89% of these include three children with disabilities.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> UNFPA, *Prevalence and Causes of Gender-Biased Sex Selection in the Republic of Armenia: Research Report*, 2022, [https://armenia.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/gbss\\_report\\_2022\\_eng\\_0.pdf](https://armenia.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/gbss_report_2022_eng_0.pdf)

<sup>47</sup> Kemp, S., *Digital 2021: Armenia*, Kepios, 2021, <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2021-armenia>

<sup>48</sup> UNDP, *Report on the Inception Stage of "Strengthened Community Resilience through Energy Efficiency and Low Emission Development"*, UNDP-Sida project, 2022, <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1CipKvAXAAoVzGTExBj53IsbRjennZyR2/view>

- Only 6.7% of households report receiving help from relatives, 80% of which are women-headed households.
- 14.7% of households are headed by single pensioners, 40% of which are women-headed households.
- 31% of Armenia's population lacks "healthy heating".

Since the early 1980s, researchers have engaged in discussions of the gendered aspects of poverty. Many surveys at the time showed that women were more vulnerable and at-risk of poverty than men. Women, especially single mothers, and women-headed households, suffer from more severe poverty than men, leading researchers to coin the term "the feminisation of poverty". Acknowledging the feminisation of poverty involves acknowledging how poverty affects women and men in different ways, and recognising that gender is a factor in terms of both the level of poverty that women and men experience, as well as in women's and men's perceptions of poverty.

Gender differences also exist in terms of child poverty, as there are relatively more girls among extremely poor children (2.8%) than boys (2.3%).<sup>49</sup>

## 2.3. Country ranking on international gender indices and ratings

In recent years, Armenia has made some progress on the Global Gender Gap Index, which is calculated each year by the World Economic Forum. Its ranking rose from the 102nd position in 2016, to 97th in 2018, and then to 98th in 2019 and 2020.<sup>50</sup> The impact of COVID-19 pandemic and war in 2020 affected Armenia's ranking in 2021, with Armenia falling to 114th place on the index.<sup>51</sup> However, significant progress is apparent in 2023, with Armenia ranking 61st among 146 countries on the Global Gender Gap Index 2023.<sup>52</sup>

The main changes are apparent in terms of the sub-index on economic participation. Armenia went from ranking 96th on this sub-index in 2021, to 84th in 2022 and 52nd in 2023. The most significant changes are registered in the labour force participation rate. Armenia ranked first among countries in terms of the percentage of the workforce who are women, with women accounting for 52.7% of the country's workforce compared to the world average of 39.5%.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia, *Poverty Snapshot*, 2022, [https://armstat.am/file/article/poverty\\_2023\\_en\\_2.pdf](https://armstat.am/file/article/poverty_2023_en_2.pdf)

<sup>50</sup> World Economic Forum, *Global Gender Gap Report 2021*, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/244387/the-global-gender-gap-index>

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> World Economic Forum, *Global Gender Gap Report 2023*, [https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_GGGR\\_2023.pdf](https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2023.pdf)

<sup>53</sup> Countries ranked by the percentage of the workforce who are women, September 2023, [https://www.qualtrics.com/blog/countries-ranked-by-female-workforce/?fbclid=IwAR1jxGIBnXaYIfa0YdH0Sc91\\_yocz1NCVM9VN3gnOWQc4boeZRc7aGvw4xs](https://www.qualtrics.com/blog/countries-ranked-by-female-workforce/?fbclid=IwAR1jxGIBnXaYIfa0YdH0Sc91_yocz1NCVM9VN3gnOWQc4boeZRc7aGvw4xs)

Armenia ranks third on the Global Gender Gap Index among the 10 countries included in Eurasia and the Central Asia.<sup>54</sup>

There is a general perception in Armenian society that gender equality is more visible now than it was before. Moreover, 92% of women and 79% of men believe that gender equality can be beneficial for Armenia's economic development.<sup>55</sup>

The **Women's Empowerment Index**, calculated by UN Women, ranks Armenia 2nd among the group of countries identified as "lower-middle" countries, with an index value of 0.656.<sup>56</sup>

The **Gender Social Norms Index** shows that 92% of Armenia's population holds at least one gender-related bias. More men hold at least two biases (82%) than women (68%). More women have no biases (10%) than men in Armenia (5%). Prominent biases are related to economic participation and physical integrity, while biases are least pronounced with respect to education and gender.<sup>57</sup>

UNDP's **Gender Inequality Index** categorises Armenia among "high human development" countries, ranking it 85th among 191 countries on the index.<sup>58</sup> According to Women in Parliament data for 2023, Armenia ranks 43rd among 186 countries.<sup>59</sup>

The World Bank's **Women, Business and the Law Index 2023** ascribes Armenia a value of 87.5, with country values on the index ranging from the highest possible value of 100 to the lowest recorded value of 26. The index captures legal differences between men and women on eight economy-related indicators. Armenia is evaluated on the index's indicators on mobility (100), workplaces (50), pay (75), marriage (100), parenthood (100), entrepreneurship (75), assets (100) and pensions (100).<sup>60</sup>

Armenia's **Women, Peace, and Security Index 2023** value is 0.72, and the country ranks 48th of 177 countries on the index.<sup>61</sup> Its performance on the women's financial inclusion sub-index improved markedly between 2017 (14.3%) and 2023 (52.2%).<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> World Economic Forum, *Global Gender Gap Report 2023*, [https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_GGGR\\_2023.pdf](https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2023.pdf)

<sup>55</sup> Onyshchenko, A., et al., *Baseline Study on Gender Norms and Stereotypes in the Countries of the Eastern Partnership: EU4 Gender Equality Together against gender stereotypes and gene-based violence*, UNFPA and UN Women, 2022, [https://eca.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-03/BASELINE%20STUDY-5\\_0.pdf](https://eca.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-03/BASELINE%20STUDY-5_0.pdf)

<sup>56</sup> UNDP, *The Paths to Equal: New twin indices on gender equality and women's empowerment and gender equality*, 2023, <https://hdr.undp.org/system/files/documents/hdp-document/pathsequal2023pdf.pdf>

<sup>57</sup> UNDP, *Human Development Report 2021–22*, [https://hdr.undp.org/system/files/documents/global-report-document/hdr2021-22pdf\\_1.pdf](https://hdr.undp.org/system/files/documents/global-report-document/hdr2021-22pdf_1.pdf)

<sup>58</sup> Gender Social Norms Index 2023, <https://hdr.undp.org/system/files/documents/hdp-document/gsn202303pdf.pdf>

<sup>59</sup> UN Women, *Women in Politics 2023*, <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2023-03/Women-in-politics-2023-en.pdf>

<sup>60</sup> World Bank Group, *Women, Business and the Law 2023*, <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/b60c615b-09e7-46e4-84c1-bd5f4ab88903/content>

<sup>61</sup> Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security, *Women, Peace, and Security Index 2019*, <https://giwps.georgetown.edu/the-index>

<sup>62</sup> Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security Index, "Armenia", <https://giwps.georgetown.edu/country/armenia/>

Similarly, Armenia's performance in terms of women's share of parliamentary seats has increased between 2017 (9.9%) and 2023 (36%). Armenia ranks relatively high on the sub-index on addressing legal discrimination against women, and political violence targeting women is considered virtually non-existent.<sup>63</sup>

With regards to the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Armenia is making relatively strong and fast progress on **Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5** on gender equality. On the SDG Gender Index 2022, Armenia has a score of 74 – on par with countries such as Argentina, Albania and Bulgaria – in terms of achieving the SDGs goals (on a scale of 0, the lowest score, to 100, the highest).<sup>64</sup> Armenia is also among the 10 countries making the fastest progress on achieving the SDGs between 2015 and 2022. The change in its score over these 7 years is +8, which is considered quite high.<sup>65</sup>

On **other human rights-related indices**,<sup>66</sup> Armenia performs as follows:

- global freedom score: 54 out of 100;
- political rights: 23 out of 40; and
- civil liberties: 31 out of 60.

Armenia's **civil society rating has improved** from 4.50 to 4.75, **due to incremental improvements in investigative journalism leading to criminal probes and political change**. Successes are also recorded in terms of media outlets' freedom of information cases in court, and the Government's decriminalisation of the "grave insults" law.

Armenia's **independent media rating** has improved from 2.75 to 3.00 due to the increased involvement of civil society organisations (CSOs) in state decision and policymaking processes, the influence of civil society in affecting changes in state policies, and the institutionalised relationship between civil society organisations and branches of government.

Overall, Armenia's **democracy score** has improved from 3.04 to 3.11.

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Equal Measures 2030, *SDG Gender Index 2022*, [https://www.equalmeasures2030.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/SDG-index\\_report\\_FINAL\\_EN.pdf](https://www.equalmeasures2030.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/SDG-index_report_FINAL_EN.pdf)

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> United Nations Armenia, *UN Country Annual Report Armenia 2022*, March 2023, [https://armenia.un.org/sites/default/files/2023-05/UN%20Annual%20Report%202023\\_Digital.pdf](https://armenia.un.org/sites/default/files/2023-05/UN%20Annual%20Report%202023_Digital.pdf); Freedom House, "Nations in Transit 2023", <https://freedomhouse.org/country/armenia/nations-transit/2023>

# 3. LEGAL AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

## 3.1. International and regional commitments on gender equality and women's empowerment

In September 2019, Armenia submitted its **State Report on the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights**.

In January of 2020, the United Nations Human Rights Council conducted Armenia's most recent **Universal Periodic Review** (UPR). The Council's report includes several recommendations for Armenia, including recommendations to ratify the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (known as the Istanbul Convention) without further delay, to continue to strengthen anti-discrimination policy, and to further strengthen the protection of vulnerable groups.

In December 2020, Armenia submitted its report on the implementation of the **Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women** (CEDAW). In June 2021, several human rights organisations submitted a list of issues for the civil society report 2022. In November 2022, the CEDAW Committee issued its Concluding Observations on Armenia. Among other recommendations, the Committee recommends that the Government of Armenia:

1. take into consideration the full spectrum of the women, peace and security agenda;
2. adopt a model of substantive equality that addresses gender-based violence and discrimination against women, including forms of discrimination, particularly against internally displaced women, and women affected by conflict;
3. strengthen awareness-raising among women and girls, including among those from disadvantaged groups, about the legal remedies available to address violations of their rights;
4. conduct systematic training on women's rights and gender equality for civil servants as part of mandatory regularly courses; and

5. improve access to employment and training opportunities for disadvantaged and marginalised groups of women.

Other important recommendations are related to the overall legislative framework on gender equality, access to justice, the national machinery for the advancement of women, national human rights institutions, the women, peace and security agenda, stereotypes and harmful practices, gender-based violence including violence against women, trafficking in women, women's participation in political and public life, the protection of women human rights defenders, education, employment, health, economic and social benefits, rural women, and women from disadvantaged and marginalised groups.

## 3.2. National legal framework on gender equality and women's empowerment

**Armenia's legislative framework** on gender equality and women's empowerment is relatively strong. The Women's Global SDG Database accords Armenia a score of 82% for its overall legislative frameworks on gender equality and women's empowerment, 42% for its overall legislative frameworks on gender-based violence, 80% for its overall legislative frameworks on employment and economic empowerment, and 82% for its overall legislative frameworks on marriage and the family.<sup>67</sup>

In June 2020, amendments were made to the **Armenian Criminal Procedural Code**. These introduced a mechanism for conducting interviews with survivors/victims or witnesses using telecommunication technologies. This is particularly important for survivors of domestic and/or sexual violence.<sup>68</sup> In January 2021, amendments to the Criminal Procedural Code entered into force. Accordingly, the guardians or trustees (legal representatives) of minors and "incapable persons" should not participate in criminal procedures if they have a kinship relationship with, or are personally dependent on, the suspect. This is especially relevant for underage victims of sexual violence who have been subjected to violence by their father or stepfather, and their mother is involved in their case as their legal representative.<sup>69</sup>

In May 2020, amendments to the **Armenian Criminal Code** entered into force. These amendments criminalise public calls for violence, and the public justification of or propaganda on violence towards a person or group based on their sex, race, skin colour, political or other views, or other characteristics.

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<sup>67</sup> Arab, C. and M. Abrahamyan, *Armenia Country Gender Equality Brief*, UN Women Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia, Istanbul, 2019, <https://eca.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/05/armenia-country-gender-equality-brief>

<sup>68</sup> Government of the Republic of Armenia, Law on Amendments in the Armenian Criminal Procedure Code 2020 (in Armenian), 2020, <https://www.arlis.am/DocumentView.aspx?DocID=143338>

<sup>69</sup> Government of the Republic of Armenia, Law on Amendments and Changes in the Armenian Criminal Procedure Code 2020 (in Armenian), 2020, <https://www.arlis.am/DocumentView.aspx?DocID=143341>

This is particularly significant in the context of widespread public calls for violence against human rights defenders in Armenia, particularly women human rights defenders.<sup>70</sup> The new criminal code identifies domestic violence as an aggravating circumstance in a number of crimes. However, domestic violence is not a standalone criminal offense.

The new Criminal Code states that violence perpetrated by a close relative is an aggravating circumstance. A “close relative” is taken to mean a spouse, former spouse, parent, step-parent, adoptive parent, foster parent, child (including an adopted child, step-child and foster child), brother, sister (including a step-brother or step-sister), grandfather, grandmother, grandchild, spouse or former spouse of the adoptive parent or foster parent, parent of the spouse or former spouse, son-in-law or daughter-in-law, irrespective of co-habitation. A person who is in, or has been in, marital relations is also deemed to be a spouse or former spouse. The new Criminal Code also prescribes criminal liability for crimes of psychological coercion (Article 194), physical coercion (Article 195), and crimes against sexual freedom and sexual inviolability.<sup>71</sup>

In 2019, a working group on improving amendments to the **Law on Political Parties** was created in the National Assembly. Draft provisions include the requirement that at least 40% of representatives in the executive bodies of political parties must be women and 40% must be men. If this requirement is not met, political parties that may have received financing from public funds as a result of elections will be deprived of these funds.

In January 2021, amendments to the Law on Political Parties entered into force. As such, targeted state financial assistance for political parties now depends on the number of women in leadership positions within the political party. If women hold more than 40% of leadership positions in a political party, it will receive only half of the state-provided financial assistance it would have otherwise been eligible for. If women hold between 20% and 40% of leadership positions, the party receives one-quarter of the financial assistance it would have been otherwise eligible for. If women hold fewer than 20% of leadership positions, the political party does not receive financial assistance.<sup>72</sup>

In September 2020, Armenia’s Parliament ratified the **Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights**, which allows access to an individual complaint mechanism. In 2020, the Armenian Parliament also ratified the **Council of Europe Convention on Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse**, known as the Lanzarote Convention.<sup>73</sup> The Convention officially came into force in January 2021.

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<sup>70</sup> Government of the Republic of Armenia, Law on Changes in the Armenian Criminal Code 2020 (in Armenian), 2020, <https://www.arlis.am/DocumentView.aspx?DocID=141919>

<sup>71</sup> Universal Periodic Review (UPR) *Third Cycle Mid-term Voluntary Report of the Republic of Armenia*, 2023, <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/upr/midtermreports/armenia-thirdcycle-mid-termreport.pdf>

<sup>72</sup> Government of the Republic of Armenia, Changes in the Political Parties Law 2020 (in Armenian), 2020, <https://www.arlis.am/DocumentView.aspx?DocID=149243>

<sup>73</sup> Government of the Republic of Armenia, On the Ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (in Armenian), 2020, <https://www.arlis.am/DocumentView.aspx?DocID=142871>

At the Nairobi Summit in 2019, Armenia committed to “uphold the right to sexual and reproductive health care in humanitarian and fragile contexts” ... through the “provision of access to comprehensive sexual and reproductive health information, education and services.” In September 2020, at the 45th session of the Human Rights Council, the Government also accepted recommendations to enhance women’s access to basic health care and sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services, as well as to introduce comprehensive and evidence-based sexuality education into Armenian schools. The recommendations state that this must be “evidence-based and comprehensive”. The Government was specifically asked to:

1. establish comprehensive sexuality education as a standalone subject in schools, designed in collaboration with young people and women’s rights organisations; and
2. develop and implement alternative comprehensive sexuality education programmes, such as peer-to-peer education, counselling corners in clinics, and training for parents of out-of-school youth.<sup>74</sup>

In 2023, amendments to the **Labour Code** introduced a new article for the prevention and prohibition of sexual harassment in the workplace. However, a system for complaints is not yet in place. A definition of forced labour has also been added to the Labour Code, and procedures have been amended to allow all governmental and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to refer survivors to the Victim Identification Commission. A decree has also been issued outlining minimum standards for the assistance of victims/survivors.<sup>75</sup>

On 29 May 2022, legislation was adopted “On making amendments and supplements to the Law on identification of and support to the persons subjected to trafficking in and exploitation of human beings.”

Additional amendments have been made to the **Law on Prevention of Violence within the Family, Protection of Victims of Violence within the Family and Restoration of Peace in the Family**. A system of monitoring abusers through special electronic devices has been introduced. According to the legislative changes that came into effect in 2022, domestic violence cases are considered criminal cases initiated on the basis of a public accusation. Therefore, domestic violence criminal cases can no longer be dismissed on the grounds of reconciliation, as occurred in the past in most cases.<sup>76</sup> On 1 February 2024, several women Members of the National Assembly presented a new package of amendments to the Law. These propose revising its title to clarify existing definitions and to bring these definitions into line with the definitions of the Criminal Code. The amendments also propose to repeal the definition of the reconciliation procedure, instead of primary medical aid, to establish free and preferential medical care and service for persons subjected to domestic violence by law – that is, not only providing primary care, but instead providing medical care in general.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> UNESCO Comprehensive Sexuality Education, Armenia, <https://education-profiles.org/northern-africa-and-western-asia/armenia/~comprehensive-sexuality-education>

<sup>75</sup> United States of America Embassy in Armenia, Human Trafficking Report 2023, <https://am.usembassy.gov/2023-tip-report/>

<sup>76</sup> Coalition to Stop Violence against Women in Armenia, *Access to Justice in the Republic of Armenia for Women who are Victims of Violence*, <https://coalitionagainstviolence.am/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/access-to-justice.pdf>

<sup>77</sup> [http://www.parliament.am/news.php?cat\\_id=2&NewsID=20031&year=2024&month=02&day=01&lang=eng](http://www.parliament.am/news.php?cat_id=2&NewsID=20031&year=2024&month=02&day=01&lang=eng)

The Government of the Republic of Armenia signed the **Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combatting Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention)** in 2018, but it has not yet been sent to Parliament for ratification.

Legislation to ensure equality and non-discrimination on all grounds, including sexual orientation and gender identity or expression has not been adopted. Hate speech and hate crimes on all prohibited grounds are not criminalised. The Criminal Code does not recognise animus due to sexual orientation or gender identity as aggravating criminal circumstances in hate crimes. There are no criminal judicial mechanisms to aid the prosecution of crimes against members of the LGBTQI+ community. Societal discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity negatively affect all aspects of their lives, including prospects for employment, housing, family relations, and access to education and health care.

A comprehensive summary of Armenia's legal frameworks and international commitments is presented in the Armenia Country Gender Equality Brief.<sup>78</sup>

### 3.3. National gender policies, strategies and action plans

In 2023, Armenia adopted a **new Gender Equality Strategy and Action Plan for 2024–2028**. The new Strategy includes six main priorities: leadership and decision-making, social-economic and labour, education and science, health, gender-based violence and the prevention of domestic violence, and climate justice.

In the past three years, Armenia has also adopted three strategies that include references to women's rights and gender equality:

- Strategy for Judicial and Legal Reforms of the Republic of Armenia 2019–2023 and related Action Plans;<sup>79</sup>
- National Strategy for Human Rights Protection 2020–2022 and its Action Plan 2020–2022;<sup>80</sup> and
- National Strategy for Human Rights Protection 2023–2025 and its Action Plan 2023–2025.

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<sup>78</sup> Arab, C. and M. Abrahamyan, *Armenia Country Gender Equality Brief*, UN Women Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia, Istanbul, 2019, <https://eca.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/05/armenia-country-gender-equality-brief>

<sup>79</sup> Government of the Republic of Armenia, On Approving the 2019–2023 Strategy for Judicial and Legal Reforms of the Republic of Armenia and the Action Plans Deriving Therefrom, 2019, [https://www.moj.am/storage/uploads/Gov.25\\_09\\_2019\\_ENG.pdf](https://www.moj.am/storage/uploads/Gov.25_09_2019_ENG.pdf)

<sup>80</sup> Government of the Republic of Armenia, National Strategy for Human Rights Protection and the Action Plan, <https://www.moj.am/en/page/575>

In 2022, the Government adopted the country's **second National Action Plan (NAP) on Women, Peace and Security**.<sup>81</sup> This addresses three key security issues that have arisen as a result of the war in 2020 – the redrawing of borders, new security realities and actors, and an influx of displaced persons from Nagorno Karabakh, most of whom are women.<sup>82</sup>

The **new National Plan for Combatting Trafficking in and the Exploitation of Human Beings for 2023–2025** includes a framework of protection and support for victims/survivors of trafficking and the exploitation of persons.

In January 2022, Armenia adopted a **new National Programme on HIV/AIDS Prevention for 2022–2026**. Its goal is to provide an effective response to HIV and foster the conditions needed to end AIDS in Armenia by 2030. In this sense, Armenia's new National Strategic Plan on HIV is a continuation of previous national programmes and aims to address key challenges that consistently emerge in terms of service delivery (prevention, testing, treatment) and to support social, legal and policy environments.

In 2022, HIV was finally removed from a list of diseases that are dangerous to the public and to hospital admissions. The National Strategic Plan on HIV for 2022–2026 particularly addresses sex workers, men who have sex with men, transgender people, people who inject drugs, and people in prisons. However, it does not address women who are experiencing menopause, gender-based violence or human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccination. It does not have a dedicated budget for implementing gender-sensitive and gender-transformative interventions. Women living with HIV are advised to seek screening for cervical cancer after their HIV diagnosis and then a secondary screening after six months, according to the Clinical Guidelines on HIV Research and Counselling. Armenia's Global Fund Country Coordinating Mechanism (CCM) serves as a formal system of accountability that enables community representatives and civil society to monitor the priority-setting process and spending on gender equality. A special working group on gender equality within the CCM also monitors cases of human rights violations and discrimination, reports to the CCM and recommends actions.<sup>83</sup>

Many ongoing judicial and legal reforms are underway in Armenia, as are reforms in the spheres of social assistance, health, education, public administration and self-governance. Reforms in the areas of labour rights, information and communication technologies (ICT), tourism, and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are also taking place. However, **most reforms are not gender-sensitive**. They require gender mainstreaming, paired with capacity building on gender equality for policymakers and gender focal points at various levels.

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<sup>81</sup> Government of the Republic of Armenia, National Strategy on Women, Peace and Security, <https://www.arlis.am/DocumentView.aspx?docID=163530>

<sup>82</sup> Democracy Today NGO, Women Peace and Security in Action, [https://www.democracytoday.am/\\_files/ugd/5101a2\\_47345596fe8f4d0da5c85697f3f196e5.pdf](https://www.democracytoday.am/_files/ugd/5101a2_47345596fe8f4d0da5c85697f3f196e5.pdf)

<sup>83</sup> EWNA Women-led Gender Assessment, *How Countries Address Barriers to HIV Services for Women Living with HIV, Sex Workers and Women who Use Drugs*, 2023, [https://ewna.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/ewna-gender-assessment-report\\_2023\\_eng.pdf?fbclid=IwAR0dZUdVkrP2GdpYuTFOYIAspLD5Zisfly9Pn8Ympp8y1YXmJA8vuoyUW4](https://ewna.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/ewna-gender-assessment-report_2023_eng.pdf?fbclid=IwAR0dZUdVkrP2GdpYuTFOYIAspLD5Zisfly9Pn8Ympp8y1YXmJA8vuoyUW4)

Armenia has adopted the methodology of **gender-responsive budgeting** (GRB).<sup>84</sup> Several ministries use gender-responsive budgeting in their strategies and programmes, including the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, the Ministry of Health, and the Ministry of Finance. Gender-responsive budgeting considers the needs of women as being part of vulnerable groups, including the needs of displaced women from Nagorno Karabakh. Reforms related to gender-responsive budgeting are fairly gender-sensitive, and offer a good example for gender-responsive budgeting at the state and community levels. However, capacity building on gender-responsive budgeting is required for responsible gender focal points and policymakers across ministries and agencies. This need has been highlighted by the Head of the Division for Women's Issues at the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. In addition, the integration of a gender approach in the budget cycle and legislation which regulates the budgetary process should also be considered. The National Strategy for Gender Equality 2019–2023 states that criteria for gender-sensitive budgeting should be introduced and implemented at all levels – that is, at the national, regional and community levels.<sup>85</sup>

In 2019, the Government approved a decree on requirements for shelters for survivors of violence in the family, and a decree on the disposal procedures for a temporary support account for survivors/victims of violence within the family. Thus far, the state has reorganised and launched six community-based support centres, and operates a website providing information on available hotline services for survivors of domestic violence.

The reform of **State Educational Standards** includes gender-sensitive elements. The reform aims to bring educational-methodological material into compliance with gender equality, and ensure the equal representation and balance of women and men in education. One of the eight competencies introduced in the reform stresses the importance of knowledge about women's labour rights.

The **Disaster Risk Reduction National Strategy** also includes some gender-sensitive elements. For example, it recognises the importance of gender equality, as well as the special needs and characteristics of women, children, the elderly, people with disabilities and other marginalised groups.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Based on conversations with the representative of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs.

<sup>85</sup> Government of the Republic of Armenia, On the Approval of the Strategy for the Implementation of the Gender Policy in the Republic of Armenia for 2019–2023 and the approval of the events programme (in Armenian), 2019, <http://www.irtek.am/views/act.aspx?aid=151906>

<sup>86</sup> On the Approval of the 2023-2030 Disaster Risk Management Strategy and the 2023-2026 Action Plan, <https://www.e-draft.am/projects/5694/about>

### 3.4. Institutional framework/machinery

The **Law of the Republic of Armenia on the Provision of Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities for Women and Men** defines the country's national institutional mechanism for gender equality.

Armenia's **national gender equality mechanisms** are:

- the Council on the Provision of Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities for Women and Men adjunct to the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia;
- permanent commissions on gender issues established in each marzpetaran (regional governing body); and
- the Public Council on Women's Rights under the Office of Human Rights Defender.

Since 2018, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs has been the main governmental actor in the formulation and implementation of gender equality policy and the promotion of gender mainstreaming.

In 2019, the Council on Women's Affairs, chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister, was established. This national mechanism provides assistance to support women's involvement in democratic processes, and to advance the equal rights of, and equal opportunities for, men and women in Armenia.<sup>87</sup> However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and recent wars, the Council has not yet been able to achieve many of its established goals.

A working group led by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs exists within the Women's Council under the Deputy Prime Minister. This group which includes gender focal points from different ministries.

The **Council on Domestic Violence** exists *de jure*, but some changes to the Law on Domestic Violence are required to enable the council to function effectively. The changes have already been suggested by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. This council meets two or three times per year, but only state representatives are invited to its meetings until necessary amendments to the Law on Domestic Violence are enforced and civil society representatives can participate in the council once more.

**Departments of Family, Children and Women** in *marzpetarans* (regional municipalities) are incorporated into regional Social and Health Departments. This restructuring was undertaken through the reforms of the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure.

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<sup>87</sup> Government of the Republic of Armenia, On the Establishment of a Women's Council and Working Group in the Republic of Armenia (in Armenian), 2019, <http://www.irtek.am/views/act.aspx?aid=102587>



# 4. GENDER ANALYSIS BY SECTOR

## 4.1. Women in decision-making and leadership

### 4.1.1. Women in parliament, national decision-making bodies and politics

It was not until the snap parliamentary elections of 20 June 2021 that **women came to account for 23% of Deputies in the National Assembly of Armenia**.<sup>88</sup> Women's share of parliamentary seats has increased significantly from 9.9% in 2017 to 35.5% in 2023. The elections of 2021 marked the first time that women's representation in the National Assembly exceeded the established quota, as discussed below.<sup>89</sup>

However, no women are members of core executive authorities, and Armenia only has two women ministers, the Minister of Health, and the Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sport.<sup>90</sup> Women account for 18% of Deputy Ministers. Despite this, women comprise the vast majority of staff members (54%) in almost all ministries in Armenia, with the exception of the Ministry of Defence.<sup>91</sup>

None of the three bodies subordinate to the Prime Minister – the National Security Service, the Police and the State Control Service – is headed by a woman. Moreover, none of the 11 bodies subordinate to the Government is headed by a woman.<sup>92</sup> Recently, Kristine Grigoryan, a former Human Rights Defenders of Armenia, has been appointed Head of the Foreign Intelligence Service. The current Human Rights Defender of Armenia is also a woman.

Since 2016, measures have been taken to put quotas in place for increasing women's political representation in the National Assembly. An amendment to the Electoral Code increased the minimum quota for women's representation among electoral candidates from 20% to 25% for 2018. In 2000, the figure increased to 30%. In the **snap parliamentary elections of June 2021, women comprised 36.3% of the candidates** running for parliament, and of the 26 political forces running, only two were headed by women.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Martirosyan, S., "36% Of Candidates Running for Armenian Parliament Are Women", *Hetq*, 2 June 2021, <https://hetq.am/en/article/131649>

Most women in the National Assembly are part of the Hayastan (34.5%) and Civil Contract (34%) factions.

Studies show that gender-sensitivity is lacking among political parties in Armenia. This is problematic, as political parties are the main gatekeepers of, and entry to, the arena of politics. Research on the gender profiles of major political parties reveals that they do not have gender policies in place, and largely lack an overall understanding of gender-based discrimination.<sup>94</sup> The Women's Agenda project, implemented by the OxYgen Foundation in Armenia, aims to increase political parties' awareness of gender issues, and facilitate dialogue between politicians and civil society.<sup>95</sup>

According to the latest survey conducted by the International Republican Institute in 2021, 80% of Armenians believe that **women are not actively involved in political life because they are preoccupied with the childcare and housekeeping**. Only 7% of women, compared to 14% of men, expressed an interest in running for political office. However, an equal number of men and women (15%) expressed an interest in joining a political party.<sup>96</sup>

While some positive changes are apparent in society's attitudes towards women's leadership, social **stereotypes persist about women's role in politics**. For example, the OxYgen Foundation finds that relatively more people can envision women holding the positions of deputy ministers (68%) and even ministers (64%) compared to women being heads of communities (63%) or the administrative heads of villages (55%). Fewer than half of Armenians (46%) can envision a woman holding the position of Prime Minister.<sup>97</sup> Over half of male respondents think that men make better political leaders, while women respondents are more likely to think that there is no difference between men and women as political leaders.<sup>98</sup>

Some changes have been reported in the **gender-related aspects of voting behaviour**. Compared to the elections of 2018, women's participation increased by 3.8% in the 2021 elections, whereas men's participation decreased by 4.3%.<sup>99</sup>

Some differences are also reported among employed and unemployed women in this regard. **Employed women are more active in elections** and make more conscious choices.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Center for Insights in Survey Research, *Public Opinion Survey on Women's Issues: Residents of Armenia*, International Republican Institute, Washington, DC, 2020, [https://www.iri.org/sites/default/files/womens\\_political\\_participation\\_breavis\\_iri\\_results\\_presentation\\_final\\_07.01.2021.pdf](https://www.iri.org/sites/default/files/womens_political_participation_breavis_iri_results_presentation_final_07.01.2021.pdf)

<sup>97</sup> OxYgen, *Women's Political Participation in the Republic of Armenia*, OxYgen, NDI and USAID, Yerevan, 2020, [https://oxygen.org.am/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Women-PP\\_ENG.pdf](https://oxygen.org.am/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Women-PP_ENG.pdf)

<sup>98</sup> Onyshchenko, A., et al., *Baseline Study on Gender Norms and Stereotypes in the Countries of the Eastern Partnership: EU4 Gender Equality Together against gender stereotypes and gene-based violence*, UNFPA and UN Women 2022.

<sup>99</sup> OxYgen, *National Assembly and Local Self-Government Elections 2021: Peculiarities of Women's Electoral Behaviour*, 2022, [https://oxygen.org.am/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/REPORT\\_Women-Electoral-Behaviour\\_2022\\_ENG.pdf](https://oxygen.org.am/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/REPORT_Women-Electoral-Behaviour_2022_ENG.pdf)

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

A recent disturbing phenomenon that disproportionately affects women in politics, as well as women's rights and human rights activists in Armenia, is **cyberbullying and online sexism**. Whereas attacks on men target their professional opinions and capacities, women are more likely to be subject of sexist and sexualised abuse. These types of online attacks on high-profile women in Armenia, as in many other countries, undermine their rights to express themselves, and to serve their constituents, while limiting their rights to free movement and assembly.<sup>101</sup>

In 2016, the Concluding Observations of the CEDAW Committee recommended that Armenia introduce a gender parity system for appointments and the acceleration of women's recruitment to senior positions in the public and private sectors. It also recommended applying the principle of equal pay for work of equal value. In the state/public sphere, several special measures have been adopted, including quotas for Members of Parliament and judges. However, a gender parity system has not been implemented for other state or private employees in terms of the appointment and accelerated recruitment of women to senior positions.<sup>102</sup>

In its 2022 Concluding Observations, the CEDAW Committee recommended that Armenia take targeted measures to promote women's access to managerial positions and higher-paid jobs in traditionally male-dominated professions. To this end, it recommends providing professional training, offering incentives for the preferential recruitment of women, and increasing the number and quality of childcare and preschool education services, alongside action to alleviate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on women's employment.<sup>103</sup>

These recommendations are relevant since women's representation in decision-making remains low in a range of sectors. For example, although women account for 80% of employees in the education sector, they tend to occupy low and medium-level positions. Currently, 50% of rectors in state universities are women, as are 33% in non-state universities.<sup>104</sup>

#### 4.1.2. Women in local administrations

In general, **women's participation in decision-making at the community level, especially in rural communities, is fairly low**. The principal reasons for their limited involvement in community leadership include public opinion, men's lack of acceptance of women's leadership, women's fear of expressing themselves, and a lack of self-confidence among women.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> United States Agency for International Development, *USAID Armenia Gender Analyses*, 2019, <https://banyanglobal.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/USAID-Armenia-Gender-Analysis-Report-1.pdf>

<sup>102</sup> United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, "UN Committee to review Armenia's record on women's rights", *UNCHR*, 2 November 2016, <https://ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=20814&LangID=E>

<sup>103</sup> Concluding observations on the seventh periodic report of Armenia. November, 2022.

<sup>104</sup> Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia, *Women and Men in Armenia 2023*, Government of the Republic of Armenia, Yerevan, <https://www.armstat.am/file/article/gender-2023.pdf>

<sup>105</sup> OxyGen, *Women's Political Participation in the Republic of Armenia*, OxyGen, NDI and USAID, Yerevan, 2020, [https://oxygen.org.am/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Women-PP\\_ENG.pdf](https://oxygen.org.am/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Women-PP_ENG.pdf)

Despite the reform of local governance structures in recent years, only 6% of the heads of consolidated communities are women. According to assessments by local organisations, the consolidation of communities has created a new “glass ceiling” for women. For example, in 2016, the gender monitoring of 60 consolidated elections in 17 clusters uniting 125 communities demonstrated that women had been very passive since the nomination phase, and women’s representation among elected municipal councillors is between two and three times lower than before consolidation. The only exception is the community of Tegh in Syunik marz, the only consolidated community where the number of women in the municipal council has increased after consolidation. However, the reasons for this have not yet been studied.<sup>106</sup>

Only 6% of the deputy heads of communities are women. There are no women among the deputies of Yerevan’s city mayor although 50% of the staff of Yerevan municipality are women. Among the 1,326 council members of communities, far fewer than half are women (29%).

Following the application of gender quotas for local administrations, the **number of women in the municipality of Yerevan’s Councils of Elders rose to 32%, and increased to 24% in Gyumri and Vanadzor.**<sup>107</sup>

In 2016, the Electoral Code stipulated an increase in the gender quota with the following “precise” wording: *“In the first part of the national electoral list of a political party, alliance of political parties and each of the political parties included in the alliance, the number of representatives of each sex, starting from the first place in the list, shall not exceed 70% in each integer group of 3 (1-3, 1-6, 1-9 and subsequently up to the end of the list).”*

In line with the changes to the Republic of Armenia’s Electoral Code adopted in 2020, the quota requiring at least a 30/70 split in the proportion of women and men on party lists applies to both national and territorial lists used in parliamentary elections, as well as to local self-government elections in Yerevan, Gyumri and Vanadzor, which are conducted through the electoral system of proportional representation.<sup>108</sup>

Of the nine communities participating in the elections, women were represented in only three councils. In one of these councils (Gyumri), women’s representation was a requirement of the gender quota stipulated in the Electoral Code.<sup>109</sup>

Currently, 14% of Armenia’s ambassadors are women, but there are no women among Armenia’s permanent representatives. Among members of the Police, 4% are women. In recent years, more women are participating in the Patrol Service.

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> WomenNet.am, “How are Women Represented in Community Councils Preparing for Elections?”, *Women & Society Information Analytical Portal*, 10 September 2021, <http://womennet.am/en/women-tim-elections/?fbclid=IwAR1OprXG7cWv6y6Bowb9TXCbAieJI4so91sVxeM13Mvr6uEOZGipzsTXPz8>

It is worth noting that 62% of Armenia's population agree that the new Patrol Service is better than the old Traffic Police.<sup>110</sup>

Among the five members of the Council of Central Bank, there is only one woman.<sup>111</sup>

### 4.1.3. Women in the judiciary

Among civil servants in managerial positions, gender equality is in sight with 44% of these positions held by women and 56% by men. Moreover, women (70%) predominate among professional positions in the civil service, significantly outnumbering men (30%).<sup>112</sup>

Of the 296 judges in Armenia, 31% are women while 69% are men. The percentage of women judges decreases among the higher ranks of the judiciary, in the following manner:

- Among 183 judges of the first instance, 27.3% are women and 72.7% are men.
- Among 44 judges of the second instance, 25% are women and 75% are men.
- Among 17 judges of the third instance, 24% are women and 76% are men.

There is greater gender imbalance in the specialised jurisdictions of First Instance Courts compared to First Instance Courts with general jurisdictions. For example:

- Among the 147 judges of First Instance Courts with general jurisdictions, 29.9% are women and 70.1% are men.
- Among the 36 judges of First Instance Courts with specialised jurisdictions, only 16.7% are women and 83.3% are men.

Among the 18 Chairpersons of the Chambers and Courts, only two are women. This means that women occupy 11% of senior positions in chambers and courts in Armenia, while men occupy 88.9%. Among the nine members of the Supreme Judicial Council, one is a woman. Women therefore occupy 10% of positions on the Supreme Judicial Council, whereas 90% of positions are held by men. There is only one woman judge elected by the General Assembly of Judges, and no women among non-judge members elected by the National Assembly.

Among assistants to judges, a gender imbalance exists in favour of women. Thus, among 257 assistants, 66.1% are women and 33.9% are men.<sup>113</sup>

**Gender quotas have been established for the judiciary** in Armenia. According to Article 109, Part 5, of the Judicial Code, gender balance must be taken into account when compiling a list of candidates for judges.

<sup>110</sup> Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia, *Women and Men in Armenia 2023*, Government of the Republic of Armenia, Yerevan, <https://www.armstat.am/file/article/gender-2023.pdf>

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> Council of Europe, "Online discussion of the study Gender equality in the judiciary of Armenia: challenges and opportunities", 26 May 2021, [https://www.coe.int/en/web/yerevan/home/-/asset\\_publisher/KZTSm796kFrq/content/online-discussion-of-the-study-gender-equality-in-the-judiciary-of-armenia-challenges-and-opportunities-?](https://www.coe.int/en/web/yerevan/home/-/asset_publisher/KZTSm796kFrq/content/online-discussion-of-the-study-gender-equality-in-the-judiciary-of-armenia-challenges-and-opportunities-?)

Where the number of the judges of either sex is less than 25% of the total number of judges, up to 50% of the places in the list of contenders must be reserved for persons of the less represented sex. The Judicial Code also establishes a gender quota for the Supreme Judicial Council, particularly for the purposes of gender balanced representation among judges who are members of the Supreme Judicial Council, specifying that at least three must be of the opposite sex (Article 76, Part 3). The gender quota only applies to members of the Supreme Judicial Council who are judges, and not to members of the body who are elected by the National Assembly.<sup>114</sup>

## 4.2. Gender and economic and social rights

### 4.2.1. Gender equality and employment

According to the data of the National Statistical Committee, **52% of women in Armenia are not employed and are not seeking employment.**<sup>115</sup>

A major reason for women's absence from the labour market is their engagement in unpaid household activities. The proportion of women who are not in Armenia's labour force among the 25–49-year-old age group has increased since 2021. Around 70% of 25–49-year-olds outside of the labour market in 2021 were women.<sup>116</sup> In 2022, women accounted for 82% of people outside the labour force among 25–29-year-olds, and 80% of the 25–49-year-olds not in the labour force.<sup>117</sup>

For men, employment reaches its peak among 25–39-year-olds. The greatest gender difference occurs in the age range of 25–34, with only 44% of women of this age employed, compared to 78% of men.<sup>118</sup>

Women's employment reaches its peak among 40–54-year-olds.<sup>119</sup> This indicates that women are out of the labour market during their most employable years, which is a considerable disadvantage in terms of overall employment.

Women tend to have fewer skills and less working experience, and employers are more reluctant to hire women who are over 40 years old.

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<sup>114</sup> See: <https://www.arlis.am/DocumentView.aspx?DocID=146620#>

<sup>115</sup> Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia, *Women and Men in Armenia 2023*, Government of the Republic of Armenia, Yerevan, [https://armstat.am/file/article/gender\\_2023\).pdf](https://armstat.am/file/article/gender_2023).pdf)

<sup>116</sup> Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia, *Women and Men in Armenia 2022*.

<sup>117</sup> Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia, *Women and Men in Armenia 2023*, Government of the Republic of Armenia, Yerevan, [https://armstat.am/file/article/gender\\_2023\).pdf](https://armstat.am/file/article/gender_2023).pdf)

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> Honorati, M., et al., *Work for a Better Future in Armenia: An Analysis of Jobs Dynamics*, World Bank, Yerevan, 2019. <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/387401564380250230/pdf/Work-for-a-Better-Future-in-Armenia-An-Analysis-of-Jobs-Dynamics.pdf>

For 43% of women, the **main reason they are not involved in the labour market, and not actively looking for a job, is their household duties**. Only 1% of men cite household duties as a factor in their being out of the labour market.<sup>120</sup> According to the 2021 Caucasus Barometer, 75% of unemployed women, compared to 59% of unemployed men, are not interested in finding a job.

In 2022, 38% of young women and 16% of young men between 15 and 29 years old were not in employment, education or training.<sup>121</sup>

Continuing trends in recent years, **72% of men and 48% of women between 15 and 74 years old are either employed or seeking employment in Armenia**. Most working women (62%) are involved in the fields of public administration, education, health care, social work and service provision.<sup>122</sup> More women work in the public sector (30%) than men (18%), while the opposite is true for non-public employment, where more men are employed (82%) than women (70%).<sup>123</sup>

Men are more involved in formal and informal employment in the sectors of agriculture, industry, construction and services. Twice as many women (25%) as men (13%) work part-time.<sup>124</sup> More women than men engage in unpaid training initiatives, and produce their own goods and services. More women are engaged as volunteers (64%) than men (36%).<sup>125</sup>

There is a **large gender gap in favour of men among employers** in Armenia, as 83% of employers are men, while only 17% are women. Moreover, women are almost twice as likely to be contributing family workers (61%) than men (39%).<sup>126</sup> There has been a slight decrease in the percentage of men contributing to family work since 2021 (32%).

**Armenia's unemployment rate is fairly high (16.6%).**<sup>127</sup> This is the highest unemployment rate among countries that are members of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). Women comprise 51% of the long-term unemployed population.<sup>128</sup>

Among the beneficiaries of the Annual Programme of State Regulations of Employment, there are far more women (63%) than men (37%). The rate of unemployment is lowest among widowed women (9%), which is almost half the rate among widowed men (16%).

<sup>120</sup> Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia, *Women and Men in Armenia 2023*, Government of the Republic of Armenia, Yerevan, [https://armstat.am/file/article/gender\\_2023\).pdf](https://armstat.am/file/article/gender_2023).pdf)

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia, *Women and Men in Armenia 2023*, Government of the Republic of Armenia, Yerevan, [https://armstat.am/file/article/gender\\_2023\).pdf](https://armstat.am/file/article/gender_2023).pdf)

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia, *Women and Men in Armenia 2020*, Government of the Republic of Armenia, Yerevan, <https://armstat.am/en/?nid=82&id=2322>

<sup>127</sup> OxyGen Foundation, *Road Map for Ensuring Equal Labor Rights for Women and Men in Armenia*, 2020, [https://oxygen.org.am/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Labor-Market-Armenia-Road-map-main.pdf?fbclid=IwAR0X6C2ZDYuuuDygKXQ0\\_rN9OKTJqUXd5i6XyG2w\\_ZMB2qbmxxvZm1hRtyBE](https://oxygen.org.am/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Labor-Market-Armenia-Road-map-main.pdf?fbclid=IwAR0X6C2ZDYuuuDygKXQ0_rN9OKTJqUXd5i6XyG2w_ZMB2qbmxxvZm1hRtyBE)

<sup>128</sup> Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia, *Women and Men in Armenia 2023*, Government of the Republic of Armenia, Yerevan, [https://armstat.am/file/article/gender\\_2023](https://armstat.am/file/article/gender_2023)

Among groups with different levels of **education**, the greatest gender differences exist in levels of general secondary, vocational and secondary specialist education. Some 62% of men and 38% of women employees have a “medium” level of education. In addition, the higher a woman’s level of education, the less she is subject to economic activity-related restrictions.<sup>129</sup> It is worth noting that restrictions on women’s economic activity are more common in urban settlements.<sup>130</sup>

**Marital status** also plays a role in employment opportunities. Among all groups of women, divorced women represent the majority of employed women in Armenia. Among men, married men are the group most involved in the labour market. The greatest gender gap in employment exists among married persons, as 70% of married men are employed, compared to 43% of married women.<sup>131</sup>

Overall, **family structure** is likely an important determinant of gendered labour market inequalities in Armenia. In particular, motherhood is correlated to higher non-participation and lower employment rates for women. Gaps are especially pronounced among younger age groups and are related to the age of women’s children. These gaps do not appear to be education-specific.<sup>132</sup>

The greatest discrepancies exist among couples with children. The number of children a woman has affects her labour market-related activities, but the number of children a man has does not affect his engagement in the labour market.<sup>133</sup> **Mothers of two children have a non-participation rate in the labour market that is six times higher than the rate for fathers of two children.**<sup>134</sup> This situation is also clearly reflected in social perceptions and patriarchal attitudes towards men’s and women’s labour force participation, as 66% of Armenian women, and 75% of Armenian men, believe that pre-school children are better off if their mother does not work.<sup>135</sup> Yet almost 100% of respondents in the same baseline survey on social norms, conducted by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment (UN Women), report that having a job is a key part of their own identity.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia, *Nationwide survey on Domestic Violence against Women in Armenia*, [https://www.armstat.am/file/article/dv\\_executive\\_summary\\_engl.pdf](https://www.armstat.am/file/article/dv_executive_summary_engl.pdf)

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia, *Women and Men in Armenia 2023*, Government of the Republic of Armenia, Yerevan, [https://armstat.am/file/article/gender\\_2023\).pdf](https://armstat.am/file/article/gender_2023).pdf)

<sup>132</sup> Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia, *Analyses of the Gender Pay Gap and Gender Inequality in the Labor Market in Armenia*, 2020, [https://armstat.am/file/article/analysis\\_of\\_the\\_gender\\_pay\\_gap\\_armenia\\_en.pdf](https://armstat.am/file/article/analysis_of_the_gender_pay_gap_armenia_en.pdf)

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

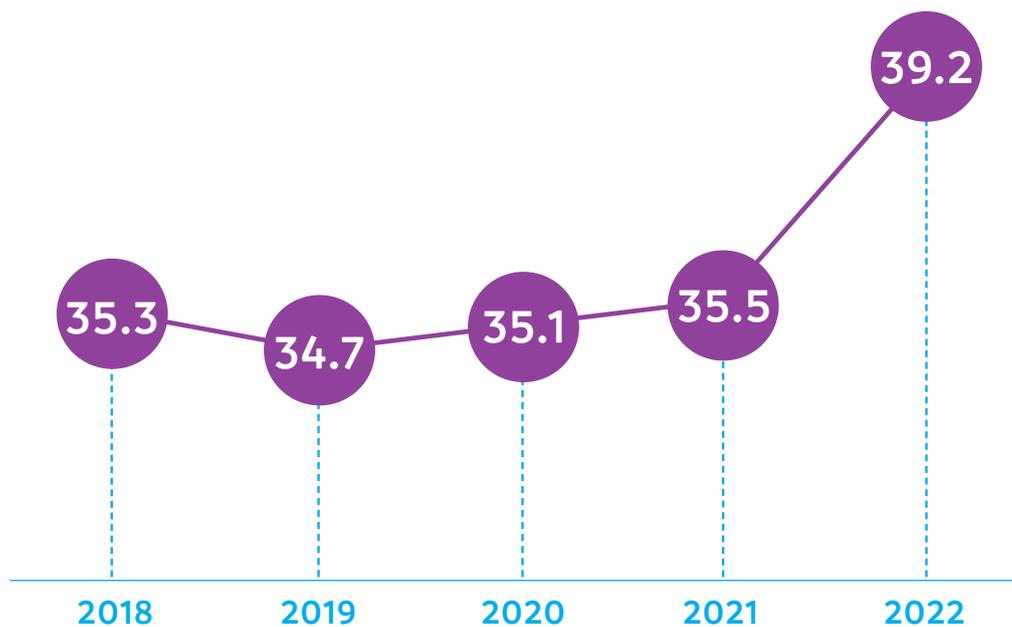
<sup>135</sup> UN Women and UNFPA, “EU 4 Gender Equality: Together Against Gender Stereotypes and Gender-Based Violence Project”, <https://eca.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/09/eu-4-gender-equality-together-against-gender-stereotypes-and-gender-based-violence#view>

<sup>136</sup> Onyshchenko, A., et al., *Baseline Study on Gender Norms and Stereotypes in the Countries of the Eastern Partnership: EU4 Gender Equality Together against gender stereotypes and gene-based violence*, UNFPA and UN Women 2022, [https://eca.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-03/BASELINE%20STUDY-5\\_0.pdf](https://eca.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-03/BASELINE%20STUDY-5_0.pdf)

Some **geographical differences** are apparent in women's and men's employment opportunities. **Gender gaps in the rate of persons who are not engaged in employment, education or training (NEET)** are higher in rural areas. For example, 45% of women in rural areas are neither employed, nor receiving education or training, compared to 19% of men in rural areas. Similarly, women in rural areas have higher NEET rates than women in urban areas.<sup>137</sup>

Women's financial inclusion has increased significantly between 2017 (14.3%) and 2023 (52.2%).<sup>138</sup> While this is a positive trend, other challenges in economic participation remain. According to the National Statistical Committee, the **gender pay gap** in Armenia was 39.2% in 2022.<sup>139</sup> This has increased since 2018 by 3.9 points, meaning that women's earnings are, on average, just 61% of men's earnings for the same work or work of equal value. Armenia's gender pay gap is 2.5 times higher than the EU average, and is the second largest gender wage gap among 17 upper-middle-income countries.<sup>140</sup>

**Figure 1. Gender pay gap in Armenia, 2018–2022**



**Data source:** National Statistical Service of Armenia, 2023.

<sup>137</sup> Honorati, M., et al., *Work for a Better Future in Armenia: An Analysis of Jobs Dynamics*, World Bank, Yerevan, 2019, <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/387401564380250230/pdf/Work-for-a-Better-Future-in-Armenia-An-Analysis-of-Jobs-Dynamics.pdf>

<sup>138</sup> Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security Index, "Armenia", <https://giwps.georgetown.edu/country/armenia>

<sup>139</sup> Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia, *Women and Men in Armenia 2023*, Government of the Republic of Armenia, Yerevan, [https://armstat.am/file/article/gender\\_2023](https://armstat.am/file/article/gender_2023)

<sup>140</sup> UN Women, *Women's Economic Empowerment in Armenia and their Greater Integration into Markets and the Digital Economy*, 2022, <https://eca.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-07/%28ENG%29%20HANDBOOK%20on%20WEE%20and%20the%20DIGITAL%20ECONOMY.pdf>

The average monthly nominal wage in the public sector is AMD 161,259 for women (equivalent to USD 400) and AMD 238,125 for men (USD 590). Outside of the non-public sector, salaries are slightly higher, but a similar gender gap exists – the average monthly nominal wage for women is AMD 191,719 (USD 480 USD) compared to and AMD 311,174 for men (USD 780) for men.<sup>141</sup> Almost twice as many women (29%) as men (15%) reported lacking any personal income in the month before the Caucasus Barometer Survey.<sup>142</sup> Even in the sectors where women dominate – such as public administration, social services, and health – the differences between the average monthly nominal salaries of men and women are clear. While the number of women in the information and communication technology sector has been increasing in recent years, a gender pay gap of 40% persists in this sector.<sup>143</sup>

In 2022, there was a slight difference in favour of men in terms of pensions. The average pension for women was AMD 45,707 (USD 115 USD) per month, compared to AMD 48,037 for men (USD 120).<sup>144</sup>

There is both **horizontal and vertical gender segregation** in favour of men in Armenia's labour market. Horizontal segregation refers to segregation within certain professions and specialisations, while vertical segregation refers to segregation among the positions occupied. Men occupy managerial positions 2.4 times more often than women in Armenia. Among production and operation managers, there are almost twice as many men (68%) as women (35%). Similar trends are apparent among the managers of small enterprises (73% of whom are men, while 27% are women).<sup>145</sup> Moreover, 60% of women work in sectors that are not particularly lucrative, including agriculture, education and health. Fewer women than men are employed in technical fields, such as manufacturing, transportation, storage, construction, mining, electricity, gas, and the steam sector. These technical sectors tend to pay higher wages than agriculture, education or health care, the sectors in which women are concentrated.<sup>146</sup> The effects of the glass ceiling – that is, vertical segregation – are also prevalent across the labour market in Armenia, with women unable to rise to senior positions.

As women are often unable to fully exercise their labour rights, they lack access to assets. Among the obstacles that prevent women's full exercise of property rights and asset-related rights include lack of collateral, a lack of business experience, high interest rates, fear of taking risks, a lack of land and property ownership, a lack of legal literacy, and limited knowledge of taxation.<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

<sup>142</sup> CRRC Armenia, Caucasus Barometer, <https://caucasusbarometer.org/en/cb2021am/PERSINC-by-RESPSEX/>

<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

<sup>145</sup> UN Women and Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia, *Analysis of the gender pay gap and gender inequality in the labour market in Armenia*, UN Women, Yerevan, 2020. [https://www.armstat.am/file/article/analysis\\_of\\_the\\_gender\\_pay\\_gap\\_armenia\\_en.pdf](https://www.armstat.am/file/article/analysis_of_the_gender_pay_gap_armenia_en.pdf)

<sup>146</sup> Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia, *Women and Men in Armenia 2020*, Government of the Republic of Armenia, Yerevan, <https://armstat.am/en/?nid=82&id=2322>

<sup>147</sup> Congrave, J. and A. Gomktsyan, *The Armenia Good Governance Fund and Gender Equality*, UKAID WOW Helpdesk, London, 2020, [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/895766/Query-45-Armenia-Good-Governance-Fund2.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/895766/Query-45-Armenia-Good-Governance-Fund2.pdf)

Informal discussions and reports by women's organisations reveal widespread sexual harassment in the workplace. However, there is no comprehensive report which identifies the problem of sexual harassment in employment sectors in Armenia. It is important to note that the Armenian Labour Code does not include any references to the definition of sexual harassment. It does not contain a prohibition of sexual harassment in the workplace, and does not address this issue in terms of regulating employment relationships.

#### 4.2.2. Women in business

Women's economic empowerment is a cornerstone of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The UN provides strong evidence that women lag behind men in terms of the number of women business owners, the size of women-owned businesses, and women's access to economic resources. In Armenia, women-owned enterprises are smaller and more disadvantaged than enterprises owned by men with regard to access to credit, resources and assets.<sup>148</sup> Armenia's value on the Women, Business and the Law Index was 87.5 in 2023.<sup>149</sup> Among countries in Central and Eastern Europe, the index assigns Armenia's performance on women's financial inclusion a score of 41%, compared to the minimum score in the region assigned to Azerbaijan (28%) and the maximum score assigned to Estonia (98%).<sup>150</sup>

The Global Gender Gap Report 2018 highlights that **34% of all firms in Armenia have women co-owners, and 24% of firms have women as top managers**. An evaluation by the Asian Development Bank in 2018 reveals that women's share of small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) ownership increased since 2013, as more programmes to support women's entrepreneurship have been established. Self-employment or micro-enterprise activities are common for both women and men in Armenia, as 35% of women, and 36% of men, are self-employed. By comparison, 14% of women in Europe and Central Asia are self-employed.<sup>151</sup>

**Women are under-represented among business owners**, although it is still difficult to obtain valid data on business ownership in the country. It is a common practice for men in Armenia to register a business in the name of a female family member.<sup>152</sup>

Almost 70% of women, and 60% of men, believe that there is no difference with respect to women's and men's performance in a top business role. Yet only 35% of men report that they would be comfortable working for a woman leader, compared to 54% of women.

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<sup>148</sup> UN Women and Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation, *Women's Economic Inactivity and Engagement in the Informal Sector in Armenia: Causes and Consequences*, UN Women, Tbilisi, 2018, <https://georgia.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2018/12/womens-economic-inactivity-and-engagement-in-the-informal-sector-in-armenia>

<sup>149</sup> World Bank, *Women, Business and the Law Index*, World Bank, Washington, DC, 2021, <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/35094>

<sup>150</sup> Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security, "Armenia's Performance on the Women, Peace, and Security Index", GIWPS, Washington, DC, 2021, <https://giwps.georgetown.edu/country/armenia>

<sup>151</sup> Asian Development Bank, *Armenia: Country Gender Assessment*, ADB, Manila, 2019, <https://www.adb.org/documents/armenia-country-gender-assessment-2019>

<sup>152</sup> International Finance Corporation, UK Aid and British Embassy Yerevan, *Women's Entrepreneurship Study in Armenia*, IFC, Washington, DC, 2021, [https://www.ifc.org/wps/wcm/connect/fcee49ac-5516-4c6f-821b-541555cb36ba/WE\\_Diagnostic\\_Report\\_Eng.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CVID=nxF1z5j](https://www.ifc.org/wps/wcm/connect/fcee49ac-5516-4c6f-821b-541555cb36ba/WE_Diagnostic_Report_Eng.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CVID=nxF1z5j)

According to a 2021 report by the International Finance Corporation (IFC) on women's entrepreneurship, **women-owned businesses are smaller and younger than businesses owned by men** (6 years of operation vs 8.5 years of operation). Most women-owned businesses in Armenia are owned by widowed or divorced women.<sup>153</sup>

There are no significant gender-related differences in the motivation for starting a business. The principal motivating factor for opening a business for both women and men is to earn money. However, **there are notable gender differences in the initial sources of financing for businesses**. Men tend to rely on personal or household savings (69% and 53%, respectively), whereas women rely on loans from banks to start businesses nearly twice as often as men (21% vs 12%, respectively). Women are three times more likely than men to borrow money from friends and relatives in order to establish a business (12% vs 4%). In addition, more than half of the firms which apply for loans are women-owned businesses.<sup>154</sup>

In terms of the perceived challenges to starting a business in Armenia, twice as many men consider the lack of an educated workforce to be the main obstacle (42% of men, vs 23% of women). More men perceive political instability in the country to be the main challenge. Women consider that the main obstacles to starting a business are a lack of time and maintaining work-life balance. More women than men believe that, if they start a business, they will work harder and have no time left for their personal lives. Research by the International Finance Corporation and UK Aid suggests that the **best levels of work-life balance exist in the regions of Gegharkunik and Syunik**; however, this source provides no further explanation of this finding.<sup>155</sup>

As in many other parts of the world, **social and cultural norms** are among the greatest challenges to women starting and developing businesses. Societal discrimination against women who run businesses remains widespread, especially in Armenia's regions.

### 4.2.3. Households and living conditions

In 2019, **most households in Armenia were headed by men** (66%) while 34% were women-headed households (38% in urban areas and 28% in rural areas).<sup>156</sup> In 2022, 37% of households were headed by women.

The vast majority of single parents with a child under 16 years old are women (64% compared to only 5% of men). However, there are more single fathers than single mothers with two or three children.<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

<sup>156</sup> Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia, *Armenia – Poverty Snapshot over 2009–2019*, Government of the Republic of Armenia, Yerevan, 2019, [https://www.armstat.am/file/article/poverty\\_2020\\_e\\_2.pdf](https://www.armstat.am/file/article/poverty_2020_e_2.pdf)

<sup>157</sup> Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia, *Women and Men in Armenia 2023*, Government of the Republic of Armenia, Yerevan, <https://www.armstat.am/file/article/gender-2023.pdf>

Data from a baseline study on social norms by UN Women indicates that 59% of men are the main breadwinners in Armenian families, while 30% of respondents report that men and women contribute equally to their households.<sup>158</sup>

According to the 2018 survey, “The Invisible Side of Everyday Life: Gender Stereotypes in Daily Routine”, there are **clear gender divisions in decisions-making at the household level**. These divisions are far more visible in rural areas. **Women tend to make decisions on “indoor” (private) matters, while men make decisions on “outdoor” (public) matters**. Men also make decisions on relatively large purchases, while women tend to make decisions about daily needs, such as food or small utilities.<sup>159</sup> **More men (75%) than women (59%) are involved in family budget management**.<sup>160</sup> It is worth noting that twice as many women than men believe that they manage the family budget alongside their spouse.<sup>161</sup>

A survey conducted by UNFPA sheds light on the prevalence and causes of **gender-based sex selection** in Armenia. Among women between 18 and 49 years old who have ever been pregnant, 75% of respondents indicate that the primary breadwinner in their family is their husband or partner, and 10% indicate that they themselves are the main breadwinner in their family.<sup>162</sup> The **personal management of people’s own income** slightly changes with age. Some 30% of women between 18 and 49 years old report that they personally decide how to manage their income, as do 31% of women between 30 and 39 years old, and 38% of women between 40 and 49 years old.<sup>163</sup>

**Societal expectations about the gendered division of labour** begin at an early age.<sup>164</sup> From the age of 8 or 9 years old, girls are expected to be involved in domestic work, such as setting the table, cleaning the house, fetching water if they live in villages, and so on.<sup>165</sup> Thus, in Armenian households, there tends to be a clear division between so-called “indoor” and “outdoor” work, with “indoor” work principally associated with women and girls. “Indoor” work centres around “care work”, including cleaning, cooking, caring for children and supporting their education.<sup>166</sup> Armenian society expects women to play a vital **role in their children’s education**, including doing homework with them and making sure that they follow the instructions they receive at school.

<sup>158</sup> Onyshchenko, A., et al., *Baseline Study on Gender Norms and Stereotypes in the Countries of the Eastern Partnership: EU4 Gender Equality Together against gender stereotypes and gender-based violence*, UNFPA and UN Women 2022, [https://eca.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-03/BASELINE%20STUDY-5\\_0.pdf](https://eca.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-03/BASELINE%20STUDY-5_0.pdf)

<sup>159</sup> World Vision and AM Partners Consulting Company, *The Invisible Side of Everyday Life: Gender Stereotypes in Daily Routine*, World Vision, Yerevan, 2018, <https://www.wvi.org/sites/default/files/AM%20Partners%20research%20English.pdf>

<sup>160</sup> Center for Insights in Survey Research, *Public Opinion Survey on Women’s Issues: Residents of Armenia*, International Republican Institute, Washington, DC, 2020, [https://www.iri.org/sites/default/files/womens\\_political\\_participation\\_breavis\\_iri\\_results\\_presentation\\_final\\_07.01.2021.pdf](https://www.iri.org/sites/default/files/womens_political_participation_breavis_iri_results_presentation_final_07.01.2021.pdf)

<sup>161</sup> Ibid.

<sup>162</sup> UNFPA, *Prevalence and Causes of Gender-Biased Sex Selection in the Republic of Armenia: Research Report*, 2022, [https://armenia.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/gbss\\_report\\_2022\\_eng\\_0.pdf](https://armenia.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/gbss_report_2022_eng_0.pdf)

<sup>163</sup> Ibid.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid.

Fathers' participation in decisions on children's education tends to be limited. Men often help their sons with chess or sports-related activities on needs basis.<sup>167</sup> The COVID-19 pandemic has further compounded these differences.

**Control mechanisms** exist in the form of social rewards or punishments to ensure that household work is properly performed by women and girls. These mechanisms, often laden with discriminatory treatment, have the potential to impact the well-being of women and girls. The unequal distribution of care and domestic work, combined with discriminatory attitudes towards women and girls, make them especially vulnerable in crisis situations. Women and girls may become "scapegoats" targeted with more physical and psychological pressures in situations where households experience stress, fear, social-psychological pressure or financial difficulties.

According to data collected by the National Statistical Committee, **women spend more than twice as much time on unpaid domestic work, caring for children, and caring for family members who are sick, elderly or have disabilities, compared to men.** Overall, women spend 58.5 hours each week on domestic care work, while men spend 28.4 hours on such work.<sup>168</sup> The time that women spend on unpaid domestic work depends on their status in the labour market. No such correlation appears to exist for men.

This unequal division of care work is clearly reflected in societal perceptions – around 80% of Armenia's population agrees that women are mainly responsible for unpaid domestic work in their families.<sup>169</sup> Despite these discrepancies, most women report that they do not want to change their daily lives. Most men and women, especially in rural areas, believe that the division of work between men and women is "natural" and, therefore, "unchangeable".<sup>170</sup>

The Labour Code of Armenia does not contribute to equalising the distribution of unpaid domestic and care work. Women are entitled to 140 days of **maternity leave** (180 days in some circumstances) and are paid in accordance with their previous salary. Women may also request up to three years of unpaid leave after the birth of a child. Men can only take 5 days of **paternity leave** within 30 days of their child's birth.

The high costs of **childcare** pose a key barrier to reducing women's disproportionate burden of unpaid work. Moreover, childcare benefits are only available to one working parent.<sup>171</sup>

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<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

<sup>168</sup> UN Women and Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia, *Analysis of the gender pay gap and gender inequality in the labour market in Armenia*, UN Women, Yerevan, 2020, [https://www.armstat.am/file/article/analysis\\_of\\_the\\_gender\\_pay\\_gap\\_armenia\\_en.pdf](https://www.armstat.am/file/article/analysis_of_the_gender_pay_gap_armenia_en.pdf)

<sup>169</sup> Onyshchenko, A., et al., *Baseline Study on Gender Norms and Stereotypes in the Countries of the Eastern Partnership: EU4 Gender Equality Together against gender stereotypes and gene-based violence*, UNFPA and UN Women 2022, [https://eca.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-03/BASELINE%20STUDY-5\\_0.pdf](https://eca.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-03/BASELINE%20STUDY-5_0.pdf)

<sup>170</sup> Ibid.

<sup>171</sup> Congrave, J. and A. Gomktsyan, *The Armenia Good Governance Fund and Gender Equality*, UKAID WOW Helpdesk, London, 2020, [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/895766/Query-45-Armenia-Good-Governance-Fund2.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/895766/Query-45-Armenia-Good-Governance-Fund2.pdf)

In recent years, an interesting trend has been noted in terms of pre-school education for children in Armenia. According to a study on pre-primary education in the country, commissioned by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), prominently cited reasons on why children are not enrolled in public pre-school institutions include parents' dissatisfaction with the quality of diets and food provided, the large size of pre-school groups, and non-transparent pre-school admission policies. Many middle and high-income families choose to send their children to private pre-schools. The study also finds that parents see pre-school attendance as a constant source of respiratory diseases in children.

Meanwhile, in rural communities, there has been a shift in perceptions of pre-school education, with many parents opting to send their children to kindergartens even when their extended family can provide childcare. In general, the educational role of pre-schools in rural areas appears to be prioritised over their care-giving role.

Among poor households, the enrolment of children in pre-school education is consistently and significantly lower than in non-poor households. According to the results of the Integrated Living Conditions Survey (ILCS) in 2019, the gross enrolment of children in pre-school institutions was 34%, and varied by household income. Enrolment ranged from 37% for non-poor households to 27% for poor and 24% for extremely poor households.

Adopting a long-term perspective, Armenia is trying to promote more births through monetary incentives ("birth grants") and community campaigns. In the shorter-term, institutionalising quality childcare services would address several problems at once, including the lack of early childhood education as an essential component of skills development, the cost of childbearing, and the burden on women to balance family responsibilities with work. According to a World Bank report,<sup>172</sup> such initiatives may also give rise to a formal care industry that can both help reduce the demographic burden and provide employment opportunities for women in the lower skills segment, as well as at the decentralised level, throughout Armenia.

## 4.3. Gender, agriculture and the green transition

The intersections between the climate, the green transition and gender are a new topic in Armenia. Some 73% of workers at the Interagency Commission on Climate Change of Armenia are women.<sup>173</sup> However, there are **no women in high-level managerial positions** at the Ministry of the Environment, either as ministers and deputy ministers.

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<sup>172</sup> Honorati, M., et al., *Work for a Better Future in Armenia: An Analysis of Jobs Dynamics*, World Bank, Yerevan, 2019, <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/387401564380250230/pdf/Work-for-a-Better-Future-in-Armenia-An-Analysis-of-Jobs-Dynamics.pdf>

<sup>173</sup> Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia, *Women and Men in Armenia 2023*, Government of the Republic of Armenia, Yerevan, [https://armstat.am/file/article/gender\\_2023\).pdf](https://armstat.am/file/article/gender_2023).pdf)

In all other institutions subordinate to the Ministry of the Environment, there are very few women among heads and deputy heads of institutions (8%).<sup>174</sup>

Overall, women and men are almost equally involved in **agriculture**, and there is a gender pay gap of 23% in the sector.<sup>175</sup>

An estimated 30% of households are food-insecure in Armenia. **Among food-insecure households in 2022, 28% were headed by women, and 18% by men.**

Households which are food-insecure and/or poor tend to be women-headed households, households headed by divorced or widowed persons, households with four or more children, households with between 8 and 12 members, households that include members with disabilities (including a child or children with disabilities), single unemployed pensioners, households that are hosted or living informally in a dwelling, and households that do not own a car.<sup>176</sup>

Overall, an intersectional approach to gender/social **vulnerability and climate change** is among the least studied topics in Armenia. Studies by UNDP reveal patterns of household heating behaviours, energy efficiency, vulnerability and gender, including:

- The heating behaviour of women-headed households is almost the same as households headed by men.
- Large families and women-headed households, especially single pensioners, are the most vulnerable in terms of the use of energy efficiency, and green and clean heating.
- A survey conducted among the Alaverdi community finds that 51% of households headed by women and 61% of households headed by men are able and ready to invest in energy efficiency.<sup>177</sup>

The “energy-saving” behaviour of women-headed households in terms of heating is also evident from the share of natural gas and electricity consumption in their expenditure structure. While 78.2% of women-headed households pay no more than AMD 15,000 for gas consumption for heating, every third household headed by a man pays AMD 16,000–35,000, and almost every fourth pays over AMD 36,000. At the same time, the share of electricity costs in the average monthly expenditure of households headed by women and those headed by men is almost equal, totalling AMD 10,000 for 57%–59% of households.<sup>178</sup>

<sup>174</sup> Ibid.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid.

<sup>176</sup> World Food Programme, *Poverty and Food Security: A Snapshot of Interlinkages*, March 2023, <https://armenia.un.org/sites/default/files/2023-03/Poverty%20and%20food%20security%20-%20a%20snapshot%20of%20interlinkages.pdf>

<sup>177</sup> Mirzakhanyan, A. and D. Harutunyan, *Climate Change Related Gender and Social Vulnerability Data Needed to Support a Just Transition in Armenia*, UNECE, 2023, [https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2023-08/WP9\\_UNDPArmenia\\_JustTransition\\_AMirzakhanyan\\_DHarutunyan%20.pdf](https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2023-08/WP9_UNDPArmenia_JustTransition_AMirzakhanyan_DHarutunyan%20.pdf)

<sup>178</sup> UNDP, *Report on the Inception Stage of “Strengthened Community Resilience through Energy Efficiency and Low Emission Development*, UNDP-Sida project.

The following **major issues exist in Armenia's agriculture sector**:<sup>179</sup>

- There is a clear gap between legislation and the implementation of agriculture-related policies.
- Women are overrepresented in informal employment and domestic work.
- Women lack access to technical knowledge on agricultural enterprise development.
- Women lack access to information about financial instruments, modern technologies and marketing.
- Women have limited access to land ownership in rural areas due to patriarchal marriages, inheritance practices, and registration practices that favour male heads of households.
- Women have limited access to credit and entrepreneurship, and face difficulties in obtaining loans.
- Rural women tend to lack of self-confidence, and are often afraid to take risks or start businesses.
- Social and gender norms dictate attitudes toward women's role in rural areas. As a result, women's key roles in the agriculture sector are not recognised.
- Women in rural areas tend to lack social capital and communication skills, a situation exacerbated by stereotypes that hinder their access to large markets beyond their villages.
- Women are often unable to drive.
- Insufficient infrastructural development and limited access to labour-saving technologies in rural households put more pressure on women compared to men.

Cooperatives are a proven tool for improving women's position in agriculture. Although special programmes and even quotas for women exist in projects which seek to develop women's cooperatives, women in Armenia are not fully benefiting from these projects. According to a report by UN Woman in 2018, husbands, fathers or sons take the benefits of the agriculture loans taken out by women.<sup>180</sup> All too often, male household members make major decisions, guide financial strategies, and receive and use loans, despite the fact that women are the target group of these funding opportunities.<sup>181</sup>

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<sup>179</sup> Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, *Gender, Agriculture and Rural Development in Armenia*, FAO, Budapest, 2017, <http://www.fao.org/3/i6737en/i6737en.pdf>

<sup>180</sup> UN Women and Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, *Gender Assessment of Rural Development and Agriculture Policies in Armenia*, UN Women, Tbilisi, 2018, [https://havasari-infohub.am/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/18\\_UN-WOMEN-gender-assesment-of-rural-and-agricultural-policies-in-armenia\\_ENG.pdf](https://havasari-infohub.am/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/18_UN-WOMEN-gender-assesment-of-rural-and-agricultural-policies-in-armenia_ENG.pdf)

<sup>181</sup> Ibid.

## 4.4. Gender and health, including sexual and reproductive health

Most women in Armenia regard their **health condition** as “good” or “satisfactory”. Difficulties with memory and concentration, as well as difficulties with walking, are especially common issues reported by women. Most women do not regularly visit doctors due to a lack of funds, and do not consider their health a priority.<sup>182</sup>

Some gender differences have been noted in **physical and mental health** in Armenia. Among people between 25 and 64 years old, more men than women have malignant neoplasms. There are also more men than women with mental health issues in Armenia. However, in the past nine years, the percentage of women experiencing bodily disorders caused by stress has increased significantly, from 27% in 2013 to 43% in 2022.

The same is true for psychological developmental disorders overall. Only 3% of women reported experiencing psychological disorders in 2013, while in 2022, this proportion was 15% according to the Ministry of Health.<sup>183</sup>

The most common age for women to become **pregnant** is 18–21 years old. Nearly 19% of women report being physically or sexually abused during pregnancy. Women whose partners prefer to have a son are more likely to be physically or sexually abused.<sup>184</sup>

In the past decade, **maternal mortality** rates have decreased in urban and rural areas. While the difference between urban and rural areas was quite visible in 2021 (35 vs 58 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births), in 2022, the difference was not as significant (20 vs and 24 maternal deaths per 100 000 live births).<sup>185</sup> **Infant and child mortality** rates have also declined in recent years. However, infant mortality appears to have a gender dimension, as the rate is higher for boys than for girls. Child mortality among the 0–4-year-old age group is also higher for boys.

While **abortion** is legal in Armenia, the state has regulated women’s right to seek abortions by requiring a three-day waiting period upon their initial visit to a doctor for a first-time medical consultation before requesting an abortion.

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<sup>182</sup> Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia, *Nationwide Survey on Domestic Violence against Women in Armenia*, [https://www.armstat.am/file/article/dv\\_executive\\_summary\\_engl.pdf](https://www.armstat.am/file/article/dv_executive_summary_engl.pdf)

<sup>183</sup> Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia, *Women and Men in Armenia 2023*, Government of the Republic of Armenia, Yerevan, <https://www.armstat.am/file/article/gender-2023.pdf>

<sup>184</sup> Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia, *Nationwide Survey on Domestic Violence against Women in Armenia*, [https://www.armstat.am/file/article/dv\\_executive\\_summary\\_engl.pdf](https://www.armstat.am/file/article/dv_executive_summary_engl.pdf)

<sup>185</sup> Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia, *Women and Men in Armenia 2023*, Government of the Republic of Armenia, Yerevan, <https://www.armstat.am/file/article/gender-2023.pdf>

According to Article 21 of Government Order on Approving the Terms and Conditions of Abortion No. 180–N, of 23 February 2017, which declares null and void Government Decree No 116–N of 5 August 2004:

*“Before proceeding with abortion, the doctor of the given healthcare provider should allot a period for the decision making to the pregnant woman equal to three calendar days (and if the last calendar day coincides with the last day of the first trimester then before that day), which is being calculated from the moment when the woman has approached the doctor for the first time with a request for abortion”.*

This compulsory waiting period creates additional psychological pressure for women.<sup>186</sup> Despite international and national principles that regulate women’s right to safe and legal abortion services, women in Armenia face various impediments to exercising this right. This is particularly true for women in rural areas, who face difficulties in accessing medical services, which are few and far between in rural locations. In addition, meeting the costs of an abortion by a doctor may be challenging for rural women.<sup>187</sup> Various reports suggest that, despite the availability of contraceptives, abortion remains a culturally acceptable method of terminating a pregnancy.

Armenia’s Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) of 2015–2016 finds that one in every four women (25%) between 15 and 49 years old has had at least one abortion. The probability of abortion rises with a woman’s age, and the number of living children she has. Women between 40 and 49 years old, on average, have had 1.3 abortions in their lifetime.<sup>188</sup> **Nearly half of the women in Armenia (47%) have had more than two abortions.**

According to a nationwide survey by the National Statistical Committee, the number of women who had an abortion has remained virtually unchanged in recent years. In 2021, 40% of ever-partnered women had an abortion at some point in their lives. The rate of miscarriage is also high, at 26%. Moreover, among women who have had an abortion, stillbirth or miscarriage, there are more women who have been abused by their partners than those who have not been abused.<sup>189</sup>

In 2019, the number of induced abortions was 15.2 per 1,000 women, the highest number since 2000.<sup>190</sup> In 2022, the number of induced abortions decreased to 12.4 per 1,000 women.<sup>191</sup>

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<sup>186</sup> Ibid.

<sup>187</sup> The average price for a medical abortion is USD 30–40, and USD 100–150 for a surgical abortion.

<sup>188</sup> Arab, C. and M. Abrahamyan, *Armenia Country Gender Equality Brief*, UN Women Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia, Istanbul, 2019, <https://eca.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/05/armenia-country-gender-equality-brief>

<sup>189</sup> Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia, *Nationwide Survey on Domestic Violence against Women in Armenia*, [https://www.armstat.am/file/article/dv\\_executive\\_summary\\_engl.pdf](https://www.armstat.am/file/article/dv_executive_summary_engl.pdf)

<sup>190</sup> Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia, *Women and Men in Armenia 2020*, Government of the Republic of Armenia, Yerevan, <https://armstat.am/en/?nid=82&id=2322>

<sup>191</sup> Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia, *Women and Men in Armenia 2023*, Government of the Republic of Armenia, Yerevan, <https://www.armstat.am/file/article/gender-2023.pdf>

**Abortion rates among rural women are twice as high as among urban women.** The number of abortions among women of reproductive age is highest in the regions of Yerevan and Lori, and lowest in the Vayots Dzor region.<sup>192</sup> Men are twice as likely (18%) as women (9%) to believe that a woman should never have a choice when it comes to abortion.<sup>193</sup>

Article 21 of the Government Order on Approving the Terms and Conditions of Abortion, No. 180-N, requires the provision of free medical and social support services on methods for preventing unwanted pregnancies immediately after an abortion. However, focus groups conducted with women by local women's organisations show that after obtaining an abortion, women often do not receive counselling or post-abortion services.<sup>194</sup>

In 2016, amendments were made to the Law on Human Reproductive Health and Reproductive Rights in order to **ban sex-selective abortions**. Though this restriction may be well-intentioned, it has the potential to violate women's rights to life, health and bodily integrity.

A three-tier programme implemented between 2016 and 2018, Ensuring Access to Modern Contraceptives for the Prevention of Unwanted Pregnancies, worked to improve reproductive health and ensure access to, and the availability of, **modern contraceptives**. This offered women in Armenia the opportunity to receive comprehensive information on family planning and modern contraceptives.<sup>195</sup>

The most common contraceptives used in Armenia are condoms, interrupted intercourses, intrauterine devices, and using calendars to monitor the menstrual cycle. There are some **differences in the use of contraceptives by settlements, except for condom use**. The use of condoms does not appear to differ across settlements and is used almost equally in urban (30%) and rural areas (30%). However, in rural settlements, the use of traditional methods is more common, such as pills (4%) and intrauterine devices (18%). The use of diaphragm/foam/gel is only common in urban settlements (0.3%). The calendar method is used by 10% of women living in urban settlements, and by 8% of those living in rural settlements. Interrupted sexual intercourse as a method of contraception is more common among women living in urban areas than in rural areas.<sup>196</sup>

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<sup>192</sup> Women's Resource Center, *The Invisible Rights of Women in the Republic of Armenia: The Overall State of Reproductive Health and Rights among Various Groups of Women*, Women's Resource Center, Yerevan, 2018, <https://www.moj.am/storage/uploads/101010verart.pdf>

<sup>193</sup> Onyshchenko, A., et al., *Baseline Study on Gender Norms and Stereotypes in the Countries of the Eastern Partnership: EU4 Gender Equality Together against gender stereotypes and gene-based violence*, UNFPA and UN Women 2022, [https://eca.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-03/BASELINE%20STUDY-5\\_0.pdf](https://eca.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-03/BASELINE%20STUDY-5_0.pdf)

<sup>194</sup> Women's Resource Center, *The Invisible Rights of Women in the Republic of Armenia: The Overall State of Reproductive Health and Rights among Various Groups of Women*, Women's Resource Center, Yerevan, 2018, <https://www.moj.am/storage/uploads/101010verart.pdf>

<sup>195</sup> United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Human Rights Committee, Replies of Armenia to the list of issues in relation to its third periodic report on International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, CCPR/C/ARM/RQ/3, 16 March 2021, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3906055>

<sup>196</sup> Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia, *Nationwide Survey on Domestic Violence against Women in Armenia*, [https://www.armstat.am/file/article/dv\\_executive\\_summary\\_engl.pdf](https://www.armstat.am/file/article/dv_executive_summary_engl.pdf)

Women's age and level of education correlates with the use of contraceptives. The most common and easily used methods – such as pills, condoms and intrauterine devices – are largely used by women with a primary or secondary level of education. Methods that require a knowledge-based approach, such as the calendar/mucus method and interrupted intercourse, are more common among women with higher/postgraduate education.

Women between 15 and 24 years old are more likely to use intrauterine devices, diaphragm/foam/gel and interrupted intercourse. The use of pills, calendar/mucus and condoms, is more common among women aged 35 and older.<sup>197</sup> A baseline study by UN Women finds that 72% of women, and 64% of men, strongly believe that it is a man's responsibility to prevent his sexual partner from becoming pregnant.<sup>198</sup>

**Gender stereotypes and biases create a discriminatory environment** in terms of sexual and reproductive health care. Discrimination is perpetuated by health workers, although they are responsible for providing services to all women, including women from socially excluded and marginalised groups. Many doctors display discriminatory attitudes and behaviours towards women living with HIV, women with disabilities, and LGBTQI+ persons. This negatively impacts the effectiveness of health services, and reduces the willingness of women living in vulnerable situations to seek health care. As a result, many women avoid visiting gynaecologists, which endangers their well-being and prevents them from realising their right to health.<sup>199</sup> **A lack of essential gynaecological care is a major problem for women from marginalised and vulnerable groups.** The State does not ensure the accessibility of health services in remote rural areas, including emergency gynaecological care. Nor does it guarantee that health workers receive adequate and sustained training on sexual and reproductive health and rights, with a special focus on marginalised groups, including women living with disabilities, LGBTQ+ persons, and women living with HIV.<sup>200</sup>

According to the data obtained in 2018 from the Armenian Ministry of Health, approximately 50,000 cases of **sexually transmitted infections** (STIs) are recorded each year. The most common are trichomoniasis, chlamydia and gonorrhoea. Persons affected by sexually transmitted infections often do not seek medical assistance, and most attempt to treat infections themselves.

It is important to note that 97% of **women living with HIV** contracted the virus through heterosexual intercourse.<sup>201</sup> There is no data available on people living with HIV disaggregated by marital status. In 2016, Armenia successfully ended parent-to-child transmission of HIV.<sup>202</sup>

<sup>197</sup> Ibid.

<sup>198</sup> Onyshchenko, A., et al., *Baseline Study on Gender Norms and Stereotypes in the Countries of the Eastern Partnership: EU4 Gender Equality Together against gender stereotypes and gene-based violence*, UNFPA and UN Women 2022, [https://eca.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-03/BASELINE%20STUDY-5\\_0.pdf](https://eca.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-03/BASELINE%20STUDY-5_0.pdf)

<sup>199</sup> See the joint civil society Universal Periodic Review (UPR) submission: <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/UPR/Pages/AMIndex.aspx>

<sup>200</sup> Ibid.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid.

According to the latest report submitted by the Government of the Republic of Armenia to the CEDAW Committee, Armenia has been recognised as the fourth country in the world to have ended parent-to-child HIV transmission.<sup>203</sup>

Over the past 20 years, **sexuality education** in Armenia has evolved from being an experimental and optional subject to becoming integrated across a range of mandatory subjects at the secondary level. Topics related to sexual and reproductive health are integrated into natural sciences, social sciences and physical education, a compulsory subject, at secondary schools. However, there is **no standalone subject of comprehensive sexuality education in schools**. This absence is among the greatest challenges that women and girls face in exercising their sexual and reproductive health rights. Due to the general absence of comprehensive compulsory sexuality education, women – especially women in rural areas – often lack awareness of contraception, family planning, and preventing sexually transmitted infections.

In early 2021, a decision was made to introduce mandatory Healthy Lifestyle Club activities for grades 5–11, and to encourage more discussions between students and teachers.<sup>204</sup> The CEDAW Committee's Concluding Observations in 2022 on Armenia's seventh periodic report recommend integrating age-appropriate sexuality education at all levels of education into the revised Healthy Lifestyle programme and other relevant school curricula. In this regard, the CEDAW Committee recommends paying particular attention to responsible sexual behaviour aimed at preventing early pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections.<sup>205</sup>

To date, the Government has not taken sufficient measures to ensure that comprehensive sexuality education is implemented in schools. Both teachers and parents tend to skim over information on sexuality in a very superficial manner, often linking discussions of sexuality with narratives on national and cultural values and identities. For example, most teachers of the Healthy Lifestyle course cover topics such as hygiene and healthy eating, but discuss topics like HIV/AIDS and sexual behaviour very superficially.<sup>206</sup> Most parents and teachers report feeling reserved or ashamed when discussing sexuality with adolescents.<sup>207</sup> However, in-depth interviews with parents and teachers reveal that at least half of them support the concept of high-quality comprehensive sexual education, and believe that such courses should be taught by professionals in the field.<sup>208</sup>

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<sup>203</sup> Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, Seventh Periodic Report submitted by Armenia under Article 18 of the CEDAW Convention, CEDAW/C/ARM/7, 1 April 2021, <https://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2046192/N2108100.pdf>

<sup>204</sup> UNESCO Comprehensive Sexuality Education, Armenia, <https://education-profiles.org/northern-africa-and-western-asia/armenia/~comprehensive-sexuality-education>

<sup>205</sup> CEDAW Concluding observations on the seventh periodic report of Armenia. CEDAW/C/ARM/CO/7: Concluding observations on the seventh periodic report of Armenia.

<sup>206</sup> Women's Resource Centre and YSU Center for Gender and Leadership Studies, *Attitudes of Armenian teachers towards the sexual education course*, Women's Resource Centre, Yerevan, 2018; Women's Resource Centre and YSU Center for Gender and Leadership Studies, *Attitudes of Armenian parents toward sexual education of their adolescent children*, Women's Resource Centre, Yerevan, 2017.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid.

Most respondents (75%) still think that women should abstain from sex before marriage, whereas only 30% agree that men also should abstain from sexual relationships before marriage.<sup>209</sup> Age and, especially, education play a significant role in attitudes toward sexual rights.

For example, people who believe that a woman carrying a condom is a sign of promiscuity usually do not have a high level of education.<sup>210</sup>

In post-war contexts, the issue of fertility often becomes a state priority. Women's organisations in Armenia have raised concerns about policies to promote fertility that only include financial assistance programmes, which put additional pressure on women who are already vulnerable to violence. A comprehensive policy to promote fertility should include a wide range of measures, including policies to promote gender equality, particularly men's participation in childcare, adequate childcare facilities, and financial support programmes for families with children.<sup>211</sup>

## 4.5. Gender and education

In 2019, girls' enrolment rate in pre-school institutions (among children between 3 and 5 years old) was slightly higher (62.8%) than boys' enrolment rate (61.3%).<sup>212</sup>

In 2022, the Gender Parity Index value at general schools in Armenia (1.04) remained the same as in 2019. The **ratio of female-to-male enrolment in primary and secondary schools is 102%**.<sup>213</sup> The average number of years of schooling for women in Armenia is 11.3 years.<sup>214</sup>

Many jobs in the Armenian labour market require secondary vocational education. However, this demand is not met by supply within the existing workforce. A study of employers' opinions indicates the quality of vocational education does not correspond to the requirements of the labour market.<sup>215</sup> Women are often not engaged in certain professions because of stereotypical perceptions in society. Girls' enrolment in vocational education remains low. Three times more boys than girls are enrolled in preliminary vocational education.<sup>216</sup>

<sup>209</sup> Onyshchenko, A., et al., *Baseline Study on Gender Norms and Stereotypes in the Countries of the Eastern Partnership: EU4 Gender Equality Together against gender stereotypes and gender-based violence*, UNFPA and UN Women 2022, [https://eca.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-03/BASELINE%20STUDY-5\\_0.pdf](https://eca.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-03/BASELINE%20STUDY-5_0.pdf)

<sup>210</sup> Ibid.

<sup>211</sup> Women's Resource Center NGO, *Factsheet on Women, Peace and Security Agenda*, <https://womenofarmenia.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/WPS-Factsheet.pdf>

<sup>212</sup> UNICEF, *Education Analysis for Armenia*, <https://www.unicef.org/armenia/media/15496/file/Education%20Sector%20Analysis%20for%20Armenia.pdf>

<sup>213</sup> Bertelsmann Stiftung, *BTI 2020 Country Report – Armenia*, Bertelsmann Stiftung, Gütersloh, 2020, [https://bti-project.org/fileadmin/api/content/en/downloads/reports/country\\_report\\_2020\\_ARM.pdf](https://bti-project.org/fileadmin/api/content/en/downloads/reports/country_report_2020_ARM.pdf)

<sup>214</sup> Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security Index, "Armenia", <https://giwps.georgetown.edu/country/armenia>

<sup>215</sup> OxyGen, *Gender Issues in the Labor Market and Vocational Education*, 2023, <https://oxygen.org.am/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/RESEARCH-PAPER%E2%80%9494updated.pdf>

<sup>216</sup> Primary vocational (handicraft) education is aimed at preparing specialists with a primary vocational (handicraft)

Manufacturing and production is the only area of preliminary vocational education in which more girls are enrolled than boys. However, at the “middle” level of vocational education<sup>217</sup> there are more girls (16.7%) than boys (14.1%),<sup>218</sup> and at this level there are more women in almost all specialisations.

**More women than men obtain bachelor’s and master’s degrees** in Armenia. The gender parity index at the first stage of higher education (bachelor’s degree) increased from 1.10 in 2013 to 1.46 in 2022.<sup>219</sup> Since 2010, more women are enrolled in, studying and graduating from master’s degree programmes than men. In 2022, more than twice as many women (69%) as men (31%) graduated from master’s programmes. However, in postgraduate studies, the opposite is true. There are twice as many men (62%) as women (38%) enrolled in postgraduate studies, although the number of men and women who graduate with postgraduate degrees is almost the same.<sup>220</sup>

The gender segregation of specialisations persists in Armenia. There are many more women and girls among students of education, the arts, humanities, philological sciences, journalism and information science. Engineering, industry and technology, architecture and construction remain “masculine” specialisations and are predominantly pursued by men and boys.

Professions are often selected by chance, based on the advice of parents or relatives. Girls rarely apply to primary vocational education institutions for two reasons. First, because the professions involved are considered more “masculine,” for example, jewellers’ art. Second, the academically weakest students tend to apply for vocational education, and there are more boys among their ranks than girls.<sup>221</sup>

In terms of **women’s participation in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education, patterns are mixed and not well-studied**. Women comprise only 10% of engineering students and one-third of physical science students. Agricultural science is a field of study that is almost exclusively dominated by boys and men. However, in certain STEM fields, most students are girls and young women, including mathematics, statistics, biological science and chemistry.<sup>222</sup> For example, 80% of students studying biology are women.

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qualification.

<sup>217</sup> Secondary vocational education is aimed at preparing specialists with a secondary vocational qualification at least on the basis of basic general education.

<sup>218</sup> Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia, *Women and Men in Armenia 2023*, Government of the Republic of Armenia, Yerevan, <https://www.armstat.am/file/article/gender-2023.pdf>

<sup>219</sup> Ibid.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid.

<sup>221</sup> OxYgen, *Gender Issues in the Labor Market and Vocational Education*, <https://oxygen.org.am/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/RESEARCH-PAPER%E2%80%9494updated.pdf>

<sup>222</sup> Asian Development Bank, *Armenia: Country Gender Assessment*, ADB, Manila, 2019, <https://www.adb.org/documents/armenia-country-gender-assessment-2019>

**Gender differences among science candidates have increased in the past decade.** In 2008, women accounted for 38% of doctoral candidates, and men for 61%. In 2019, 52% of doctoral candidates were women and 48% were men.

In 2022, 53% of candidates of science were women and 47% were men. The gender imbalance at the level of doctors of science has remained the same over the past decade, 25% of whom are women while 75% are men.

Despite women's and girls' high levels of enrolment in education, the **rate of women not in employment, education or training remains high.**<sup>223</sup> A gender imbalance also exists in the NEET rate. While most young women in Armenia will not enter employment at all, or will become economically inactive after finishing school, most young men will secure or seek employment.<sup>224</sup>

A World Bank study highlights skills mismatches and gaps in certain areas. For example, employers have difficulties in finding skilled workers in the service sector. At the same time, employees in the ICT sector, and financial and insurance markets, report that they needed more training on higher level technical skills. According to a report by UN Women, "*a highly skilled workforce with a solid post-secondary education is a prerequisite for innovation and growth.*"<sup>225</sup>

**Women are overrepresented among the teaching staff** in Armenia's educational system. Women account for the vast majority of staff in pre-schools (99.5%), general schools (89%), preliminary vocational educational institutions (70%) and middle vocational educational institutions (76%). The only exception is higher education, where 56% of staff members are women and 44% are men.<sup>226</sup>

According to focus groups discussions conducted with selected teachers at secondary schools, teachers need additional capacity building on the topics related to gender equality. Misunderstandings exist about the term "gender" among teachers. In addition, gender stereotypes and biases exist, despite teachers' statements that they do not discriminate against anyone in the classroom based on their gender.<sup>227</sup>

In 2022, UNICEF prepared a resource pack for history teachers, entitled "Present in the Past, Absent in History". Its goal is to promote awareness of women in history.

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<sup>223</sup> Buitrago-Hernandez, P., et al., *Exploring the Diversity of Young People Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET): The Gender Profile of NEETs in Georgia and Armenia*, World Bank, Washington, DC, 2019, [https://havas-ar-infohub.am/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/15\\_WB\\_Gender-profile-of-NEETs-in-Georgia-and-Armenia\\_ENG.pdf](https://havas-ar-infohub.am/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/15_WB_Gender-profile-of-NEETs-in-Georgia-and-Armenia_ENG.pdf)

<sup>224</sup> Ibid.

<sup>225</sup> UN Women, *Women's Economic Empowerment in Armenia and their Greater Integration into Markets and the Digital Economy*, 2022, <https://eca.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-07/%28ENG%29%20HANDBOOK%20on%20WEE%20and%20the%20DIGITAL%20ECONOMY.pdf>

<sup>226</sup> Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia, *Women and Men in Armenia 2023*, Government of the Republic of Armenia, Yerevan, <https://www.armstat.am/file/article/gender-2023.pdf>

<sup>227</sup> UNICEF, *Inclusivity: to What Extent Education in Armenia is Responsive to Gender Issues*, 2021, <https://www.unicef.org/armenia/media/13116/file>

Therefore, the pack examines a number of topics in Armenian history from the point of view of women's daily lives, roles, customs and polices. The topics include information about women in Soviet Armenia, prenuptial and post-marriage customs in present times, women and activism in the 19th–20th centuries, Armenian feminist discourse in 19th century, and migration during the Ottoman empire.<sup>228</sup>

The latest report by the OxYgen Foundation notes that the **poor condition of inter-village roads and long distances to school are a key reason why girls drop out of education**. Insufficient infrastructure in rural areas negatively affects the education of both boys and girls. However, the location of schools, a lack of inter-village transportation and bad roads disproportionately affect parental decisions regarding girls' education.

Due to safety concerns and social norms, parents forbid their daughters from attending classes outside of their own villages.<sup>229</sup>

Other **major barriers to gender equality in education** in Armenia include:<sup>230</sup>

- The absence of education on gender equality in schools and higher education institutions.
- Stereotypes about masculinity and femininity, gender roles, and a lack of knowledge about human rights among teachers and professors.
- The fact that the State Pedagogical Institute's curriculum is not gender-sensitive.
- Strong gender differences in the career choices and career paths of male and female students.

The CEDAW Committee's Concluding Observations on Armenia's seventh periodic report of Armenia recommend ensuring comprehensive sexuality education, as described above. The Committee also recommends integrated a number of elements into the revised "Healthy Lifestyle" programme and other relevant school curricula, including (1) inclusive and accessible content on gender equality, including on women's rights and the harmful effects of gender-based violence against women and girls, and (2) human rights and peace education.<sup>231</sup>

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<sup>228</sup> UNICEF, *History#5: A Resource Pack With an Innovative Look at the Teaching of History in Armenian Schools*, 2022, <https://www.unicef.org/armenia/en/press-releases/history5-resource-pack-innovative-look-teaching-history-armenian-schools>

<sup>229</sup> OxYgen Foundation, *An Analysis of Implementation of Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in Armenia*, 2020, [https://havasar-infohub.am/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/47\\_Beijing25\\_ANALYSIS-OF-THREE-AREAS\\_ENG.pdf](https://havasar-infohub.am/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/47_Beijing25_ANALYSIS-OF-THREE-AREAS_ENG.pdf)

<sup>230</sup> Ibid.

<sup>231</sup> CEDAW Concluding observations on the seventh periodic report of Armenia. CEDAW/C/ARM/CO/7: Concluding observations on the seventh periodic report of Armenia.

## 4.6. Gender-based violence, prevention and protection mechanisms, and access to essential services

**Domestic violence remains widespread** in Armenia. Over 700 cases of domestic violence cases are reported each year, and women's organisations' hotlines continue to receive around 3,000 calls per year.<sup>232</sup> According to consolidated data from the hotlines of the women's organisations, in 2022, 3876 calls were received, 624 of which were domestic violence cases. In 2023, there were 3307 calls received, 597 of them were domestic violence cases.

According to the data provided by the Investigative Committee of the Republic of Armenia, the Committee investigated 1,051 criminal cases of domestic violence in the first term of 2023, 140 of which have been completed with a bill of indictment and in 144 cases, persons have been sent to court.<sup>233</sup>

As noted above, in 2018, Armenia signed the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention). After the Velvet Revolution, the new Government intended to ratify the Istanbul Convention in 2019. However, **Armenia's ratification of the Istanbul Convention was prevented by a strong anti-gender opposition movement led by ultra-right nationalist groups, supported by the Armenian Apostolic Church.** This movement created considerable disinformation about the Convention and influenced the ratification process through political manipulation. Ratification was eventually postponed, despite advocacy efforts by several women's groups and the Coalition to Stop Violence against Women.

Following the Velvet Revolution, the new Government committed to advancing gender equality at all levels. However, it fell short of implementing concrete steps in different areas, despite significant improvements being made in others. **Combating domestic violence is one area where the Government has made important progress**, through the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour. In 2018, following a decree issued by the Prime Minister, the Government established the Domestic Violence Council,<sup>234</sup> which operates under the ministry. It includes representatives of different governmental agencies and civil society organisations. The Council's role is to support the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour to develop necessary by-laws and procedural regulations to enforce the Law on Domestic Violence, and ensure an effective multi-sectoral response to domestic violence cases. Some restructuring of the Council will take place after the amendments to the Law on Domestic Violence to enable the body to function more effectively.

<sup>232</sup> See: [https://coalitionagainstviolence.org/en/?fbclid=IwAR10mJ5KQF3YJfop6NZdugLvYX\\_3Bwm0j6DV32sRp2a3lhgkV8QTLhf2l3c](https://coalitionagainstviolence.org/en/?fbclid=IwAR10mJ5KQF3YJfop6NZdugLvYX_3Bwm0j6DV32sRp2a3lhgkV8QTLhf2l3c) and <https://www.facebook.com/csvwarmenia/>

<sup>233</sup> Investigative Committee of the Republic of Armenia: <https://www.investigative.am/en/news/in-the-first-term-of-2023-140-criminal-proceedings-on-domestic-violence-on-146-persons-sent-to-court-summing-up>

<sup>234</sup> Government of the Republic of Armenia, Decree on Creation of the Council on Prevention of Violence in the Family Decree Number 1685-U, Government of the Republic of Armenia, Yerevan, 2018, <https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/5a6b2e274.pdf>

As noted above, these changes have already been suggested by the ministry and, when necessary amendments to the Law are enforced, civil society representatives will be able to take part in the Council once more.

In March 2019, decrees<sup>235</sup> were signed to establish more shelters, develop regional crisis centres with clear guidelines, devise protocols to address cases in each province, and ensure a financial support fund for survivors. However, according to the Coalition to Stop Violence against Women, Armenia still lacks a multi-sectoral approach and response to domestic violence cases at the state and community levels. Further amendments are needed to counter domestic violence and gender-based violence in a more systematic manner. In addition, shelters' occupancy is very limited and not in compliance with the Istanbul Convention's standards on the number of shelters per 100,000 inhabitants.

**Persistent violence against women in the “offline” world has become prevalent on online platforms as well.** Women experience sexism, misogynist attacks, threats and sexual harassment on social media, and while using the internet. Women are often attacked on the basis of their gender – facing sexualised threats and sexist campaigns – while men are attacked for their opinions or capacities. Law enforcement bodies have been unable to efficiently respond and protect victims of online gender-based violence.

When these attacks remain unpunished, they effectively restrict women's freedom of expression and their active involvement in the public digital world. A survey of 750 ICT companies in 2018 by the Enterprise Incubator Foundation<sup>236</sup> shows that, although women are increasingly present in the ICT sector, they are less represented than men in technical positions (68% of which are held by men, while 28% are held by women). Women are almost entirely absent from internet governance processes in Armenia, and as such their needs are not included. The internet governance sector is dominated by men, and online harassment and gender-based violence are not priority issues. These issues are not discussed and are disregarded entirely in annual Internet Governance Forums.<sup>237</sup> In addition, gaps exist in legislation. **Armenia has no national laws or regulations to protect women and men from online gender-based violence.**

There is a need to take more concrete actions to protect everyone, particularly women, from online abuse, cyber harassment, and the gendered effects of cyberbullying in Armenia. There is also a need to update legal frameworks and judicial practices, while raising awareness among the private ICT sector. It is equally crucial to include women and civil society in the country's Internet Governance Processes in order to make them gender-responsive, aware, and inclusive of the needs of the most vulnerable and high-risk groups that are systematically targeted by online abuse.

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<sup>235</sup> Government of the Republic of Armenia, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, “New Decrees to Support Women Victims of Domestic Violence”, 29 March 2019.

<sup>236</sup> Enterprise Incubator Foundation, *Armenian IT Industry Report 2018*, Enterprise Incubator Foundation, Yerevan, 2018, <https://www.eif.am/eng/researches/report-on-the-state-of-the-industry>

<sup>237</sup> Armenian Internet Governance Forum: <https://www.isoc.am/en/armenian-internet-governance-forum>

According to a survey conducted by the National Statistical Service of Armenia, 15% of ever-partnered women have been subjected to **physical violence** by their husbands/intimate partners. Rural women are more likely to be subjected to moderate and severe physical violence than women in urban areas. There are also some correlations with age and education, and experiences of physical violence. Among the women who have been physically abused by their partner, women between 45 and 59 years old predominate. The higher a woman's level of education, the lower the incidence of physical violence (beatings and slapping) during pregnancy.

According to the same survey, women who experience nervousness, despair, anxiety, depression and feelings of uselessness are more likely to be physically and psychologically abused than women who rarely experience these feelings. Women's feelings of uselessness positively correlate with psychological violence.<sup>238</sup>

Since 2019, ten support centres for victims/survivors of gender-based violence have opened in the regions of Armenia, with the support of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and the local NGO, the Women's Support Centre. More women and girls are applying for help than in the past. However, according to a nationwide survey by the National Statistical Service of Armenia, **the majority of women in Armenia (67%) do not take steps to protect themselves from domestic violence**, and 43% of women who have been physically or sexually abused by their partner stay silent about the violence they experience.

Only 12% of women who have been physically or sexually abused by their partner have sought help from a responsible institution, and 24% of abused women have ever left home because of violence. Moreover, 77% of women who have been physically or sexually abused by their partner continue to live with their abuser, and never leave their abuser's home.<sup>239</sup>

Women prefer to hide their experiences of sexual violence for fear of being blamed, as well as the negative consequences they, or their family members, may face. In most cases, victims/survivors of sexual violence become a target of double victimisation by public and law enforcement institutions. However, some progress is afoot in attitudes towards victims/survivors of sexual violence. Over 50% of people in Armenia believe that a woman should not be blamed if sexual violence is committed against her. Similarly, 54% agree that in a case of sexual violence, it is unacceptable to blame a woman for her clothes, drinking, behaviour, reputation or anything else. Young people are more likely to agree with this view, with 58% of persons between 18 and 29 years old believe that blaming a woman is unacceptable, compared to 41% of those over the age of 60.<sup>240</sup>

Focus group discussions with women in different regions of Armenia show that 84% of women, with no age differences, agree with the statement, "sexual violence does not have any justification".

<sup>238</sup> Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia, *Nationwide Survey on Domestic Violence against Women in Armenia*, [https://www.armstat.am/file/article/dv\\_executive\\_summary\\_engl.pdf](https://www.armstat.am/file/article/dv_executive_summary_engl.pdf)

<sup>239</sup> Ibid.

<sup>240</sup> Onyshchenko, A., et al., *Baseline Study on Gender Norms and Stereotypes in the Countries of the Eastern Partnership: EU4 Gender Equality Together against gender stereotypes and gender-based violence*, UNFPA and UN Women 2022, [https://eca.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-03/BASELINE%20STUDY-5\\_0.pdf](https://eca.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-03/BASELINE%20STUDY-5_0.pdf)

There are also some changes with respect to understandings of marital rape. Based on surveys and data from the Sexual Assault Crisis Centre, even a few years ago, most Armenian women did not believe that a woman could be sexually abused by her husband. In a survey conducted in 2023, 41% of women agreed with the statement that “women can be subjected to sexual violence in marriage.”<sup>241</sup> Although 66% of people believe that a woman should not tolerate violence, two-thirds of these individuals also believe that conflicts between a couple (even conflicts which lead to violence) should remain a private matter.<sup>242</sup>

More women (61%) than men (53%) are somewhat aware of legislation on domestic violence. However, fewer women (38%) and men (48%) are aware about legislation related to rape.<sup>243</sup>

An interesting and positive trend is apparent in terms of psychological support. Some 70% of women, and 66% of men, perceive psychologists to be the most effective source of support when combatting gender-based violence. Apart from psychologists, women respondents (61%) are more likely than men (54%) to turn to their local police department, while male respondents are more likely to consult family members (63%) than women (46%).<sup>244</sup>

In cases of sexual violence, most women indicate that they would seek help from local women’s organisations.<sup>245</sup>

The past two years have witnessed more discussions on sexual harassment in the workplace and in educational institutions, thanks to the efforts of local women’s organisations. In 2020, the Women’s Resource Center prepared a report on sexual harassment in the workplace, and the Sexual Assault Crisis Center developed a report on sexual harassment in educational institutions.

An online survey conducted by the Women’s Resource Center among 590 people on the prevalence and characteristics of sexual harassment in the workplace reveal that considerably more young women (16–39 years old) participated in quantitative research on sexual harassment in the workplace. This suggests that they are not only a target group of harassment, but also interested in raising the issue and contributing to policy development on this challenge. According to the centre’s quantitative research, 43% of women respondents have experienced sexual harassment in the workplace.<sup>246</sup> According to the respondents, the most common type of sexual assault (reported by 23% of respondents) is unwanted touching of the body, specifically the legs, back, arms, shoulders and/or face.

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<sup>241</sup> Socioscope, *Women about Sexual Violence, Perceptions and Experiences*, 2023, [https://socioscope.am/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/%D4%B6%D5%A5%D5%AF%D5%B8%D6%82%D5%B5%D6%81-66\\_compressed.pdf](https://socioscope.am/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/%D4%B6%D5%A5%D5%AF%D5%B8%D6%82%D5%B5%D6%81-66_compressed.pdf)

<sup>242</sup> Onyshchenko, A., et al., *Baseline Study on Gender Norms and Stereotypes in the Countries of the Eastern Partnership: EU4 Gender Equality Together against gender stereotypes and gene-based violence*, UNFPA and UN Women 2022, [https://eca.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-03/BASELINE%20STUDY-5\\_0.pdf](https://eca.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-03/BASELINE%20STUDY-5_0.pdf)

<sup>243</sup> Ibid.

<sup>244</sup> Ibid.

<sup>245</sup> Socioscope, *Women about Sexual Violence, Perceptions and Experiences*, 2023, [https://socioscope.am/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/%D4%B6%D5%A5%D5%AF%D5%B8%D6%82%D5%B5%D6%81-66\\_compressed.pdf](https://socioscope.am/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/%D4%B6%D5%A5%D5%AF%D5%B8%D6%82%D5%B5%D6%81-66_compressed.pdf)

<sup>246</sup> Women’s Resource Centre, *Sexual Harassment in the Workplace*, <https://womenofarmenia.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Սեռական-սոսնձողություն-աշխատավայրում-հետազոտություն.pdf>

A relatively large proportion also report facing verbal harassment, including unwanted sexual jokes at work (21%), unwanted sexual comments about the body and appearance (20%), and unwanted sexual offers (13%). Young people mention relatively new types of sexual harassment. Thus, 12% of 16–24-year-olds, 6% of 25–39-year-olds and 4% of 40–49-year-olds, respectively, have received sexual offers, pornographic materials, photos and video recordings online. About 11% of respondents report that, in addition to sexual harassment, they have been directly or indirectly asked to perform sexual acts in the workplace.<sup>247</sup>

The majority of recorded sexual harassment cases (32%) occur in the service sector. A considerable proportion of cases are also reported in the public administration system (14%), education sector (10%), ICT sector (9%) and NGO sector (8%). In 95% of cases, sexual harassment occurs in the workplace. More than half of the victims/survivors (55%) of victims are registered employees with a contract, and 70% work full-time. The vast majority of cases (95%) have occurred during the day shift. In terms of perpetrators, 51% of respondents identify the abuser as their supervisor, 78% identify a colleague, and 9% mention a customer. Around 30% of victims/survivors continue working in the same workplace. Only 13% have reported sexual harassment to their employer or human resources department. However, many of these applicants (37%) are not satisfied with the response of their employer or human resources department.<sup>248</sup>

According to a report on access to justice for women who are victims/survivors of violence, prepared by the Coalition to Stop Violence against Women, a protective decision is rarely applied in cases of domestic violence, and law enforcement officers do not show due diligence in protecting women from recurring violence. In general, perpetrators are mildly punished, and imprisonment is not the penalty imposed. When determining punishments, the courts record the absence of an aggravating circumstance in most of cases, because in the context of domestic violence, no aggravating circumstance had been defined by the legal regulations in force at the time of the adoption of the judicial acts analysed.<sup>249</sup> In addition, the court sessions and judicial acts contain questions asked by the participants in trials which reproduce gender stereotypes, thereby strengthening existing myths about gender roles. Another obstacle to fair punishment for cases of domestic violence is an overload of the judicial system, which leads to the dismissal of the cases on the ground that the statute of limitations has expired.<sup>250</sup>

In 2022, the Government identified six victims of trafficking in human beings, fewer than the 32 victims recorded in 2021, but similar to the nine victims identified in 2020, and eight in 2019. Of the persons identified in 2022, four were sex trafficking victims, and two were labour trafficking victims, including four women, one man and one boy. All of the victims were Armenians. The Government does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking but is making significant efforts to do so.

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<sup>247</sup> Ibid.

<sup>248</sup> Ibid.

<sup>249</sup> Coalition to Stop Violence against Women in Armenia, *Access to Justice in the Republic of Armenia for Women who are Victims of Violence*, 2023, <https://coalitionagainstviolence.am/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/access-to-justice.pdf>

<sup>250</sup> Ibid.

It has increased efforts to end trafficking, in light of the COVID-19 pandemic's potential impact on its anti-trafficking capacity. These efforts include developing screening indicators, in cooperation with an NGO, to help identify victims in migration flows, and establishing standardised indicators for the Victim Identification Commission to officially assess and identify victims/survivors.<sup>251</sup>

## 4.7. Women, peace and security

Based on the principle of equality between men and women, the Government of the Republic of Armenia approved its **first National Action Plan (2019–2021) for the Implementation of the UN Security Council Resolution on Women, Peace and Security (UNSCR 1325)** on 28 February 2019. On 2 June 2022, the Government adopted the **second National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 for 2022–2024** and a timeline for the plan's implementation.

The main difference between the first and second National Action Plans is determined by a drastic change in the situation in Nagorno Karabakh, that is, by the war that broke out in 2020, and post-war realities. In terms of their structure, both plans are based on the four pillars of UNSCR 1325 – participation, protection, prevention, relief, and recovery. The second Action Plan also touches upon ensuring cooperation with all local and international platforms within the framework of UNSCR 1325, and includes a section on monitoring and evaluation.

The latter implies the presentation of annual reports by an interdepartmental commission responsible for the implementation of UNSCR 1325.<sup>252</sup>

The second National Action Plan clearly defines objectives, the measures necessary to achieve these objectives, implementation timelines, results indicators, responsible implementing and complementing entities, and funding sources. It takes into consideration Armenia's international obligations with regard to women's rights and gender equality, including those assumed within the framework of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the Sustainable Development Goals and 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Universal Periodic Review process, and other documents.<sup>253</sup>

The second National Action Plan addresses three key security issues that have arisen as a result of the most recent war – the redrawing of borders, new security realities and actors, and an influx of displaced persons from Nagorno Karabakh, the majority of whom are women. The situation was further complicated by the fact that the war broke out and continued during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic. The plan's preamble provides data on civilian population losses due to the 44-day war, stating that 80 civilians were killed, including 12 women, and that of the 91,000 people displaced, 88% are women.

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<sup>251</sup> United States Embassy in Armenia, 2023 Human Trafficking Report, <https://am.usembassy.gov/2023-tip-report/>

<sup>252</sup> OxyGen, *Research Report on Perspectives for Women's Participation in Security and Peace Progress in Armenia*, 2023, [https://oxygen.org.am/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Research-Report-WEPS\\_ENG-05.03.2023-final.pdf](https://oxygen.org.am/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Research-Report-WEPS_ENG-05.03.2023-final.pdf)

<sup>253</sup> Ibid.

The plan introduces solutions to these complex problems by strengthening human security approaches with programmes to ensure that women maintain equal access to their rights and are protected from violence. The second National Action Plan also includes a **new pillar of cooperation**, focuses heavily on prevention techniques, and introduces new aspects of prevention related to the topics of genocide, war and violence. It is important to underline that Armenia's traumatic experience of war has not resulted in the implementation of protection initiatives based on enhanced military programmes. Instead, these are based on the premises of prevention, community education, and enhancing human security.<sup>254</sup>

Focus group discussions conducted in the border regions of Syunik, Vayots Dzor and Tavush show that, overall, people in these regions value women's participation in decision-making related to emergency situations. According to focus group participants, during emergency situations such as the 44-day war in Nagorno Karabakh, women shouldered prime responsibility for providing safety to their families and communities. However, gender stereotypes persist which hinder women's participation in security.<sup>255</sup>

Many **examples of women self-organisation in communities** have been registered and documented. Women's organisations have provided shelters, food, clothing and stationery for school children. According to experts, lessons can be learned from the experience of Goris. Under the direct guidance of the deputy head of the community (a woman), residents of the town and nearby locations, young volunteers and civil society representatives provided support to thousands of families displaced from Nagorno Karabakh.<sup>256</sup>

Despite positive developments in the second National Action Plan, local women's organisations have expressed their concerns about potentially advancing a militaristic agenda. As a policy brief by the Women's Resource Center notes, the plan mainly aims to mitigate the consequences of war, and to prepare for a new war, rather than focusing on human security and peace. In addition, the lack of state funding for implementing activities, and the lack of an intersectional approach are key concerns.<sup>257</sup> For example, after the 44-day war in 2020, women's participation has significantly increased in training courses on handling firearms and acquiring civil defence skills. However, women are absent from any kind of negotiations related to conflict management.<sup>258</sup> The **main recommendations of women's organisations to improve the National Action Plan** are to:<sup>259</sup>

- reflect the needs of all women's groups within the framework of promoting the women, peace and security agenda;

<sup>254</sup> Democracy Today, *Women Peace and Security in Action*, 2023, [https://www.democracytoday.am/\\_files/ugd/5101a2\\_47345596fe8f4d0da5c85697f3f196e5.pdf](https://www.democracytoday.am/_files/ugd/5101a2_47345596fe8f4d0da5c85697f3f196e5.pdf)

<sup>255</sup> OxYgen, *Research Report on Perspectives for Women's Participation in Security and Peace Progress in Armenia*, 2023, [https://oxygen.org.am/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Research-Report-WEPS\\_ENG-05.03.2023-final.pdf](https://oxygen.org.am/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Research-Report-WEPS_ENG-05.03.2023-final.pdf)

<sup>256</sup> Ibid.

<sup>257</sup> Women's Resource Center NGO, *Factsheet on Women, Peace and Security Agenda*, 2023, <https://womenofarmenia.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/WPS-Factsheet.pdf>

<sup>258</sup> OxYgen, *Research Report on Perspectives for Women's Participation in Security and Peace Progress in Armenia*, [https://oxygen.org.am/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Research-Report-WEPS\\_ENG-05.03.2023-final.pdf](https://oxygen.org.am/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Research-Report-WEPS_ENG-05.03.2023-final.pdf)

<sup>259</sup> Ibid.

- change the concept of security within the framework of the women, peace and security agenda, from militarisation to social protection and active participation;
- ensure state funding for the National Action Plan and ensure productive mechanisms to enable its monitoring by civil society; and
- involve various groups of women in the development, implementation and monitoring of national follow-up action plans to implement the provisions of UN Security Council Resolution 1325.

In June 2023, the Armenian parliament approved a draft law in its second and final reading that allows women to volunteer for military service. According to the Law, women between 18 and 27 years old have the right to apply for a six-month period of military service. After completing service, they will receive a one-time payment of AMD 1 million drams (USD 2,500). Women drafted into the army will be assigned to a military unit without any drawing of lots, and without the possibility of subsequent transfer to other units. A separate barracks will be built specifically for women in one military training unit. A women's battalion will be created, and women command staff will be appointed. Women who have completed their compulsory service will be enlisted in the reserve, and may be called up again if necessary.<sup>260</sup>

It should be noted that the Law was adopted without any consultations with civil society, including women's organisations. However, women's organisations have raised several concerns about the Law. According to some women's organisations and experts, women's military service will not promote gender equality, because the entire defence and security field is very much male-centred, and is not adapted to women. Moreover, women's involvement in the military will most probably create additional security challenges for women.<sup>261</sup>

Research conducted by the local NGO, Democracy Today, among women enrolled in the armed forces identifies the following reason for joining military service:<sup>262</sup>

- family tradition;
- the security challenges facing Armenia; and
- a sense of equal obligation and responsibility towards the country.

However, survey participants highlight discrimination, stereotypes and other challenges. Despite many positive changes, participants note that neither society nor the military sector has fully adapted to women's presence in the army. Therefore, women serving in the armed forces face stereotypes and scepticism about their capabilities which, in turn, leads to discriminatory attitudes.<sup>263</sup>

<sup>260</sup> Armenian National Assembly approves draft law allowing women to volunteer for military service, [https://arka.am/en/news/society/armenian\\_national\\_assembly\\_approves\\_draft\\_Law\\_allowing\\_women\\_to\\_volunteer\\_for\\_military\\_service/](https://arka.am/en/news/society/armenian_national_assembly_approves_draft_Law_allowing_women_to_volunteer_for_military_service/)

<sup>261</sup> Women's Resource Center, *Women in the Armenian Armed Forces: How Can they guarantee security without security guarantees?*, 2023, <https://womenofarmenia.org/2023/07/18/women-in-the-armenian-armed-forces-how-can-they-guarantee-security-without-security-guarantees/>

<sup>262</sup> Democracy Today, *Equal Rights, Equal Responsibilities: Young Women in the Military Sector*, 2023, [https://www.democracytoday.am/\\_files/ugd/5101a2\\_c4c485f5b176471f9f3fa8288392dc8d.pdf](https://www.democracytoday.am/_files/ugd/5101a2_c4c485f5b176471f9f3fa8288392dc8d.pdf)

<sup>263</sup> Ibid.

Among other obstacles, negative family attitudes, gender stereotypes among male colleagues, a lack of psychological support, and healthcare are major challenges.<sup>264</sup>

UNFPA is also conducting focus group discussions with women students enrolled in military education, in cooperation with the Ministry of Defence.<sup>265</sup>

## 4.8. Gender and digital transformation/the ICT sector

Information and communications technology is one of the fastest growing sectors in Armenia. Armenia's reputation as a hub for innovation has recently earned it the nickname of the Silicon Valley of the region.<sup>266</sup> Narrowing the gender gap in STEM education is crucial not only for women's economic empowerment, but also for sustainable economic development. The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) finds that **narrowing the gender gap in STEM education** could create up to 1.2 million more jobs and increase long-term GDP by up to USD 960 billion by 2050.<sup>267</sup>

**Women's involvement in the sector in Armenia is 40%, higher than the global average of 20%.**<sup>268</sup> According to the 2021 Women Entrepreneurship Study in Armenia, relatively fewer stereotypes exist in the ICT sector due to more open work environments, young staff and opportunities for remote work.<sup>269</sup> Despite this favourable environment, only 11% of the leaders in the ICT sector are women.<sup>270</sup> A considerable gender pay gap also exists in the sector (40%), as noted above.<sup>271</sup>

Currently, 35% of ICT students are women and girls, and almost 60% of students of mathematics and statistics are girls.

SafeYOU, a mobile application created by an Armenian woman and supported by UNFPA and the EU, has been transformed into a global platform for protection against, and the prevention and prosecution of gender-based violence.

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<sup>264</sup> Ibid.

<sup>265</sup> Atanesyan, A., A. Avetisyan and A. Savtalyan, *Women in Military Forces* (in Armenian), UNFPA, Yerevan, 2022.

<sup>266</sup> HighTech Armenia, <https://thegurus.am/technology/content-ideation-tools-techniques/>

<sup>267</sup> UN Women, *Women's Economic Empowerment in Armenia and their Greater Integration into Markets and the Digital Economy*, 2022, <https://eca.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-07/%28ENG%29%20HANDBOOK%20on%20WEE%20and%20the%20DIGITAL%20ECONOMY.pdf>

<sup>268</sup> Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia, *Women and Men in Armenia 2023*, Government of the Republic of Armenia, Yerevan, <https://www.armstat.am/file/article/gender-2023.pdf>

<sup>269</sup> International Finance Corporation, UK Aid and British Embassy Yerevan, *Women's Entrepreneurship Study in Armenia*, IFC, Washington, DC, 2021, [https://www.ifc.org/wps/wcm/connect/fcee49ac-5516-4c6f-821b-541555cb36ba/WE\\_Diagnostic\\_Report\\_Eng.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CVID=nxF1z5j](https://www.ifc.org/wps/wcm/connect/fcee49ac-5516-4c6f-821b-541555cb36ba/WE_Diagnostic_Report_Eng.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CVID=nxF1z5j)

<sup>270</sup> EU4Digital, "How to ensure rapid development in the Armenian IT sector? EU4Digital highlights women as the key to growth", 14 August 2020, <https://eufordigital.eu/how-to-ensure-rapid-development-in-the-it-sector-eu4digital-highlights-women-as-the-key-to-growth>

<sup>271</sup> Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia, *Women and Men in Armenia 2023*, Government of the Republic of Armenia, Yerevan, <https://www.armstat.am/file/article/gender-2023.pdf>

With 60,000 women already using SafeYOU in Armenia, Georgia and Iraq, SafeYOU is becoming increasingly popular. Plans are afoot to expand its use to Africa and Arab states. Audio recordings gathered using SafeYOU have been accepted by courts as a pivotal piece of evidence. In 2022, out of 300 submissions from 61 countries, and 20 finalists, SafeYOU won the Joint Innovation Challenge.

The **main barriers to equality of opportunities and outcomes in STEM in Armenia** include:<sup>272</sup>

- unequal access to quality education in rural areas;
- school fees for STEM-oriented private high schools;
- cultural norms and cultural messages which portray men as more intelligent and, therefore, frame STEM careers as more appropriate for them;
- gender segregation within STEM fields, as men tend to hold technical and professional-track positions at STEM firms, while women mainly hold non-STEM positions, as accountants, human resource personnel, public relations personnel and administrative staff;
- success stories of women in STEM are not widely disseminated;
- although STEM employment is well-paid, careers in the field are risky and unstable; and
- regions in Armenia lack STEM workplaces.

## 4.9. Groups living in vulnerable conditions, and social inclusion

Over the past several years, numerous reports have emerged about the situation of women and girls among different vulnerable groups, revealing discrimination and the violation of their rights, and highlighting the need to eliminate discrimination at the micro and macro levels.

**LGBTQI+ people** in Armenia continue to face harassment, discrimination and violence. The Criminal Code does not recognise animus due to sexual orientation or gender identity as aggravating criminal circumstances in hate crimes, as noted above.

In 2021–2022, human rights organisations reported an increase in hate crimes against LGBTQI+ persons. Although criminal law forbids public calls to violence, the Government has not prosecuted perpetrators when the victims are LGBTQI+.<sup>273</sup> Several cases of killings of transgender women have been reported alongside the reinforcement of negative portrayals of LGBTQI+ persons, and the acceptance of violence towards them, in the media.

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<sup>272</sup> World Bank, *Republic of Armenia Levelling the STEM Playing Field for Women: Differences in Opportunity and Outcomes in Fields of Study and the Labor Market*, World Bank, Washington, DC, 2017, <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/26766aGenderandSTEMReportFINAL.pdf>

<sup>273</sup> United States Embassy in Armenia, *Human Rights Report on Armenia 2022*, <https://am.usembassy.gov/2022-human-rights-report>

In its judgement in May 2023, the European Court of Human Rights found that Armenia violated the prohibition against torture and discrimination in the case of [Oganezova v. Armenia](#). Oganezova was a well-known LGBTQI+ activist whose club was attacked and set on fire in 2012. The court also found that Armenian authorities failed to discharge their obligation to effectively investigate the arson attack, which was committed due to homophobic motives.<sup>274</sup>

Fear of discrimination and humiliation due to public disclosure of their sexual orientation or gender identity continue to prevent many LGBTQI+ people from reporting crimes against them, even when they are clearly motivated by anti- LGBTQI+ bias. When reported, investigations of such crimes are often inconclusive or ineffective.

Public debate around the ratification of the Istanbul Convention descended into hateful and derogatory speech against LGBTQI+ people by some public officials, who incorrectly suggested that the Istanbul Convention seeks to promote LGBTQI+ “propaganda” and to “legitimise” same-sex marriage.

PINK Armenia, an LGBTQI+ rights group, documented 45 physical attacks based on the victim’s sexual orientation or gender identity in 2022. In 2020, it documented 12 such cases.

In August 2020, the Court of Appeal ruled that a proper investigation was not conducted into a violent homophobic attack in 2018 against a group of LGBTQI+ activists, which left at least six activists injured. The court ordered a re-investigation.<sup>275</sup>

Analyses of legal regulations related to domestic violence and abuse by intimate partners of the same gender find that Armenia’s current legislation does not provide sufficient protection from discrimination, hate crimes, and other human rights violations against LGBTQI+ people. Moreover, cases of same-gender intimate partner violence are usually not reported to law enforcement bodies.<sup>276</sup>

A survey of **sex workers** in Yerevan and Armenia’s regions<sup>277</sup> reveals that that prevalent stigma and discrimination against sex workers in society negatively impacts their mental health and self-perception, and pose major barriers to their access to social services, sexual and reproductive health-related services, and health facilities. The vast majority of sex workers experience violence and exploitation. Yet most are reluctant to seek support from state institutions due to a lack of trust, fear of further victimisation, and violence against them.

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<sup>274</sup> Ibid.

<sup>275</sup> Ibid.

<sup>276</sup> Pink Armenia, *The Cases and Tendencies of Violence towards LBT+ Women and Among Same-Gender Partners*, 2023, <https://www.pinkarmenia.org/en/news/untf-report>

<sup>277</sup> Martirosyan, L., *Human Rights Frameworks, Social Protection, and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights*, SWAN and RightSide, 2023, [http://rightsidengo.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/re-search-swan.pdf?fbclid=IwAR1Mk-3VfHdi09mT5z11fqN51oqLvTnq7764OHn7TOKfXtqR1cZa\\_8cLns](http://rightsidengo.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/re-search-swan.pdf?fbclid=IwAR1Mk-3VfHdi09mT5z11fqN51oqLvTnq7764OHn7TOKfXtqR1cZa_8cLns)

The survey also reveals that the fear of facing negative consequences within their personal lives, such as rejection or eviction from their homes, may influence some sex workers to stay silent about traumatic experiences. The situation is further exacerbated because sex work is not legally recognised in Armenia, which limits sex workers' access to any form of legal protection. There is limited awareness of social protection measures among sex workers, most of whom are unaware of legal, health or social services available to them as citizens of Armenia. In recent years, a few sex worker-led organisations have been established that engage in advocacy and raise awareness of the situation of sex workers.<sup>278</sup>

Physical obstacles and discrimination prevent **women and girls with disabilities** in Armenia from exercising their rights, including their sexual and reproductive health rights. Sensory and physical obstacles, alongside biased attitudes and a lack of knowledge and skills among medical personnel, cause women and girls with disabilities to experience double discrimination in the sphere of reproductive services, especially in rural areas.<sup>279</sup> Other barriers include a lack of privacy, a lack of information, and a lack of counselling services. Armenia also lacks guidelines and training for health workers on how to work with women and girls with disabilities who are seeking an abortion. In 2022, UNFPA published a book entitled "50 women with disabilities who changed the world" to raise awareness of women with disabilities.<sup>280</sup>

The prevalence of **child, early and forced marriage in Yezidi communities** stems from gender inequality. The practice of early marriages is caused, on the one hand, by cultural perceptions of marriage and, on the other, by entrenched gender roles. The Government acknowledges the existing problem, but no mechanisms or educational programmes have been developed to raise awareness among Yezidi women about their rights.<sup>281</sup> According to one report, "When a 16-year-old Yezidi girl gives birth, no police officer or social worker comes and asks why [...] If she'd dropped out of school, no question is asked about why a Yezidi child does not attend school [...] They believe that a Yezidi girl does not attend school because she is married and they turn a blind eye to the situation."<sup>282</sup> In recent years, some improvements have been made. Several community-based organisations are working to empower Yezidi women and girls. In December 2023, a hearing in the National Assembly took place on the revision of the age for marriage within the Yezidi community. A comprehensive approach is needed, in which legislative reforms are complemented by mechanisms to prevent early marriages.

<sup>278</sup> Ibid.

<sup>279</sup> Ibid.

<sup>280</sup> Hasmik, S. and D. Armine, *50 Women with Disabilities Who Changed the World* (in Armenian), UNFPA, 2022, <https://armenia.unfpa.org/hy/publications/%D5%B0%D5%A1%D5%B7%D5%B4%D5%A1%D5%B6%D5%A4%D5%A1%D5%B4%D5%B8%D6%82%D5%A9%D5%B5%D5%B8%D6%82%D5%B6-%D5%B8%D6%82%D5%B6%D5%A5%D6%81%D5%B8%D5%B2-50-%D5%AF%D5%A1%D5%B6%D5%A1%D5%B5%D6%84-%D5%B8%D6%80-%D6%83%D5%B8%D5%AD%D5%A5%D6%81%D5%AB%D5%B6-%D5%A1%D5%B7%D5%AD%D5%A1%D6%80%D5%B0%D5%A8?fbclid>

<sup>281</sup> Eurasia Partnership Foundation, *Issues Related to the Rights of and Opportunities for Yezidi Girls Residing in Armenia*, 2020, [https://epfarmenia.am/sites/default/files/Document/Issues\\_Related\\_To\\_The\\_Rights\\_of\\_And\\_Opportunities\\_For\\_Yezidi\\_Girls\\_Residing\\_In\\_Armenia\\_ENG.pdf](https://epfarmenia.am/sites/default/files/Document/Issues_Related_To_The_Rights_of_And_Opportunities_For_Yezidi_Girls_Residing_In_Armenia_ENG.pdf)

<sup>282</sup> IWPR, "Armenia's Yezidi Girls Choose School Over Early Marriage", 1 June 2023, <https://iwpr.net/global-voices/armenias-yezidi-girls-choose-school-over-early-marriage>

**Women living with HIV face discrimination and violations of their sexual and reproductive rights** by state and non-state actors, including health care providers. A lack of knowledge and misinformation about HIV transmission, post-exposure prophylaxis and antiretroviral therapy remain widespread in Armenia. The belief that women with HIV should not get pregnant or have children is also prevalent in Armenian society. This leads to a culture of blaming HIV positive pregnant women. Women living with HIV in rural communities often avoid seeing a doctor during pregnancy for fear of information spreading about their HIV status.<sup>283</sup>

One study of women with HIV shows that the vast majority have stereotypical views related to gender roles and perceptions about women and men in Armenia.<sup>284</sup>

Respondents describe the role of men in providing for the family materially, being wealthy, having high incomes and being good specialists, while they largely view women's role as being within the family, and that fulfilling the role of mother is women's greatest aspiration.

At the same time, women living with HIV appear to have an overall awareness of gender-based inequality in Armenian society. According to data from the same study, women living with HIV face comparatively more cases of gender-related violence in healthcare facilities (35%) as well as at educational institutions (17%) and by the police (11%).

Fewer cases of violence are reported to courts (3%) and religious establishments (3%). Only 5% of surveyed women consider themselves to be "very happy".<sup>285</sup> Local women's organisations provide a range of mental health services, including peer support groups and psychological support for women living with HIV. Women who use drugs and sex workers also have access to psychological consultations. Retreats for women with HIV are organised through NGO initiatives. However, there are no community services for sex workers and women who use drugs.<sup>286</sup>

In terms of positive trends, since 2019, women living with HIV in Armenia have been involved in the CEDAW reporting processes in collaboration with the Coalition to Stop Violence Against Women.

<sup>283</sup> Women's Resource Center, *The Invisible Rights of Women in the Republic of Armenia: The Overall State of Reproductive Health and Rights among Various Groups of Women*, Women's Resource Center, Yerevan, 2018, <https://www.moj.am/storage/uploads/101010verart.pdf>

<sup>284</sup> Coalition to Stop Violence Against Women in Armenia and Real World, Real People, *Manifestations of Gender-Based Violence against Women Living with HIV and Women Intravenous Drug Users in the Republic of Armenia*, 2021, [https://realwrp.org/news\\_attachments/42\\_-\\_Անվերնն%20Եկոյց,%2021.02.22.pdf?fbclid=IwAR3okS7FpNfodSpg4gPZ-kIGWu07pOxPeXgdBX9tlZ8J48zR4fE-9TuAAtohttps://realwrp.org/news\\_attachments/42\\_-\\_Անվերնն%20Եկոյց,%2021.02.22.pdf?fbclid=IwAR3okS7FpNfodSpg4gPZ-kIGWu07pOxPeXgdBX9tlZ8J48zR4fE-9TuAAto](https://realwrp.org/news_attachments/42_-_Անվերնն%20Եկոյց,%2021.02.22.pdf?fbclid=IwAR3okS7FpNfodSpg4gPZ-kIGWu07pOxPeXgdBX9tlZ8J48zR4fE-9TuAAtohttps://realwrp.org/news_attachments/42_-_Անվերնն%20Եկոյց,%2021.02.22.pdf?fbclid=IwAR3okS7FpNfodSpg4gPZ-kIGWu07pOxPeXgdBX9tlZ8J48zR4fE-9TuAAto)

<sup>285</sup> Ibid.

<sup>286</sup> Eurasian Women's Network on AIDS, *Women-led Gender Assessment, How Countries Address Barriers to HIV Services for Women Living With HIV, Sex Workers and Women Who Use Drugs*, 2023, [https://ewna.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/ewna-gender-assessment-report\\_2023\\_eng.pdf?fbclid=IwAR0dZUdVkfP2GdpYuTFOYIAspLD5Zisfly9Pn8Ympp8y1YXmJA8vuoyUW4](https://ewna.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/ewna-gender-assessment-report_2023_eng.pdf?fbclid=IwAR0dZUdVkfP2GdpYuTFOYIAspLD5Zisfly9Pn8Ympp8y1YXmJA8vuoyUW4)

## 5. IMPACT OF THE 44-DAY WAR IN NAGORNO KARABAKH AND THE MASS DISPLACEMENT OF ARMENIANS FROM NAGORNO KARABAKH ON THE SITUATION OF WOMEN AND GIRLS

An assessment of displaced women conducted by the NGO, the Women's Resource Center, reveals that many women from Nagorno Karabakh began to experience displacement after 25 September 2023. Throughout the period of blockade and displacement, women assumed complete responsibility for their families and decision-making process. Single women faced additional challenges during the displacement process, particularly due to the absence of access to cars and/or driving skills. The vast majority of respondents report physical and mental health issues because of their displacement and witnessing atrocities.<sup>287</sup>

Many forcibly displaced persons faced a journey to Armenia of more than 30 hours, leaving women and girls without adequate sanitation facilities and at higher risk of gender-based violence.<sup>288</sup>

During the 2020 war, attacks in September 2022, and mass displacement in 2023, cases of torture and the mutilation of women's bodies have been reported. One of the most despicable cases is the case of Susana Margaryan, whose desecrated and dismembered body was put on display through social networks.<sup>289</sup>

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<sup>287</sup> WRC assessment.

<sup>288</sup> UN Women, *Gender Alert I – Voices of Women Activists and Civil Society Organizations: First Respondents to the Armenia Refugee Crisis: Centering Gender Specific Needs and Priorities in the Refugee Response in Armenia*, 2023, [https://armenia.un.org/sites/default/files/2023-10/Gender%20Alert\\_12.10.23.pdf](https://armenia.un.org/sites/default/files/2023-10/Gender%20Alert_12.10.23.pdf)

<sup>289</sup> UNSCR 1325, Women, Peace and Security as delivered by the Delegation of the Republic of Armenia at the 1023th Plenary Meeting of the Forum for Security Co-operation, 28 September 2022, <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/b/5/533936.pdf>

A needs assessment conducted among forcibly displaced women with disabilities shows that most of these women live in the Syunik region with relatives or friends. The majority rent houses or apartments, and only 21% own the dwelling they reside in. Most live in large households, creating additional problems with regard to mental health. Most women with disabilities from the displaced population evaluate the conditions of shelters where they have been placed as being inaccessible and inconvenient. It is highly concerning that 72% of surveyed women are unemployed, and 60% are actively looking for jobs.

One-third of the women surveyed want to develop their professional skills further, and 14% want to obtain new professional skills. Most women see themselves in the field of beauty services. The vast majority (95%) of surveyed women report that, upon arriving in Armenia, they received necessary health services. However, most did not receive any other services, including assistance from social workers, and only 5% received psychological assistance despite their vulnerable mental health conditions.<sup>290</sup>

Focus groups discussions with women displaced during the 2020 war highlight the following obstacles to integration and rehabilitation:<sup>291</sup>

- social-psychological problems;
- stigma and discrimination;
- a lack of access to education and work;
- the absence of permanent living places;
- cultural and language differences; and
- the limited resources of receiving communities.

Women in rural border areas have a clear understanding of their communities' needs and vulnerabilities in terms of protection. They highlight problems with the availability of shelters and their proper furnishing, a lack of equipment, the state of infrastructure which is not adapted to emergencies, and other problems.<sup>292</sup>

Overall in 2023, the Government of Armenia and local community organisations proved better equipped and organised to provide support to the displaced population compared to in 2020. A number of community-based mechanisms and support groups set up in 2020 have been reactivated, enabling an immediate and coordinated response. Women's organisations have also conducted needs assessments to identify the immediate needs of women and girls from the most marginalised and vulnerable communities.

Local women's organisations were and continue to be on the frontlines of supporting women and girls who have been displaced, and addressing their needs.

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<sup>290</sup> Agate, *Needs Assessment Among Forcibly Displaced Women with Disabilities* (in Armenian), Agate NGO, Kvinna till Kvinna, Yerevan, 2023.

<sup>291</sup> World Vision Armenia, *Research on Integration and Provision of Social and Psychological Services to Women Affected by War*, 2023, [https://www.wvi.org/sites/default/files/2023-09/CLASS\\_Full%20report\\_ARM.pdf](https://www.wvi.org/sites/default/files/2023-09/CLASS_Full%20report_ARM.pdf)

<sup>292</sup> Oxygen, *Research Report on Perspectives for Women's Participation in Security and Peace Processes in Armenia*, 2023, [https://oxygen.org.am/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Research-Report-WEPS\\_ENG-05.03.2023-final.pdf](https://oxygen.org.am/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Research-Report-WEPS_ENG-05.03.2023-final.pdf)

Preliminary consultations held by UN Women with several local women's organisations highlight the following important aspects of forced displacement:

- deep psychological effects identified as “collective trauma”;
- an increase in acute and chronic health needs; and
- the possible increase of gender-based violence.

Unified data provided by support centres for the victims of gender-based violence indicates that the number of cases of domestic violence has been increasing since 2020.

Comprehensive continued support, including financial and psychosocial assistance, for the displaced population remains crucial, and ensuring a gender-sensitive approach in crisis management and emergency response is a priority.

# 6. RECOMMENDATIONS ON GENDER MAINSTREAMING FOR THE EU DELEGATION TO SUPPORT PROGRESS ON GENDER EQUALITY IN ARMENIA

## 6.1. Recommendations on women's political participation

- Assist the process of introducing a gender quota system for the appointment of women, and the accelerated recruitment of women to senior positions in the public and private sectors.
- Support the organisation of awareness raising campaigns that address social norms related to women's leadership and political participation.

## 6.2. Recommendations on economic and social rights

- Support relevant state stakeholders to implement programmes and policies related to the economic integration of women from displaced communities.
- Support the Government to implement gender impact assessments of the displacement from Nagorno Karabakh.
- Assist the introduction of policies that support more flexible work-life balance for women, and which address time poverty, the provision of child care and family support.
- Aid the implementation of policies that aim to expand care services and parental leave opportunities. For example, policies that enable women to work from home and provide flexibility in their working schedules.
- Support efforts to strengthen workers' unions, decision-making in the Government and Parliament, and sensitise these stakeholders on gender equality issues, including sexual harassment in the workplace.

- Promote gender equality in policies, strategies and actions, with a focus on innovation and entrepreneurship for growth.
- Support relevant authorities on the implementation of successful methods/models to advance gender equality, with a focus on innovation and entrepreneurship for growth.
- Support the design and implementation of projects for groups women who are most affected by the gender wage gap. These include women between 40 and 54 years old, women living in the regions of Armenia, women with only a secondary level of education, women working in services, and women sales workers.
- Support the implementation of projects for smallholder farmers, most of whom are women.
- Support the Government to develop relevant legislation on the gender pay gap.
- Support the Government's awareness raising on the harmonisation of work, family and private life, the equal division of reproductive work, and men's active participation in parental responsibilities.

### 6.3. Recommendations on sexual and reproductive health and rights

- Support the Government to bring sexual and reproductive health and rights into compliance with human rights standards, including access to sexual and reproductive health care services.
- Assist the introduction of comprehensive and professional sexuality education in schools.
- Support capacity building processes for health care workers to enable them to become more gender-sensitive in terms of issues related to sexual and reproductive health and rights, and sexual and gender-based violence.

### 6.4. Recommendations on education, particularly STEM and ICT education

- Assist the development of digital literacy and global competency programmes for girls.
- Implement a project to support lifelong learning opportunities for women, including occupational transitions.
- Increase investments in technology and innovation that support women's leadership in the information and communications technology sector.
- Assist the implementation of an awareness raising campaign to promote girls' and women's participation in STEM education.
- Promote women's STEM careers through the development of women's leadership capacities, and by implementing mentorship and coaching programmes for women.

## 6.5. Recommendations on combatting gender-based violence

- Support the relevant authorities on developing and adopting the legal framework to combat online gender-based violence and sexism.
- Implement programmes that seek to raise awareness of women's human rights defenders.
- Support the ratification process of the Istanbul Convention and facilitate dialogue between the Government, Parliament and civil society on the process of ratification.
- 6.6. Recommendations on women, peace and security
- Support efforts to adjust the National Action Plan on UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security to meet the needs of Armenia's new post-war context.
- Document achievements and challenges in the implementation of the National Action Plan on UN Security Council Resolution 1325.
- Support programmes to increase women's leadership in peace-building and humanitarian action, as well as the effective implementation of the women, peace and security agenda in Armenia.

## 6.7. Recommendations on cooperation with the National Statistical Committee

- Support the National Statistical Committee to calculate gender differences in Armenia's multidimensional poverty index value to address intersectionality, and to understand how to support the country's most vulnerable groups.
- Assist the institutional strengthening of the National Statistical Committee in terms of the collection and analysis of gender-disaggregated data on the different effects of the tax system, as well as on the gendered aspects of unpaid care work and childcare.
- Support the National Statistical Committee to comprehensively analyse the educational choices and career paths of male and female students.

## 6.8. Recommendations on cooperation with civil society organisations

- Support local civil society organisations on the implementation of projects in the framework of the EU Gender Action Plan III's priority areas.
- Support civil society organisations that work with vulnerable groups and provide essential assistance to communities affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, the 44-day war and mass displacement from Nagorno Karabakh.
- Strengthen the capacities of women's civil society organisations to monitor EU support and the Government's Economic Recovery Plan.







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