# Country Gender Equality Profile

# KYRGYZSTAN

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# COUNTRY GENDER EQUALITY PROFILE OF KYRGYZSTAN

UN Women Kyrgyzstan
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UN WOMEN

FOR ALL WOMEN AND GIRLS

# FOREWORD



The Kyrgyz Republic consistently reaffirms its commitment to advancing gender equality as a cornerstone of sustainable development, social cohesion, and inclusive prosperity. Guided by national priorities and international obligations, the Government continues to pursue systematic reforms aimed at strengthening institutions, improving the quality and accessibility of public services, and ensuring equal rights and opportunities for women and men in the economic, social and public spheres.

The Country Gender Equality Profile (CGEP) serves as a strategic, evidence-based instrument that provides a comprehensive assessment of both progress achieved and persisting structural challenges. It consolidates key data and analytical findings to inform policy decisions and resource prioritization, underscoring the need for integrated solutions - ranging from further strengthening of the legislative and regulatory framework and modernization of social services to the expansion of women's economic opportunities, enhanced systems for prevention of and response to violence, reinforced regional mechanisms, and strengthened institutional accountability.

This CGEP reflects the collective efforts of state institutions, the expert community, and international partners. The Ministry of Labour, Social Welfare and Migration of the Kyrgyz Republic expresses its sincere appreciation to UN Women in the Kyrgyz Republic and the Delegation of the European Union to the Kyrgyz Republic for their technical support in the preparation of this analytical product, as well as for their continued partnership in advancing evidence-informed public governance.

The findings and recommendations presented in the CGEP will guide the further refinement of state programmes and strategies, including the development of an effective social protection system, the promotion of women's economic participation, the strengthening of mechanisms for the prevention of and response to gender-based violence, and the systematic integration of a gender perspective across socio-economic planning and the climate agenda.

The Country Gender Equality Profile is intended to serve as a practical policy compass, supporting coherent, accountable decision-making in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its overarching commitment to leave no one behind.



**Ainura Orozbaeva**
*Deputy Minister of Labour, Social Welfare and Migration of the Kyrgyz Republic*

# FOREWORD



Gender equality and the full realization of the rights of all women and girls are central to the mandate of the United Nations and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Global evidence consistently demonstrates that societies are more resilient, inclusive and prosperous when women and girls can participate equally in economic, social and political life. These lessons are equally pertinent for the Kyrgyz Republic as it advances its sustainable development priorities.

The Country Gender Equality Profile (CGEP) provides a strategic, data-driven foundation for understanding the status of gender equality in the country. By bringing together official statistics, administrative data, research findings and recent normative developments within a single analytical framework, the Profile identifies both areas of progress and the persistent structural barriers affecting diverse groups of women and girls. Its integrated scope covering economic empowerment, participation in public life, violence against women and girls, social protection, health, education, climate change and digital transformation offer a clearer view of where action is most urgently needed.

For the United Nations Country Team, the CGEP establishes a shared evidence base to guide more coherent, coordinated and results-oriented engagement with national partners. It will inform joint planning, strengthen policy dialogue and help ensure that the UN system's support is aligned with the country's international obligations, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Beijing Platform for Action and the Sustainable Development Goals. It also served as a strategic evidence base for the preparation of the Kyrgyz Republic's Voluntary National Review (VNR) 2025 and contributed to alignment with the National Development Programme of the Kyrgyz Republic until 2030, strengthening the use of data to drive coordinated action and monitor progress against national and global commitments. Grounding our work in robust and disaggregated data is essential for driving system-wide change and advancing accountability for gender equality.

The preparation of this Profile has been a collaborative undertaking across government institutions, civil society, academia, development partners and the United Nations system. I wish to acknowledge the constructive cooperation and leadership of the Ministry of Labour, Social Welfare and Migration in steering the national process, and I extend my appreciation to all who contributed their expertise and analysis. I also acknowledge UN Women for its leadership in coordinating this analytical work and for its sustained technical support to strengthen the use of gender-disaggregated data in the Kyrgyz Republic.

As the Kyrgyz Republic accelerates progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals, the United Nations stands ready to support the use of the CGEP's insights to shape laws, policies, budgets and programmes that deliver measurable improvements in the lives of women and girls. Our shared objective is clear: to translate the pledge of the 2030 Agenda - to leave no one behind, and to reach those furthest behind first into concrete and lasting progress for every woman and every girl across the country.

**Antje Grawe**
*United Nations Resident Coordinator*
*in the Kyrgyz Republic*

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This Country Gender Equality Profile (CGEP) of the Kyrgyz Republic was developed under the leadership of the Ministry of Labour, Social Welfare and Migration of the Kyrgyz Republic, with the support of the United Nations Resident Coordinator, and under the overall coordination of UN Women, within the framework of the Regional "Making Every Woman and Girl Count" Programme for Europe and Central Asia (Women Count).

The Profile was prepared in close collaboration with the Delegation of the European Union to the Kyrgyz Republic, with important contributions from members of the Technical Advisory Group established for the development of the Profile: government institutions, civil society organizations, academia, development partners and the United Nations system.

UN Women extends its sincere appreciation to all stakeholders who provided expertise, data and analytical inputs, which significantly strengthened the quality and relevance of this Profile.

# ACRONYMS

| | |
|---|---|
| **ADB** | Asian Development Bank |
| **C190** | ILO Convention 190 on Violence and Harassment, 2019 |
| **CEDAW** | Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women |
| **CGEP** | Country Gender Equality Profile |
| **EBRD** | European Bank for Reconstruction and Development |
| **EU** | European Union |
| **FAO** | Food and Agriculture Organization |
| **GBV** | Gender-based violence |
| **GDP** | Gross domestic product |
| **GEWE** | Gender equality and women's empowerment |
| **GIZ** | German Agency for International Cooperation |
| **GTF** | Gender Theme Group |
| **ICT** | Information and communications technology |
| **ILO** | International Labour Organization |
| **LGBTQI+** | Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex and other |
| **MICS** | Multi-Indicator Cluster Survey |
| **MLSWM** | Ministry of Labour, Social Welfare and Migration |
| **NAP** | National Action Plan |
| **NGOs** | Non-governmental organizations |
| **NSC** | National Statistical Committee |
| **SDC** | Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation |
| **SDGs** | Sustainable Development Goals |
| **SRHR** | Sexual and reproductive health and rights |
| **UNAIDS** | Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS |
| **UNCITRAL** | UN Convention on the Use of Electronic Communications in International Contracts |
| **UNCT** | United Nations Country Team |
| **UNDP** | United Nations Development Programme |
| **UNFPA** | United Nations Population Fund |
| **UNICEF** | United Nations Children's Fund |
| **UNSCR 1325** | United Nations Security Council resolution 1325 |
| **UNSDCF** | United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework |
| **VNR** | Voluntary National Review |
| **WPS** | Women, peace and security |

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## 1. INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

The Country Gender Equality Profile (CGEP) provides an evidence-based assessment of gender equality challenges within the country's sustainable development framework. Developed under the leadership of Kyrgyzstan's Ministry of Labour, Social Welfare and Migration (MLSWM), with technical support from UN Women, this profile addresses critical gender gaps identified through a comprehensive analysis of government statistics, legislative frameworks and stakeholder consultations. This profile serves as a tool for implementing national frameworks, including the National Development Strategy until 2040, National Gender Equality Strategy until 2030, and the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) 2023–2027.

## 2. LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORK: STRONG COMMITMENTS, WEAK IMPLEMENTATION

Kyrgyzstan has established a robust international and domestic legal framework for gender equality through ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1997 and its Optional Protocol in 2002, eight of nine core UN human rights conventions and all eight International Labour Organization (ILO) Fundamental Conventions, as well as ILO Convention No. 190 on Violence and Harassment. These international obligations carry binding domestic force under Article 6 of the Constitution, while the Law on State Guarantees of Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities for Men and Women serves as the primary domestic framework. The institutional architecture operates through the National Council on Family Affairs, Gender Development, Social Protection and the Rights of the Child; the MLSWM as the authorized body; and 51 designated gender focal points across levels of government.

The National Gender Equality Strategy until 2030 establishes four strategic priorities: women's economic empowerment, cultural transformation, prevention of gender-based violence (GBV), and gender parity in decision-making. However, implementation faces critical barriers. The 2025 repeal of mandatory gender analysis requirements represents a retreat from systematic gender mainstreaming. No established system exists for tracking national budget allocations to gender equality, forcing most programmes into donor dependency. The 2024 repeal of reproductive rights legislation removed explicit guarantees for comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services.

UN monitoring bodies have identified persistent gaps: delayed anti-discrimination legislation, problematic use of undefined terms like "traditional family values," systematic barriers to justice access, weak enforcement of gender-based violence legislation, insufficient coordination within national gender machinery, and reproductive health access limitations. These assessments highlight the disconnect between comprehensive legal commitments and lived realities.

## 3. CRITICAL GENDER EQUALITY CHALLENGES ACROSS SEVEN THEMATIC AREAS

**Political Participation and Leadership:** While gender quotas have proven effective for elected positions, achieving women's 39 per cent representation on local councils, their absence in appointed roles creates systematic

exclusion.[1] Women hold only 5 per cent of cabinet positions, zero positions among Presidential Representatives and district heads, and 3.5 per cent of rural administrative leadership. Economic constraints and pervasive gender-based violence create systematic barriers to political participation, with 32 per cent of women politicians facing direct threats. Economic violence affects 30 per cent of women, directly undermining political independence. Media coverage reinforces stereotypes, with men receiving seven times more political coverage than women.

**Economic empowerment:** Women's employment levels declined from 49.3 to 43.8 per cent over 15 years, despite economic growth, driven by stereotypical gender roles and religious influence. Women are concentrated in lower-paid sectors (77 per cent in education and health services) and informal work, all contributing to a 25 per cent gender wage gap. Women dedicate 4 hours and 20 minutes daily to household tasks compared to 55 minutes for men. Only 29 per cent of real estate is owned by women, creating barriers to credit access and business scaling. Women represent merely 27 per cent of all entrepreneurs and hold only 1.2 per cent of Water User Association director positions.

**Digital inclusion:** Only 45 per cent of rural women had Internet access in 2023, compared to 65 per cent of men. Women's representation in the information and communications technology (ICT) sector declined from 40.8 per cent in 2020 to 31.9 per cent in 2022, with only 15 per cent of tech sector leadership positions held by women. Gender stereotypes deter participation, with only 18 per cent of girls choosing technical university majors and 7 per cent continuing ICT careers. Educational gaps persist, with women comprising just 33.9 per cent of computing programme students.

**Gender-based violence:** Despite strengthened legislation, systematic barriers persist. Only 16 crisis centres serve the entire country, with demand increasing 21.4 per cent in 2024. While conviction rates improved to 86 per cent, 80 per cent of scheduled court hearings are postponed and judicial treatment remains degrading. Prevention strategies are underdeveloped and fragmented. Technology-facilitated violence affects 53.2 per cent of women. Forced and child marriage persist despite criminalization. Women with disabilities and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex and other (LGBTQI+) individuals face compounded discrimination with inadequate specialized services.

**Women, peace and security (WPS):** Implementation of the National Action Plan (NAP) on United Nations Security Council resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325) remains formalistic without dedicated resources. Women's representation in security leadership is critically low – only 4.6 per cent in the Ministry of Internal Affairs and 6 per cent in defense. Cross-border conflicts demonstrated women's vulnerability but also untapped peacebuilding potential, yet grass-roots initiatives lack systematic integration into government structures.

**Climate change and natural resource management:** National climate policies remain gender-blind despite women's systematic exclusion from natural resource governance. Women hold only 18.5 per cent of land titles yet comprise 46 per cent of agricultural workers. They are all but excluded from pasture committees (2.4 per cent leadership) and Water User Associations (1.2 per cent director positions). Limited access to productive resources heightens gender-specific climate vulnerabilities. Furthermore, women's critical environmental knowledge remains underutilized in formal decision-making processes.

**Sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR):** Healthcare system failures create comprehensive access barriers, with only 35.3 per cent of women having health insurance coverage. Kyrgyzstan records Central Asia's highest maternal mortality rates at 46.5 per 100,000 live births, with 73 per cent of deaths occurring in rural areas. Heterosexual HIV transmission increased from 66 to 88 per cent between 2018–2022, reflecting deepening gender inequalities. Adolescent birth rates remain 2.5 times higher than regional averages.

1 The sources for this and all subsequent data in this executive summary can be found in Chapter 5.

Women with disabilities face systematic denial of reproductive autonomy, with 26 per cent unable to leave their homes without permission.

## 4. STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS FOR 2025–2030

The CGEP demonstrates that translating international obligations and national commitments into lived realities requires legal progress and sustained political and financial commitments. To address these challenges, priority actions must include:

**Legislative and policy reforms:** Harmonize discrimination definitions with international standards, restore mandatory gender analysis requirements; adopt comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation; amend the Labour Code to align with ILO Convention No. 190; and restore comprehensive reproductive rights legislation.

**Institutional strengthening and robust accountability:** Establish dedicated budget lines with expenditure tracking; develop systematic gender-responsive budgeting tools; strengthen coordination mechanisms across government levels; formalize gender responsibilities within institutional mandates; and establish specialized equality tribunals. Develop transparent monitoring systems with regular public reporting; and support independent monitoring capacity, including shadow reporting to UN treaty bodies.

**Economic empowerment:** Address declining employment, including through investment in care economy infrastructure; realize equal pay commitments; expand women's access to productive assets and credit; and support women's entrepreneurship. Ensure prevention and response to violence and harassment, including sexual harassment, in the world of work.

**Violence prevention and response:** Scale up crisis centre infrastructure with sustainable funding; develop comprehensive prevention strategies, including with male engagement; establish legal frameworks for technology-facilitated violence and violence in public spaces; and ensure accessible services for marginalized groups.

**Political and civic participation:** Create genuine opportunities for women's substantive participation from design through implementation, particularly critical given current civic space constraints that threaten women human rights defenders. Address gender-based political violence through institutional recognition and response; protect civic space for women's rights organizations and human rights defenders; and transform media representations of women in leadership.

**Gender mainstreaming in emerging policy fields, including climate policy and digital integration:** Integrate gender considerations into climate policies and digital transformation strategies; ensure women's participation in natural resource governance; close digital access and skills gaps; and recognize women's environmental knowledge in formal planning.

**Comprehensive data systems:** Strengthen the National Statistical Committee (NSC)'s capacity to close gaps (e.g. in climate vulnerability, unpaid care work, and the informal economy); establish systematic monitoring of treaty body recommendations; and strengthen sex-disaggregated data collection across all sectors.

# INTRODUCTION

## 1. BACKGROUND AND JUSTIFICATION

This Country Gender Equality Profile (CGEP) serves as an integrated evidence base linking national development strategies with UN cooperation frameworks. Based on comprehensive secondary data analysis and stakeholder consultations, it addresses gender equality gaps identified through a desk review of government statistics, reports and legislative frameworks.

Kyrgyzstan has undergone significant political and economic transformation since 2020. Constitutional changes adopted in 2021 concentrated power in the presidency, transitioning from a parliamentary to a fully presidential system. The country has achieved remarkable economic growth, maintaining strong annual gross domestic product (GDP) performance among the highest rates in Central Asia. However, democratic governance has faced setbacks, including deteriorating press freedom and the enactment of legislation requiring non-governmental organizations (NGOs) receiving foreign funding to register as foreign agents. The country demonstrated resilience following the COVID-19 pandemic, which caused significant economic contraction and increased poverty levels, with strong recovery beginning in 2022.

Kyrgyzstan has integrated the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development into national planning through its National Sustainable Development Strategy and National Development Programme. . Notable progress includes increased women's political representation in parliament and the adoption of comprehensive legal provisions for gender equality. However, significant challenges persist: extreme poverty has increased since 2019, domestic violence cases have risen substantially and female labour force participation remains considerably lower than male participation. The consolidation of authoritarian governance, shrinking civic space and reinforced conservative norms continue to pose substantial challenges to women's advancement despite formal legal protections.

Against this backdrop of political transformation and persistent gender inequalities, the CGEP provides a critical evidence base for policy action. The profile supports key national frameworks, including: the National Development Strategy until 2040; National Development Programme until 2026; National Gender Equality Strategy until 2030; State Programme on Women's Entrepreneurship 2022–2026; State Programme to Support Women's Leadership 2024–2030; and the new Labour Code (2025). It is embedded within the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) 2023–2027, which establishes four strategic priorities: equitable access to quality social services and decent work; inclusive green socioeconomic development; climate action and environmental protection; and just, accountable institutions for peace and human rights.

The profile supports the VNR for 2025, helping achieve the Government's ambition to raise Kyrgyzstan's global SDG ranking from 48th to 30th by 2030 by identifying persistent gender gaps across employment, social protection, gender-based violence prevention, climate resilience and political participation.

## 2. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The CGEP provides a detailed assessment of gender equality challenges within Kyrgyzstan's sustainable development context, identifying gender-based disparities in social, economic, cultural and political rights while analysing root causes. It focuses particularly on vulnerable groups, including girls and young women,

women with disabilities, women in rural areas and ethnic minorities. Through evidence-based findings and recommendations, the profile enables more effective national policies and supports the implementation of the National Gender Equality Strategy until 2030 by identifying key issues, barriers and acceleration opportunities.

## 3. METHODOLOGY AND APPROACH

The CGEP was developed under the leadership of the Ministry of Labour, Social Welfare and Migration (MLSWM), with UN Women and European Union (EU) Delegation technical facilitation. The Inter-Agency Working Group on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment provided strategic direction and ensured alignment with national priorities and international commitments, including CEDAW, the Beijing Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda.

Development followed five structured stages: inception and desk review mapping frameworks and agreeing indicators; stakeholder consultations with government, civil society, academia, the private sector and development partners; mixed-methods analysis and drafting; technical review and multi-stakeholder validation; and dissemination to the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) and Gender Theme Group (GTG) for programming integration.

Engagement included diverse stakeholders across multiple sectors. Government partners participated through MLSWM leadership with line ministries and National Statistical Committee (NSC) involvement. UN system coordination occurred via UNCT and GTG. Civil society input came from women's rights organizations, disability groups and youth organizations. Development partner contributions were provided by the EU Delegation and multilateral actors, while private sector and academic institutions contributed evidence and peer review.

The process emphasized several guiding principles: national ownership; human-rights-based approach; inclusive data disaggregation by sex, age, location and disability status; quality assurance through triangulation; and strategic alignment with national strategies and the UN cooperation framework. The analytical approach used a mixed-methods design triangulating official statistics from the NSC, administrative data from ministries, internationally comparable survey data, focus group discussions, expert interviews and documented testimonies. UN system inputs ensured common indicators and alignment with joint programmes under UNSDCF.

## 4. REPORT STRUCTURE

Following this introduction, Chapter 3 examines Kyrgyzstan's policy and legal framework, focusing on international commitments, national legislation and institutional mechanisms. Subsequent chapters provide core analysis covering: governance and political participation; economic empowerment; digitalization; gender-based violence; women, peace and security; climate change; and sexual and reproductive health rights. The report concludes with challenges and opportunities for accelerated progress towards gender equality within the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

# 1

# CURRENT CONTEXT AND GENDER EQUALITY IN KYRGYZSTAN

# CURRENT CONTEXT AND GENDER EQUALITY IN KYRGYZSTAN

## 1. POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC OVERVIEW

Kyrgyzstan has undergone significant political transformation since October 2020. Constitutional changes adopted in 2021 concentrated power in the presidency, transitioning the country from a parliamentary to a fully presidential system while reducing parliament's size and influence.[2] Snap parliamentary elections were held on 30 November 2025 following the self-dissolution of parliament.

The country's democratic trajectory has faced setbacks.[3] Press freedom has deteriorated, and a "foreign representatives" law enacted in April 2024 requires NGOs receiving foreign funding to register as foreign agents, mirroring similar legislation in Russia and other authoritarian States.[4] Gender-based and domestic violence remain serious concerns despite legal reforms.

### Economic Growth and Recovery from COVID-19

Kyrgyzstan has achieved remarkable economic growth since 2022, maintaining strong annual GDP growth of 9 per cent from 2022–2024. Year-on-year GDP growth reached 12.3 per cent in early 2025, among the highest rates in Central Asia over the past 15 years.[5] The economy demonstrates improved fiscal discipline and macroeconomic stability, driven by natural resources. While the economy remains dependent on remittances from Russia, this dependence has decreased in recent years, and major infrastructure projects are underway.

The COVID-19 pandemic severely impacted Kyrgyzstan's health system and economy, causing an 8.6 per cent economic contraction in 2020, substantial job losses and increased poverty. However, the country demonstrated resilience through community mobilization and international support, with strong recovery beginning in 2022.[6]

## 2. GENDER EQUALITY: CONTEXT AND CHALLENGES

Kyrgyzstan's socioeconomic and political situation presents mixed implications for gender equality. While legal frameworks provide formal protection, the consolidation of authoritarian governance, shrinking civic space and reinforced conservative norms pose significant challenges to women's advancement.

### Political and Social Barriers

The consolidation of presidential power has limited women's political representation. The

2 International IDEA. 2025. "Kyrgyzstan | The Global State of Democracy." November. https://www.idea.int/democracytracker/country/kyrgyzstan

3 Human Rights Watch. 2025. World Report 2025: Kyrgyzstan. 16 January.

4 Freedom House. 2024. Kyrgyzstan: Freedom in the World 2024 Country Report.

5 Asian Development Bank. 2024. "ADB Forecasts 5% Growth and Slowing Inflation in the Kyrgyz Republic in 2024." 11 April. https://www.adb.org/news/adb-forecasts-5-growth-and-slowing-inflation-kyrgyz-republic-2024

6 World Health Organization. 2024. "Building Resilient Healthcare in Kyrgyzstan: Mitigating the Impacts of COVID-19 through Strategic Partnerships." 5 April. https://www.who.

transition to a presidential system reduced parliament's influence, constraining women's pathways to power. Although women hold 22 per cent of parliamentary seats, they remain virtually absent from executive positions.[7] Recent legislation targeting civil society organizations impacts groups working on gender issues and challenging traditional power structures.

Conservative norms significantly constrain women's participation in public life.[8] Religious and traditional influences discourage women from pursuing political and economic leadership positions, prioritizing domestic responsibilities instead. Gender-based violence systematically excludes women from politics, particularly affecting younger women. Media coverage reinforces inequality by focusing on women's personal attributes rather than their expertise, undermining their political legitimacy.

### Economic Exclusion and Gender-Based Violence

Women face systematic economic exclusion and marginalization despite legal protections.[9] Strong occupational segregation concentrates women in lower-paid sectors, creating a salary gap of 25 per cent in men's favour. Property ownership barriers limit women's access to credit and business development opportunities. Unpaid care responsibilities, combined with the lack of affordable and accessible childcare services and limited and unpaid paternity leave rights for men, deepen persistent employment gaps, especially among women aged 25–34. Informal work among women continues to be a persistent challenge, depriving women of decent working conditions with labour rights and social protection.

Gender-based violence continues at alarming levels.[10] While 2024 legal reforms eliminated reconciliation in rape cases, implementation remains weak. Only 16 crisis centres serve the entire country through unstable NGO contracts. Traditional harmful practices like bride abduction persist with limited prosecution. Technology-facilitated violence affects most women, while legal frameworks lack adequate digital protection measures. Despite the ratification of ILO Convention on Violence and Harassment (No.190), national legislation still lacks full definition and protection against different forms of violence and harassment in the world of work. Marginalized women face compounded discrimination: women with disabilities experience healthcare and employment access restrictions; LGBTQI+ individuals encounter hostile conditions and discrimination; and rural women face disadvantages through limited access to technology and healthcare services.

## 3. PROGRESS TOWARD THE 2030 AGENDA

The UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development has been integrated into national planning through the National Sustainable Development Strategy (2018–2040)[11] and the National Development Programme through 2026.[12] These frameworks emphasize human-centred development and prioritize vulnerable and marginalized groups.

A second VNR on the SDGs has been prepared with development partner support.[13] Implementation focuses on reducing inequality, eradicating poverty, mitigating climate change, creating jobs, promoting gender equality and ensuring universal access to education and skills.

Kyrgyzstan's SDG monitoring framework includes 217 indicators, with only 38 (17.5 per cent) disaggregated by sex, highlighting the need for improved gender data production. The monitoring system comprises 136 global, 60

int/news-room/feature-stories/detail/building-resilient-healthcare-in-kyrgyzstan--mitigating-the-impacts-of-covid-19-through-strategic-partnerships

7 Kyrgyzstan | Equal Future

8 Kyrgyz Republic: Gender in Society Perception Study | United Nations in Kyrgyz Republic

9 United Nations in the Kyrgyz Republic | Unpaid Care Work as a Structural Determinant of Women's Economic.

10 United Nations in the Kyrgyz Republic. Violence against Women

11 Government of Kyrgyzstan. 2018. Presidential Decree of the Kyrgyz Republic No. 221 of 31 October 2018.

12 Government of Kyrgyzstan. 2021. Presidential Decree of the Kyrgyz Republic No. 435 of 12 October 2021.

13 Government of Kyrgyzstan. 2025. Voluntary National Review (VNR) 2025 Report, United Nations HLPF.

national, and 21 proxy indicators. Kyrgyzstan ranks 48th globally, with an SDG Index score of 74.2, leading Central Asia.[14]

### Key Achievements and Persistent Challenges

For SDG 5, Kyrgyzstan has adopted 90 per cent of necessary legal provisions for gender equality, particularly regarding violence prevention.[15] The framework criminalizes domestic violence and forced marriage while empowering law enforcement to protect victims.

Notable progress includes increased women's political representation: from 5.5 to 22.2 per cent in national parliament and from 15 to 37.9 per cent in local government through seat reservations. Child marriage declined from 14 per cent in 2018 to 10 per cent in 2023 among women aged 20–24.[16]

However, significant challenges persist. Extreme poverty, which had nearly been eradicated at 0.5 per cent in 2019, surged to nearly 6 per cent during the COVID-19 pandemic and remained at 5 per cent in 2023.[17] Domestic violence cases increased by 75 per cent in 2023, with female survivors up 84 per cent since 2019, reflecting both increased incidents and improved reporting.[18] Only 59 per cent of married women access modern contraception despite 99.4 per cent awareness.[19] Female labour participation dropped to 44.7 per cent (from 46 per cent in 2022) versus 73.5 per cent for men.[20]

## 4. DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS

Key actors advancing gender equality and women's empowerment (GEWE) in Kyrgyzstan include UN agencies, the EU and bilateral partners, who wield significant influence through coordination functions, resources and government engagement capacity.

### UN System Leadership

The United Nations remains the most influential GEWE actor through its coordinated presence and alignment with global frameworks. UN agencies support government implementation of CEDAW, the Beijing Platform for Action, the WPS agenda and SDG 5. The UNCT achieved 100 per cent compliance (11 of 11 indicators) under the UNCT Gender Scorecard in 2024, up from 53 per cent in 2020.

The Gender Thematic Group coordinates gender mainstreaming across the UNSDCF. UN Women chairs the GTG and leads normative advocacy while providing technical assistance to State institutions and civil society. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) implement complementary gender programming.

### European Union, Development Banks and Bilateral Partners

The European Union maintains significant GEWE influence through targeted programmes: the Spotlight Initiative (USD 6.71 million for violence prevention), the Education Support Programme (USD 37.5 million for gender-sensitive education, 2023–2026), and the Social Protection Programme (USD 19.4 million, 2016–2020).

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has a commitment to systematic gender mainstreaming. In 2024, ADB approved USD 50 million for fiscal and public administration reforms, including gender-responsive budgeting.[21] In 2025, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) launched a Women's Entrepreneurship Finance programme and the Women's Entrepreneurship

14 Sustainable Development Report. 2025. Sustainable Development Report 2024, profile: Kyrgyz Republic.

15 Government of Kyrgyzstan. 2025. Voluntary National Review 2025 Report, p. 52.

16 UNICEF Kyrgyzstan. 2023. Annual Report 2024.

17 Government of Kyrgyzstan. 2025. Voluntary National Review 2025 Report, p. 53.

18 Ibid.

19 UNICEF. 2023. Kyrgyz Republic Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) 2023: Statistical Snapshots.

20 NSC (National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic). 2024. Women and Men of the Kyrgyz Republic: 2019-2023.

21 ADB (Asian Development Bank). 2024. "ADB Supports Public Sector and Governance Policy Reforms in the Kyrgyz Republic." https://www.adb.org/ru/news/adb-support-public-sector-and-governance-policy-reforms-kyrgyz-republic

Finance Code, to expand women's access to finance and strengthen their role in the economy.[22]

The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) leads gender-responsive budgeting initiatives through partnerships with the Ministry of Finance and local governments. The German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ) supports gender mainstreaming in legal reform processes.

## Coordination Challenges

Coordination among bilateral donors remains informal, lacking a dedicated platform for joint planning around shared GEWE priorities. Most funding concentrates on violence prevention and political participation, while unpaid care work, the care economy, informal work, climate resilience and private sector engagement receive insufficient attention.

Long-term sustainability requires enhanced strategic coordination, balanced investment across priorities, and greater domestic ownership to sustain reforms beyond external funding cycles.

22 Banks.kg. 2023. "EBRD Invests €1.3 Billion in 2022." 13 January. https://banks.kg/news/ebrd-invests-13-billion-euros-in-2022

# 2

# LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

# LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

## 1. INTERNATIONAL AND REGIONAL COMMITMENTS TO GENDER EQUALITY

International gender equality obligations carry binding force domestically, following Article 6 of Kyrgyzstan's Constitution.[23] The country has ratified eight out of nine core UN human rights conventions, creating comprehensive anti-discrimination provisions.[24]

Kyrgyzstan ratified CEDAW in 1997 and its Optional Protocol in 2002, committing to the comprehensive international framework for women's rights implementation. Also, the country has ratified all eight ILO Fundamental Conventions, including Convention on Equal Remuneration (No. 100), the Convention on Discrimination in Employment and Occupation (No. 111), plus the ILO Maternity Protection Convention (Revised), 1952 (No. 103). In 2024, Kyrgyzstan became the first Central Asian country to ratify ILO Convention on Violence and Harassment, 2019 (No. 190), positioning itself as a regional leader in labour protection, although gaps remain with non-ratification of additional ILO Conventions on Maternity Protection, 2000 (No.183), Domestic Workers, 2011 (No. 189) and Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention, 1981 (No.156).

Kyrgyzstan has systematically integrated the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development into national policy frameworks, including the National Development Strategy (2018–2040)[25] and National Development Programme until 2026,[26] presenting its Second Voluntary National Review (VNR) at the 2025 High-Level Political Forum.[27] The country maintains strong commitment to Beijing Platform for Action implementation and submitted a Beijing +30 National Review in 2024.[28]

The country demonstrates commitment to the WPS agenda through its fourth National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 for 2022–2024,[29] establishing strategic objectives for strengthening women's participation in peacebuilding, ensuring protection for violence-affected women and children, promoting gender balance in security institutions and facilitating post-conflict recovery. Kyrgyzstan has also committed to climate frameworks through its Nationally Determined Contribution Implementation Plan under the Paris Agreement and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030.[30]

UN monitoring bodies have identified rights violations across multiple domains and expressed concern about government pressure on human rights defenders, lawyers, politicians and journalists in a narrowing

23 Government of Kyrgyzstan. 2021. Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic.

24 OHCHR (UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights). Undated. "Treaty Bodies: Kyrgyz Republic." Accessed on 13.10.2025. https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/TreatyBodyExternal/countries.aspx?CountryCode=KGZ&Lang=EN

25 National Development Strategy of the Kyrgyz Republic 2018-2040 [in Russian].

26 Government of Kyrgyzstan. 2021. National Development Programme until 2026 [in Kyrgyz/Russian].

27 High-Level Political Forum. 2025. Voluntary National Review 2025: Kyrgyz Republic Report.

28 UN Women. 2024. Beijing +30 National Review, Kyrgyzstan.

29 Government of Kyrgyzstan. NAPs on UNSCR 1325: 2022–2024 and 2018-2020), nap_1325_2022_kyrgyzstan.pdf.

30 UNFCCC (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change). Undated. Kyrgyz Republic NDC, in NDC Registry. and UNDRR (United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction). Undated. "What is the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction?"

civil society space.[31] The tension between international expectations for civil society engagement and domestic conditions for civil society actors represents a fundamental challenge to effective implementation of the international rights framework.

UN monitoring bodies have expressed their concerns specifically about persistent women's rights violations and systematic gender-based discrimination and violence, affecting particularly marginalized women and girls in rural and minority communities, the continuation of traditional harmful practices like ala kachuu (bride kidnapping) despite legal prohibitions, and critically high barriers for women and girls with disabilities facing sexual and gender-based violence.[32]

The 2021 CEDAW concluding observations identified fundamental gaps requiring immediate attention: delayed comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation with definitions covering direct and indirect discrimination and intersecting forms of discrimination; problematic use of undefined terms like "morality" and "traditional family values" that could undermine women's rights; systematic barriers to justice access; critically weak enforcement of gender-based violence legislation; insufficient coordination and unclear mandate distribution within national gender machinery; persistent unequal political and economic participation; and significant reproductive health access limitations, particularly following the 2024 repeal of reproductive rights legislation. CEDAW recommendations call for strengthened cooperation with civil society and protection of women's human rights defenders.[33]

The ILO Committee of Experts has highlighted critical gaps in labour rights protection: legislation failing to fully reflect equal pay for equal work and work of equal value, absence of clear legal definitions of indirect gender-based discrimination, lack of sexual harassment definitions and prohibition, and weak enforcement mechanisms.[34] The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights noted that almost half the population cannot meet daily nutritional requirements, while Kyrgyzstan has failed to adopt regulatory frameworks requiring human rights due diligence despite detrimental impacts of extractive activities.[35]

The 2023 final report of the EU-UN Spotlight Initiative reveals recurring themes: inadequate legal definitions failing international standards, weak institutional coordination and resource allocation, insufficient protection for marginalized groups and persistent barriers to accessing justice.[36] A 2018 EU-commissioned Gender Study found that "adequate measures to protect the fundamental rights of LGBT people as guaranteed by the Constitution and International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights do not exist."[37] The UN Special Rapporteur on disabilities specifically noted the dire situation for women and girls with disabilities facing sexual and gender-based violence.[38]

## 2. NATIONAL LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR GENDER EQUALITY

The Constitution of Kyrgyzstan is the supreme legal instrument affirming equality between men and women in rights and freedoms, guaranteeing equal opportunities for their realization (Article 24).[39] It prohibits sex-based discrimination, establishes legal liability for

31 CEDAW Committee. 2021. Concluding observations on the fifth periodic report of Kyrgyzstan. CEDAW/C/KGZ/CO/5.

32 OHCHR. 2023. Visit to Kyrgyzstan: Report of the Working Group on discrimination against women in law and practice. A/HRC/53/39/Add.1; OHCHR. 2023. Visit to Kyrgyzstan: Report of the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights. A/HRC/53/33/Add.1.

33 CEDAW Committee. 2021. Concluding observations on the fifth periodic report of Kyrgyzstan. CEDAW/C/KGZ/CO/5.

34 ILO Committee of Experts. 2023. "Comment on Legislation: Kyrgyzstan; Direct Request (CEACR) – adopted 2024, published 113rd ILC session (2025)." Normlex database. Accessed on 13.10.2025 https://normlex.ilo.org/dyn/nrmlx_en/f?p=1000:13100:0::NO:13100:P13100_COMMENT_ID,P13100_COUNTRY_ID:4410145,103529

35 Human Rights Council. 2020. Report of the Administration of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.

36 Spotlight Initiative. 2024. Kyrgyzstan Final Annual Report 2023.

37 EEAS (European External Action Service). 2018. Kyrgyzstan Gender Study Report.

38 OHCHR. 2025. Visit to Kyrgyzstan: Report of the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities. A/HRC/58/56/Add.1.

39 Government of Kyrgyzstan. 2021. Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic. CBD Ministry of Justice database.

discriminatory practices, and legitimizes temporary special measures. Article 26 recognizes motherhood as subject to State protection, reinforcing reproductive rights and family support obligations.

The Law on State Guarantees of Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities for Men and Women serves as the primary domestic framework, establishing comprehensive anti-discrimination provisions and institutional obligations.[40] This framework legislation prohibits direct and indirect gender discrimination, establishes guarantees for gender equality in political participation, civil service, economic relations and property access, while assigning specific obligations to State institutions. The Law on Normative Legal Acts establishes procedural requirements for assessments of legal acts in terms of their compliance with principles of equality, though compliance remains inconsistent.[41]

The legal framework establishes comprehensive rights guarantees spanning non-discrimination rights with protection from direct and indirect discrimination, economic rights ensuring equal access to employment and property, political rights guaranteeing equal participation in governance, social rights providing equal access to education and healthcare, and reproductive rights that maintain constitutional protections despite recent legislative changes.

Key sectoral laws incorporate varying degrees of gender-sensitive provisions. The Labour Code includes protective provisions for pregnant and breastfeeding women, prohibits pregnancy-based employment discrimination, and establishes some equal pay principles – yet they are not fully aligned with international standards.[42] Moreover, enforcement mechanisms remain weak and the Labour Code lacks violence and harassment at workplace provisions.[43] The Family Code recognizes gender equality principles, prohibits discrimination in family relations, acknowledges unpaid domestic labour and enables contractual property arrangements between spouses.[44] The Law on the Protection of Public Health entitles women to necessary medical and sanitary assistance free of charge for maternity-related care needs.[45] Recent amendments to the Criminal Code and Criminal Procedure Code strengthen protection against gender-based violence, eliminate reconciliation options for serious crimes and remove statute limitations for sexual violence.[46]

However, a significant legislative gap emerged with the 2024 repeal of the Law "On the Reproductive Rights of Citizens and Guarantees for their Realization,"[47] which removed explicit guarantees for comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services. Constitutional provisions take precedence over all domestic legislation, with the Law on State Guarantees serving as framework legislation. Nevertheless, significant portions of economic legislation, including the Civil Code, Land Code, Water Code and Forest Code remain gender-neutral without proactive equality measures.

Multiple accountability pathways support these rights through constitutional liability with direct constitutional prohibition of discrimination, civil law remedies enabling court-based enforcement, administrative accountability creating State institutional obligations, criminal law protection establishing criminal penalties for discrimination-based crimes and gender-based violence, and legislative oversight through parliamentary review mechanisms.

**40** Government of Kyrgyzstan. 2008. Law on State Guarantees of Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities for Men and Women.

**41** Government of Kyrgyzstan. 2021. Law of the Kyrgyz Republic "On Normative Legal Acts. CBD Ministry of Justice database.

**42** The ILO's supervisory committee (CEACR) has observed that section 17 of the Gender Equality Act 2003 does not give full legislative expression to the principle of equal remuneration for men and women for work of equal value. The CEDAW Committee in its concluding observations also expressed concern with respect to the absence of legislation to ensure the application of the principle of equal pay for work of equal value, which is enshrined in Article 20 of the Labour Code and Article 5 of the Act on State Guarantees of Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities for Men and Women. ILO Committee of Experts. 2023. "Comment on Legislation: Kyrgyzstan; Direct Request (CEACR) – adopted 2024, published 113rd ILC session (2025)." Normlex database. Accessed https://normlex.ilo.org/dyn/nrmlx_en/f?p=1000:13100:0::NO:13100:P13100_COMMENT_ID,P13100_COUNTRY_ID:4410145,103529:NO

**43** Government of Kyrgyzstan. 2025. Labour Code of the Kyrgyz Republic. CBD database.

**44** Government of Kyrgyzstan. 2024. Family Code. CBD database.

**45** Ibid.

**46** CEDAW Committee. 2021. Concluding observations on the fifth periodic report of Kyrgyzstan. CEDAW/C/KGZ/CO/5.

**47** Government of Kyrgyzstan. 2015. Law of the Kyrgyz Republic No. 148 of 4 July 2015, voided on 3 February 2024. CIS Legislation database.

Despite comprehensive coverage, significant gaps persist requiring urgent attention. Current definitions of direct and indirect discrimination require alignment with international standards, while the Law on State Guarantees lacks specific implementation mechanisms for rural service access, land rights, equal pay enforcement and comprehensive domestic violence protection. Gender-neutral formulation of major economic laws fails to address structural gender-specific barriers, while legal remedies remain inaccessible for many discrimination victims due to procedural complexities and cost barriers.

The CEDAW Committee has recommended adopting temporary special measures in national legislation to accelerate substantive equality.[48] Priority legal framework strengthening requires harmonizing discrimination definitions with international standards, strengthening enforcement mechanisms, establishing specialized equality tribunals, improving legal aid access, reforming gender-neutral economic legislation and restoring comprehensive reproductive rights legislation. These reforms are essential to transform legal guarantees from aspirational commitments into enforceable rights.

## 3. STRATEGIC APPROACH TO GENDER EQUALITY

Kyrgyzstan has developed a multi-tiered strategic framework integrating gender equality into national development goals. The National Development Strategy 2018–2040 positions gender equality as a core principle with the vision that "full and equal participation of women in governance at all levels of political, economic, and public life is ensured."[49] The National Development Programme until 2026 operationalizes this through a human-centred approach emphasizing the 2030 Agenda principle to "leave no one behind."[50]

The National Gender Equality Strategy until 2030 establishes four strategic priorities: women's economic empowerment addressing labour market segregation; cultural transformation challenging gender stereotypes; prevention and elimination of gender-based violence; and gender parity in decision-making.[51] The strategy was operationalized through a National Action Plan for 2022–2024, which concluded without formal monitoring. A new draft Action Plan for 2025–2027 outlines five strategic areas, 13 objectives, 49 tasks and 144 measures.[52]

In the past, comprehensive gender analysis tools existed with legal mandates in primary legislation, creating a framework for systematic gender integration across government planning. However, a significant policy reversal occurred in 2025 when mandatory planning methodologies requiring gender analysis across economic, environmental and social dimensions were repealed, representing a retreat from systematic gender mainstreaming. Prior to repeal, these methodologies required sex-disaggregated data collection, analysis of gender disparities' impact on development outcomes and integration of gender considerations in project design.

Currently, gender analysis incorporation depends primarily on political leadership commitment and development partner support, creating inconsistent application. A regulation on inter-agency coordination establishes mechanisms to reduce violence against women and children, while various by-laws provide implementation guidance.[53] However, no standardized Government methodology exists for systematic gender mainstreaming assessment, with monitoring relying primarily on civil society organizations.

Kyrgyzstan does not have an established system for tracking the national budget share allocated to the promotion of gender equality, creating fundamental implementation

48 CEDAW Committee. 2021. Concluding observations on the fifth periodic report of Kyrgyzstan. CEDAW/C/KGZ/CO/5.

49 Government of Kyrgyzstan. 2018. Decree of the President of the Kyrgyz Republic No. 221. National Development Strategy of the Kyrgyz Republic 2018-2040. CBD Ministry of Justice database.

50 Government of Kyrgyzstan. Undated. National Development Programme of the Kyrgyz Republic until 2026. CBD Ministry of Justice database.

51 Government of Kyrgyzstan. 2022. Decree of the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic No. 390 on the Procedure for Implementation. CBD Ministry of Justice database.

52 Government of Kyrgyzstan. 2022. National Strategy of the Kyrgyz Republic on Achieving Gender Equality until 2030. CBD Ministry of Justice database.

53 OHCHR. 2023. Visit to Kyrgyzstan: Report of the Working Group on discrimination against women in law and practice. A/HRC/53/39/Add.1

and accountability challenges. The budget formation instruction lacks gender-specific indicators, forcing most gender equality programmes to rely on development partner funding or residual State budget allocations.[54] Despite systemic gaps, some ministries include direct gender-related expenditures: the Ministry of Health allocated KGS 127.7 million (USD 1.45 million) for maternal and child health (1.4 per cent of ministry budget) and KGS 328.7 million (USD 3.75 million) for HIV services with gender indicators (3.6 per cent) in 2024.

The State Programme for Supporting Women's Entrepreneurship (2022–2026)[55] demonstrates persistent policy-budget disconnects, as it is not reflected in the 2024 national budget despite being a formal government priority. Kyrgyzstan maintains extensive gender-disaggregated indicators through systematic data collection, yet important gaps persist in climate change vulnerability, social protection access, time-use data for unpaid care work and economic participation in informal sectors.

The strategic framework faces fundamental implementation barriers. The 2025 repeal of mandatory gender analysis requirements represents a retreat from systematic gender mainstreaming, creating dependence on political will rather than institutional mandate. Gender-responsive budgeting remains underdeveloped with no established tracking systems, forcing most gender programmes into donor dependency. Coordination mechanisms across government levels remain insufficient, with civil society organizations serving as primary watchdogs.

Addressing these barriers requires restoring mandatory gender analysis requirements, developing systematic gender-responsive budgeting tools, establishing standardized monitoring methodologies, strengthening coordination mechanisms, closing critical data gaps and ensuring policy-budget alignment. Without these reforms, strategic frameworks risk remaining aspirational documents rather than effective tools for advancing gender equality.

## 4. INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK AND PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE PROMOTION OF GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

The institutional architecture for gender equality operates through a multilayered coordination system linking national policy bodies to local implementation mechanisms. The National Council on Family Affairs, Gender Development, Social Protection and the Rights of the Child, established in November 2024, considers draft targeted programmes and action plans; submits proposals and measures for the improvement of state policy; reviews and discusses reports and statements submitted by State bodies, local self-government authorities, trade unions, employers, international organizations and civil society organizations basing its advice on the results of monitoring and evaluation. It is led by the Chairperson of the Cabinet of Ministers and comprises 33 members from ministries, Parliament and representatives from trade unions, civil society and international organizations.[56]

The MLSWM functions as the authorized State body under Resolution No. 252 (2021), leading strategy implementation and consolidating national reporting.[57] To strengthen implementation capacity, the Ministry designated 51 gender focal points across ministries, agencies, judiciary and local governments in 2024, though effectiveness is constrained by limited resources and lack of formal job description integration. Parliamentary oversight operates through the Parliamentary Council on the Rights of

**54** Government of Kyrgyzstan. 2021. Instruction on the Formulation, Review, and Execution of Program-Based Budgets. CBD Ministry of Justice database.

**55** Government of Kyrgyzstan, Decree of the Cabinet of Ministers. 2022. State Programme on Support and Development of Women's Entrepreneurship 2022-2026. CBD Ministry of Justice database.

**56** Government of Kyrgyzstan. 2024. Decree establishing The National Council on Family Affairs, Gender Development, Social Protection and the Rights of the Child. CBD database.

**57** Government of Kyrgyzstan. 2021. Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Kyrgyz Republic No. 252 "On Issues of the Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Migration. CIS Legislation database.

Women, Children and Gender Equality,[58] while the Office of the Ombudsperson (especially the Department for the Protection of the Rights of Children, Women and Families) provides independent monitoring and responds to cases of rights violations, though CEDAW (2021) recommended strengthening both authority and resources.[59]

Line ministries carry targeted responsibilities: the Ministry of Internal Affairs leads UNSCR 1325 implementation; the Ministry of Economy and Commerce coordinates women's entrepreneurship programmes; while other ministries integrate gender considerations within their respective policies and service-delivery systems. This sectoral approach ensures gender equality integration across government functions, though coordination and consistency remain ongoing challenges.

Community-level implementation involves multiple complementary structures providing direct citizen access to services and advocacy. Approximately 470 Committees for the Prevention of Domestic Violence provide front-line response and prevention services, while Community Prevention Centers offer broader social support. Aksakal courts, revised in 2024 to respect a gender quota ensuring no more than 70 per cent of one sex, are designed to maintain a gender balance in traditional justice mechanisms, while Women's Councils under local governments provide dedicated advocacy and support structures.

Civil society organizations form the backbone of non-State engagement, participating through formal representation in national councils, inter-agency working groups, shadow reporting to international bodies and service-delivery partnerships. Key actors include women's NGOs such as the Alliance of Women's Legislative Initiatives, Soobsha and Demilgelüü Aiyldar, which provide advocacy, direct services and accountability monitoring.

The private sector contributes through both direct investment and structural change initiatives, with banks, the Kyrgyz Stock Exchange and employer associations mobilizing resources through gender-lens financing and workplace equality commitments, while technology firms contribute innovation in digital skills development and online safety measures. Non-traditional partners engage through community trust and social norms transformation: Media outlets and influencers shape public opinion and maintain visibility of gender equality issues, while faith-based organizations, philanthropies and traditional leaders leverage their community standing to shift social attitudes.

The National Statistical Committee[60] coordinates gender statistics under the Law on Official Statistics, managing data collection across ministries and local governments while monitoring SDG implementation. Through the UN Women Women Count Programme, Kyrgyzstan has institutionalized both UN Minimum Set and SDG gender indicators, reporting 65 per cent availability of 85 gender indicators, equivalent to 74 per cent of the UN Minimum Set and 57 per cent of SDG indicators.[61] This demonstrates clear progress in core statistical areas while highlighting remaining gaps in newer or more complex measurement domains.

The institutional framework demonstrates a structured approach from national coordination to local implementation, with comprehensive coverage spanning government bodies, civil society, private sector and non-traditional partners. However, effectiveness depends critically on adequate resourcing, formal integration of gender responsibilities within institutional mandates and sustained coordination across the complex network of State and non-State actors. The system's primary strength lies in its inclusive multi-stakeholder approach, while ongoing challenges include resource constraints, coordination gaps between government levels and the need for stronger formal accountability mechanisms.

**58** UNDP/Spotlight Initiative. 2024. Kyrgyzstan Final Narrative Programme Report 2023, p. X.

**59** CEDAW Committee. 2021. Concluding observations on the fifth periodic report of Kyrgyzstan. CEDAW/C/KGZ/CO/5. paras. X & Y.

**60** Government of Kyrgyzstan. 2025. Law of the Kyrgyz Republic on Official Statistics. CBD database.

**61** UN Women. 2023. Women Count Kyrgyzstan Country Report 2023.

# 3

# GENDER ANALYSIS, BY THEMES

# GENDER ANALYSIS, BY THEMES

Recent years have seen significant policy developments, including the 2024 State Programme on Supporting Women's Leadership, legislative reforms addressing gender-based violence, and the ratification of ILO Convention No. 190 on violence and harassment in the workplace.

Despite this robust foundation, implementation gaps persist across different dimensions of women's lives. This chapter examines seven critical areas where legal frameworks have yet to translate into substantive equality: political participation and leadership; economic empowerment; digital inclusion; gender-based violence; peace and security; climate action and natural resource management; and sexual and reproductive health rights.

Across these themes, common patterns emerge. Women face systematic exclusion from decision-making positions – whether in parliament, corporate leadership, security institutions or water-user associations. Economic barriers compound political marginalization and GBV operates across multiple domains while institutional responses remain inadequate and prevention strategies underdeveloped.

These challenges are interconnected, creating cumulative disadvantages particularly severe for rural women, women with disabilities, ethnic minorities and other marginalized groups. Climate change intensifies existing vulnerabilities, while inadequate healthcare systems and data-collection methods render many women's experiences invisible in policies. Structural barriers, cultural norms and resource constraints interact to limit women's full participation, despite formal commitments to gender equality.

## 1. GENDER EQUALITY IN GOVERNANCE, POLITICAL AND CIVIC PARTICIPATION AND LEADERSHIP OF WOMEN

Kyrgyzstan has established a comprehensive legal framework for gender equality grounded in both domestic and international commitments. As a State Party to CEDAW and the Convention on the Political Rights of Women, the country is legally obligated to ensure women's equal participation in public and political life at all levels. These obligations are reinforced through the Beijing Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which are integrated into national policy frameworks. The country's 2025 UN assessments indicate approximately 90 per cent of implementation of the required legislative foundation for gender equality.[62]

Domestically, constitutional provisions guarantee equal rights in civil service and electoral participation while legitimizing gender quotas as temporary special measures. The Law on State Guarantees of Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities for Men and Women[63] mandates gender representation across government branches, while electoral legislation incorporating quotas since 2007 has achieved significant progress in elected positions – increasing women's local council representation from 10 per cent in 2016 to 37.9

62 United Nations. 2025. Voluntary National Reviews 2025: Kyrgyz Republic High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.

63 Government of Kyrgyzstan. 2008. Law on State Guarantees of Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities for Men and Women, Law No. 184 adopted on 4 August 2008. CBD database.

per cent in 2024.[64] However, the Law on Public and Municipal Civil Service[65] remains largely gender-neutral, contributing to persistent gaps in appointed positions. The 2024 State Programme on Supporting Women's Leadership until 2030[66] aims to address the structural barriers that legal quotas alone cannot address.

## Key issues

### Gender quotas have proven effective for elected positions, but their absence in appointed roles limits women's access to executive decision-making power.

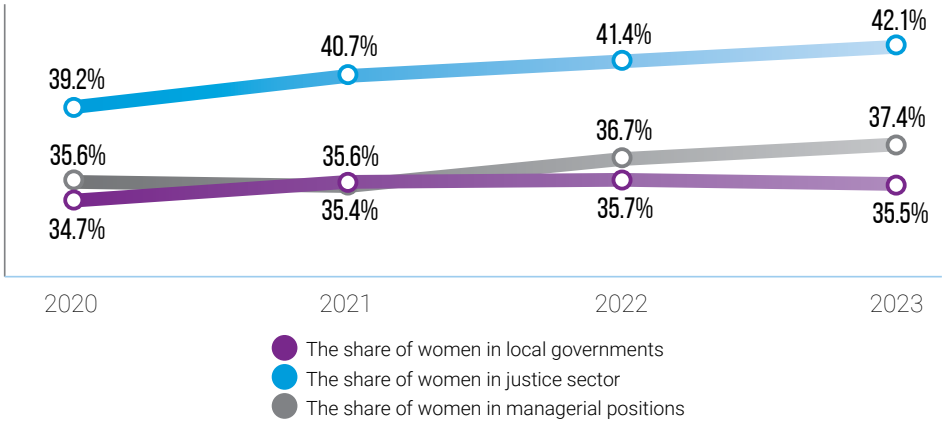
Women occupy 22 per cent of Jogorku Kenesh seats, below the 30 per cent target but showing clear improvement where quotas apply. The mixed electoral system creates uneven coverage – quotas apply to 54 proportional representation seats, while 36 majoritarian seats lack special measures, demonstrating the direct impact of institutional design choices.

The most dramatic success occurred at the local level, where women's representation increased to 39 per cent in 452 rural councils and 27.7 per cent in 32 urban councils[67] following 2021 electoral reforms introducing reserved seats. This transformation demonstrates the potential of targeted institutional interventions.

The absence of quotas for appointed positions creates stark contrasts in women's representation. Only one woman holds a ministerial position among 21 Cabinet members (5 per cent)[68], while executive exclusion extends across all administrative levels with zero women among seven Presidential Representatives, 40 district heads or 32 mayors. At the rural level, only 16 women head administrations out of 452 positions (3.5 per cent).[69]

This pattern reflects broader civil service dynamics, where women comprise 42.1 per cent of staff but only 29.4 per cent of national political appointments and 3.3 per cent of local political appointments.[70] Sectoral segregation persists, with men dominating enforcement and economic agencies (e.g. 83 per cent State Customs Service, 79 per cent Prosecutor General's Office) while women lead social sectors (e.g. 75 per cent Ministry of Health, 74 per cent Ministry of Labour).[71]

**FIGURE 1:**
**The share of women in managerial positions, in 2020-2023**




64 Central Commission for Elections and Referendums of the Kyrgyz Republic. Women and Elections. https://shailoo.gov.kg/ru/zhenshiny-i-vybory.https://shailoo.gov.kg/ru/zhenshiny-i-vybory

65 Government of Kyrgyzstan. 2024. On the Civil Service and Municipal Service – Presidential Decree, 7 March 2024. CBD database

66 Ibid.

67 Government of Kyrgyzstan. Undated. "Central Commission for Elections and Referendums – Women in Representative Bodies."

68 NSC (National Statistical Committee). 2024. Women and Men of the Kyrgyz Republic: 2019-2023.

69 Government of Kyrgyzstan, MLSPM. 2024. Discussion in Bishkek on Amendments to the Law on State Guarantees of Equal Rights and Opportunities for Men and Women.

70 NSC. 2024. Women and Men of the Kyrgyz Republic: 2019–2023.

71 Ibid.

The small critical mass of women in leadership renders them vulnerable within male-dominated institutions. Political parties remain weakly institutionalized, with women politicians often perceived as assistants rather than leaders.[72] Despite widespread perception that lack of political experience presents a barrier to women's leadership, no party has established leadership schools for women.

The State Programme to Support Women's Leadership targets the institutional design gaps identified, institutionalizing pathways for women's participation in appointed positions and leadership development beyond electoral quotas.

### Economic constraints and gender-based violence create systematic barriers to women's political participation and leadership

Economic constraints and unequal access to financial resources create systematic barriers to women's political engagement, from campaign financing to economic independence. These barriers are reinforced by widespread violence against women and harassment that deters participation while State institutions fail to address these interconnected forms of exclusion.

Violence against women in politics and public spaces operates across multiple forms and venues. Nearly 30 per cent of women reported experiencing economic violence – exclusion from financial decision-making or unequal resource access – typically perpetrated "exclusively" or "mostly" by men.[73] This economic control directly enables other forms of political violence by limiting women's independence and capacity for political action.

Sexual harassment awareness is nearly universal (97 per cent of respondents), while psychological violence directly affects one-third of women politicians. Thirty-two per cent faced threats, 19 per cent reported sexist remarks or verbal abuse and 12 per cent experienced deliberate exclusion from speaking opportunities – typically by male political opponents. Physical violence, while less common, remains a real deterrent, with 12 per cent aware of cases and 2 per cent experiencing it directly.[74]

This violence operates across digital and physical spaces through messaging apps, social media and in-person venues – including workplaces, party meetings and public events. Female candidates report threats from male rivals or family members pressuring withdrawal from races, while women legislators face harassment for raising corruption issues. The pattern particularly discourages younger women from seeking office, creating intergenerational deterrent effects.[75]

## IN FOCUS



2015
**21.7%**

2023
**22.2%**

The share of women in parliament



2015
**36%**

2023
**42%**

The share of women in managerial positions

72 UNFPA Kyrgyzstan. 2016. Gender in Social Perception (Гендер в восприятии общества).

73 OSCE. 2023. Violence against Women in Politics in the Kyrgyz Republic: Research Findings

74 Agency of Social Technologies. 2022. Violence against Women in Politics in the Kyrgyz Republic: Research Findings.

75 Ibid.

Violence against women in politics receives no formal recognition from the Central Election Commission, Parliament, national gender equality mechanism, or law enforcement. This institutional blindness ensures perpetrators face no consequences while victims receive no support, reinforcing both economic and physical forms of political exclusion.[76]

### Shrinking civic space compounds gender-specific barriers

The civil society sector employs approximately 17,000 individuals and generated over KGS 2 billion KGS (USD 22.8 million), which is equivalent to 0.3 per cent of the country's GDP, in 2022.[77] Women's rights organizations are crucial for both democratic development and public services through education, protection and advocacy, but face increasing constraints.[78] Civil society and international organizations report unprecedented tightening of State policy regarding human rights, with restrictions on freedoms of association, assembly and expression.

Recent legislation introduces limitations inconsistent with international standards.[79] In addition to the observed tendency towards limitations on freedom of association, as well as freedom of expression and opinion, a specific potential harm with respect to Kyrgyzstan's gender equality commitments is that concepts such as "gender" and "gender equality" – concepts defined and protected by international law – have come to be associated as "foreign" concepts and organizations providing services and advocating for gender equality commitments are considered "foreign agents".

### Media coverage reinforces gender stereotypes and undermines women's political legitimacy

Despite three decades of educational initiatives targeting journalists, gender biases persist across all media platforms. The normalization of biased representations creates a cultural environment where young women rarely see political leadership as attainable. When media consistently portray politics as a male domain, this influences civic engagement patterns among potential female leaders.

Gender-insensitive media coverage underrepresents women and systematically reinforces stereotypes about women's roles, undermining women's political legitimacy and discouraging civic and political participation. Research indicates severe underrepresentation of women in Kyrgyzstan's media. According to CABAR.asia analysis:[80]

- **Politics coverage:** Men are featured nearly seven times more often than women
- **Economy coverage:** Men are featured more than eight times more often than women
- **Incidents and society:** Men are covered twice as frequently as women

Only 17 per cent of publications about women pertain to politics and economics.[81] This creates a media environment where the public rarely encounter women as political actors or governance experts, reinforcing the perception that politics and economics are primarily male domains.

Women receive less news coverage and are more likely to be profiled based on personal attributes rather than expertise.[82] Election

76 Ibid.

77 Vesti.kg. 2023. "What Contribution Do NGOs Make to the Development of Civil Society and State Institutions in Kyrgyzstan?" 16 October. https://vesti.kg/politika/item/116107-kakoj-vklad-nko-vnosyat-v-razvitie-grazhdanskogo-obshchestva-i-gosudarstvennykh-institutov-kyrgyzstana.html

78 UN Working Group on Discrimination against Women and Girls. 2022. End-of-Mission Statement following Visit to Kyrgyzstan; International Center for Not-For-Profit Law. 2024. "Law of the Kyrgyz Republic on Amendments to the Law of the Kyrgyz Republic on Noncommercial Organizations (also known as the Law on Foreign Representatives)".

79 As highlighted, for example by the European Commission for Democracy Through Law (Venice Commission) in its "KYRGYZSTAN OPINION ON LAW No. 72 OF 2 APRIL 2024 AMENDING THE LAW "ON NON-PROFIT ORGANISATIONS" adopted by the Venice Commission at its 140th Plenary Session (Venice, 11–12 October 2024).

80 CABAR.asia. 2023. "In Kyrgyzstan, Media Write about Women Three Times Less Often than about Men." 22 March. https://cabar.asia/ru/v-kyrgyzstane-smi-pishut-o-zhenshinah-v-3-raza-rezhe-chem-o-muzhchinah

81 Social Technologies Agency. 2022. Violence against Women in Politics of the Kyrgyz Republic: Research Results 2021–2022.

82 Social Technologies Agency. 2023. Gender Aspects of Media Activities in the Kyrgyz Republic: Challenges and Recommendations.

campaigns amplify online hate speech against women candidates, who are labelled as "untraditional Kyrgyz women" through online platforms, creating a hostile environment that deters office-seeking.

## 2. WOMEN'S ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RIGHTS AND ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

International legal instruments, including CEDAW and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, as well as ILO Conventions establish binding standards for equal enjoyment of economic and labour rights, including the right to freely choose one's profession, equal opportunities in employment, and the principle of equal pay for work of equal value. These frameworks specifically prohibit discriminatory practices such as dismissal on grounds of pregnancy, maternity leave or marital status. The Beijing Platform for Action promotes expanding women's participation in the labour market, with Kyrgyzstan reaffirming this commitment through its Beijing+30 national review in 2024. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development focuses on reducing women not in paid employment by improving women's employment levels and fostering women's entrepreneurship, while the 2024 ratification of ILO Convention No. 190 shows the country's commitment to safe and equitable working environments.

While the Law on State Guarantees prohibits gender discrimination in economic relations and ensures equal property access and entrepreneurial opportunities, no dedicated legislation specifically addresses women's economic rights. The new Labour Code,[83] which entered into force in January 2025, lifted prior professional bans for women while maintaining protections for pregnant and lactating women. However, laws are poorly enforced, particularly regarding equal pay for work of equal value and with respect to direct and indirect discrimination, and the Code lacks provisions on violence and harassment, including sexual harassment at the workplace. Other key economic laws – including the Civil, Land, Water and Forest Codes – remain gender-neutral without active support for women's advancement.

### Recent policy developments

The State Programme for Supporting Women's Entrepreneurship (2022–2026)[84] and December 2024 amendments to the Law on Entrepreneur Rights Protection[85] introduced the first legal definition of "women's entrepreneurship" (51 per cent female ownership/majority female employment), enabling government assistance specifically for women including tax incentives and access to banking and financial services. Important advances in recognizing care work include 2023 legislative amendments enabling women to register as individual entrepreneurs providing home-based childcare services, monetizing previously unpaid care work. The 2022 personal assistant scheme provides compensation for disability care, predominantly benefiting women caregivers and acknowledging their contribution to social protection systems.[86]

### Key Issues

#### Economic pressures and structural inequalities create barriers to women's economic advancement

In 2023, more than 29.8 per cent of the population of Kyrgyzstan lived below the poverty line.[87] Poverty rates had been declining significantly until 2018–2019, when they reversed sharply and despite positive economic growth (except during COVID-19), poverty rates remain above

**83** Government of Kyrgyzstan. 2025. Labour Code of the Kyrgyz Republic. CBD Ministry of Justice database.

**84** Government of Kyrgyzstan. 2022. Cabinet of Ministers Decree on the Programme for Support and Development of Women's Entrepreneurship 2022–2026, edition 53-309/edition 1117600. CBD Ministry of Justice database.

**85** Government of Kyrgyzstan. 2001. Law on Education of the Kyrgyz Republic (or related act), edition 4-379/edition 821580. CBD Ministry of Justice database.

**86** Government of Kyrgyzstan. 2020. Regulation on Payment for Personal Assistant Services to Children and Persons with Disabilities, edition 12819/edition 1164488. CBD database.

**87** NSC. "Poverty rate – Open Data." Poverty rate - Open Data - Statistics of the Kyrgyz Republic

pre-pandemic levels. Food inflation surged 16.2 per cent in 2022 for essential items, significantly impacting household budgets since families spend approximately 70 per cent of income on food, forcing 44 per cent of households to cut food expenditures. Economic growth benefits are unevenly shared – with the poorest 20 per cent receiving only 7.7 per cent of income while the wealthiest 20 per cent receive 41.4 per cent.[88]

Women play a critical role in sustaining household income through official employment, informal work and labour migration – in 2022, women made up 40.5 per cent of all external migrants.[89] However, women often prioritize family survival strategies over official employment when household resources are stretched. Rural women remain one of the most vulnerable categories of the population.[90]

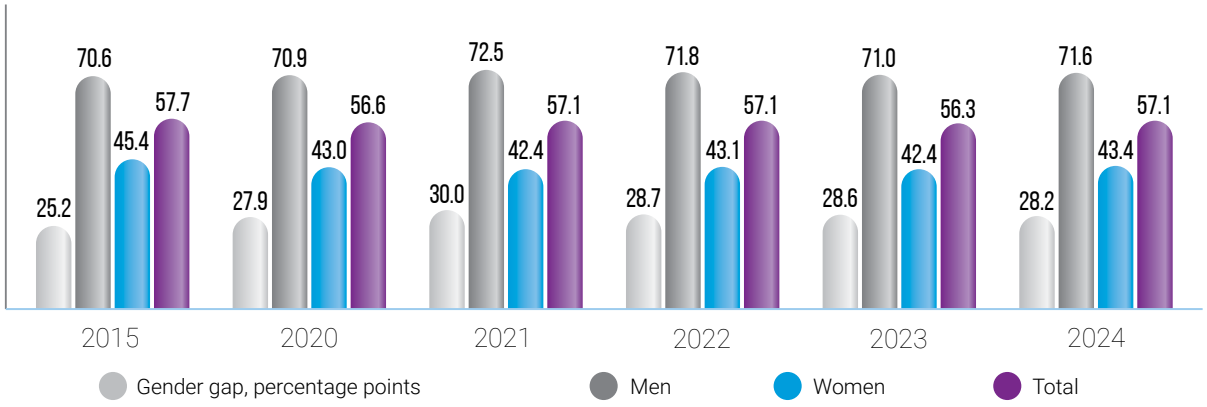
### Women's employment levels have declined despite economic growth, driven by traditional gender role reinforcement

Women's employment rate declined from 49.3 to 43.8 per cent between 2015–2022. Despite continuous population growth, the total number of employed women has remained virtually unchanged (825,200 in 2005 and 859,700 in 2019).[91] Increasing numbers of women have become unpaid homemakers rather than participating in the formal economy. This also partly explains the decline in unemployment rate among working-age women (from 9.3 per cent in 2005 to 6.7 per cent in 2019).[92]

Cultural and religious norms interact to reinforce women's economic exclusion. A significant factor affecting women's economic activity is the correlation between employment and family religiosity.[93] As religious adherence and conservative patriarchal values resurge nationwide, stereotypical views persist that women should focus on domestic duties rather than paid work. Women bear nearly all responsibilities related to childrearing and caring for elderly relatives, reinforced by prevailing traditions, religious norms and patriarchal attitudes.

Employers often prefer to hire men to avoid the perceived financial and administrative burden of women's reproductive roles.[94] While

**FIGURE 2:**
**Employment rate by sex and gender gap (%)**




88 United Nations Human Rights Council. 2023. Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the Human Rights Situation in the Kyrgyz Republic. A/HRC/53/33/Add.1.

89 NSC. 2024. Women and Men of the Kyrgyz Republic: 2019–2023.

90 WFP (World Food Programme). 2024. WFP Annual Country Report Kyrgyz Republic.

91 NSC. 2019. Employment and Unemployment. Results of the Integrated Sample Survey of Household Budgets and Labour Force in 2019.

92 Ibid.

93 World Bank. 2017. Exploring Gender Norms in the Kyrgyz Republic.

94 International Labour Organization and UN Women. 2023. Social Protection Profile: Kyrgyzstan.

Kyrgyzstan's legislation formally requires non-discrimination, laws are poorly enforced. Six companies have endorsed the Women's Empowerment Principles, going beyond legal minimums through proactive measures such as conducting gender audits and offering flexible work arrangements.

### Women's concentration in lower-paid sectors continues despite their essential contributions

Women are predominantly employed in sectors with lower wages, such as education, healthcare and social services that tend to be undervalued despite their critical societal role – highlighted during COVID-19. Three-quarters (77 per cent) of employees in both education and health services are women. Men dominate better-paid sectors: 99 per cent in construction, 96 per cent in transport and storage, and 93 per cent in mining.[95]

This concentration in lower-paid sectors contributes to persistent differences in men's and women's earnings, where men's average salaries exceed women's by approximately 25 per cent.[96] Men's incomes are primarily derived from official sources – wages, property income, pensions and earnings from abroad. As a result, salary and retirement benefit improvements have comparatively less impact on women's economic status.[97]

### Women bear disproportionate unpaid care responsibilities that limit their economic opportunities

Women shoulder the majority of unpaid care responsibilities, including caregiving for children, elderly family members and persons with disabilities. The most pronounced gender gap in employment appears in the 25–34 age group, when many women leave the workforce due to childbirth and caregiving responsibilities. Employment rates begin to converge in the 45–54 age group as women return to work once children are older.[98] The challenge to reconcile family responsibilities with paid work is exacerbated by limited availability of affordable care infrastructure.

According to the 2021 Time-Use Survey, women dedicate 4 hours and 20 minutes per day to household tasks, compared to just 55 minutes for men. Women spend 40 minutes per day on caregiving, while men devote just 17 minutes.[99]

Rural women spend 1.3 times more time on domestic work than urban counterparts. Rural women spend 5 hours and 25 minutes daily on unpaid household duties, while urban women spend 4 hours. Among men, the difference is minimal, averaging around 45 minutes daily regardless of location.[100]

Additionally, 56.8 per cent of women aged 15 and older serve as primary water-providers for households. About 16 per cent of the rural population spends up to 30 minutes daily collecting water, with women and girls under 15 responsible for water collection in two-thirds of such households.[101]

The Cabinet of Ministers launched a pilot "Government Accelerators" Programme in 2023, enabling more than 250 women entrepreneurs to register home-based childcare centres in Bishkek over 100 days, providing care for over 4,000 children.[102] The initiative helps addressing the unpaid care burden while also creating economic opportunities for women.

While the Accelerators Programme contributes to alleviating care burdens, the working conditions and representation of care workers in general are inadequate. The majority of domestic workers are employed informally, with no legal recognition or

**95** NSC. 2024. Women and Men of the Kyrgyz Republic: 2019–2023.

**96** Ibid.

**97** ibid.

**98** Ibid.

**99** NSC. 2021. Results of the 2020 Time Use Survey. p. 279.

**100** NSC. 2023. Sustainable Development Goals and Gender in the Kyrgyz Republic: Statistical Compendium. p. 68.

**101** Musabaeva. 2017. Gender Issues in Access to Clean Water. Global Water Partnership.

**102** Government of Kyrgyzstan, Ministry of Economy. 2023. Implementation of the "Government Accelerators" Program to Reduce Barriers in the Provision of Early Childhood Education Services.

labour and social protections. The working conditions of formally employed care workers in the education and healthcare sectors are also not well protected, with low wages, long working hours and prevalent discriminatory practices. It has not been fully clarified if the labour rights of the women engaged in home-based childcare centres are protected by the Labour Code.

### Women are systematically excluded from ownership and control of productive assets

Women have severely limited access to and control over property and resources that generate income. Only 29 per cent of real estate is officially owned by women, creating significant barriers for women seeking to secure credit, achieve access to banking and financial services, acquire equipment or scale up production.[103] Women's rights to land are often in conflict with customary law, preventing them from inheriting or retaining land after divorce.

Most women live in homes owned by the husband's parents, following the traditional practice of brides moving into grooms' households. Among rural women aged 15–49, 43.7 per cent do not own any housing, and fewer than 5 per cent have sole ownership.

Other key assets are predominantly registered to men: 61 per cent of business buildings and land, 80% of land, 90 per cent of private vehicles, and 93 per cent of farm equipment.

Widespread customary practices limit women's agricultural land rights and participation in natural resource governance. Out of more than 428,000 functioning farm businesses, only 20.2 per cent are headed by women. The highest proportion of female farm managers is in Bishkek (38.6 per cent), and the lowest in Batken region (10.4 per cent). This unequal access contributes to a gap in access to banking and financial services, keeping women stuck in farming that barely meets family needs.

Women are significantly underrepresented in the governance of natural resources, such as in forestry user groups and pasture management committees. Only 11 of 454 pasture committees (2.4 per cent) were led by women in 2016.[104] A similar situation applies to water management. Although women make up over 60 per cent of water users, control over irrigation water remains predominantly in male hands. In Kyrgyzstan's 633 Water User Associations, women hold just 1.2 per cent of director positions, 0.4 per cent of chair positions and 1.9 per cent of deputy chair positions. While more than half now have gender-balanced boards, only 38 are chaired by women, severely limiting women's influence over water access decisions.[105]

### Structural barriers prevent women from founding and scaling their businesses

Women represent only 27 per cent of all entrepreneurs and face systemic barriers limiting access to banking and financial services and constraining business growth.[106] Rural women's access to banking and financial services actually declined by 1.1 per cent.

Women's businesses are often concentrated in very small businesses with limited opportunities for business growth. Women's representation in large enterprises remains low, ranging from 0 per cent in agriculture to 32.2 per cent in services. The highest concentration of female-led businesses is in small and medium enterprises in services, where women comprise 38.6 per cent.[107]

Regional disparities are significant: Bishkek has the highest proportion of female business leaders (women outnumbering men by 8.6 per cent), while Osh region has the lowest (42.8 per cent fewer women than men in leadership roles).[108]

**103** NSC. 2016. Gender in the Perception of Society.

**104** AO (Food and Agriculture Organization). 2016. National Gender Profile of Agriculture and Rural Households.

**105** NSC. 2016. Gender in the Perception of Society. http://www.stat.kg/ru/publications/gender-v-vospriyatii-obshestva/

**106** Government of Kyrgyzstan. National Strategy of the Kyrgyz Republic to Achieve Gender Equality by 2030. edition 159472/edition 1189691.

**107** NSC. 2024. Women and Men of the Kyrgyz Republic: 2019–2023.

**108** Ibid.

In 2021, only 28 per cent of women entrepreneurs in Kyrgyzstan received loans to grow their businesses, compared to 45 per cent of men.[109] A transformative approach to banking and financial services suggests a more gender-responsive financial sector could generate approximately KGS 45.3 billion (USD 431.5 million) in annual revenues.[110] There are some positive trends: women using financial institutions increased by 0.3 per cent nationally and 2.5 per cent in urban areas, although in rural areas it declined by 1.1 per cent.[111]

Addressing barriers to getting loans, Kyrgyzstan launched its first Gender Bonds in November 2022 through a partnership between UN Women, Bank of Asia, the Kyrgyz Stock Exchange and other institutions.[112] The ICMA-compliant bonds generated immediate market interest, with 25 per cent of the 82,000 bonds sold within two hours of launch, demonstrating market appetite for banking products designed for women.

# 3. WOMEN AND ICT

While Kyrgyzstan has established constitutional gender equality guarantees and comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation, significant implementation gaps persist, particularly affecting rural women and marginalized groups in accessing legal remedies.

At the international level, Kyrgyzstan's digital governance framework aligns with key global instruments including the UN Convention on the Use of Electronic Communications in International Contracts (UNCITRAL) and UNCITRAL Model Laws on Electronic Commerce and Electronic Signatures. These provide legal certainty for digital transactions and foundational standards for gender-inclusive digital economies, complemented by emerging global health standards that emphasize equitable access and gender-responsive innovation.

Despite this legal foundation, gender mainstreaming implementation in Kyrgyzstan's digital transformation agenda remains poor. The country's digital vision is articulated through multiple frameworks, including the National Development Strategy 2018–2040[113] and Digital Transformation Programme 'Taza Koom,'[114] supported by over 100 regulatory acts governing telecommunications and digital governance. However, an independent evaluation found gender considerations "often tokenistic and poorly integrated into ICT-enabled service delivery," with no comprehensive assessment conducted on the impacts of women's digital public service access – representing a significant policy gap requiring targeted intervention.[115]

## 3.1. Key Issues

### Women face significant barriers to ICT access that limit their economic opportunities and competitiveness

Women experience systematic exclusion from technology access with stark disparities: only 45 per cent of women in rural areas had Internet access as of 2023, compared to 65 per cent of men.[116] This disparity reduces women's ability to compete for jobs and limits their access to online education, widening the gender gap in economic opportunities.

Mobile phone ownership drives technology exclusion. Among women aged 15 and older, 92 per cent owned a mobile phone in 2022, compared to 94.1 per cent of men. Urban ownership rates were higher for both groups:

109 UN Women. 2021. Kyrgyzstan Factsheet, Women's Entrepreneurship Expo 2021.

110 IFC (International Finance Corporation). Market Research to Assess the Business Opportunity of Women's Markets for Financial Services in Kyrgyzstan.

111 NSC. 2024. Women and Men of the Kyrgyz Republic: 2019–2023.

112 United Nations Kyrgyzstan. 2022. "Launch of the 'Spaces of Gender Equality' Storytelling Project in Kyrgyzstan." https://kyrgyzstan.un.org/ru/208333-впервые-в-истории-Кыргызстана-стартовали-торги-гендерных-облигаций

113 Government of Kyrgyzstan. 2018. National Development Strategy of the Kyrgyz Republic for 2018–2040.

114 Government of Kyrgyzstan. 2017. Digital Transformation Programme "Taza Koom",

115 United Nations in the Kyrgyz Republic. Evaluation of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) 2018–2022..

116 NSC. 2024. Women and Men of the Kyrgyz Republic: 2019–2023.

96 per cent for women and 97.7 per cent for men, compared to 89.4 per cent and 92.1 per cent respectively in rural areas.[117]

Affordability remains a critical barrier, with Internet services and smart devices disproportionately affecting women and girls. According to the 2023 Sustainable Development Report, income-based technology access gaps stood at 74.4 per cent. Among women specifically, 75.0 per cent in rural areas used the Internet compared to 83.9 per cent in urban areas.[118]

### Women's declining representation in technology jobs restricts their influence on digital innovation and policymaking

Women's representation in technology employment has declined dramatically. The share of women employed in the ICT sector fell from 40.8 per cent in 2020 to just 31.9 per cent in 2022, according to the NSC.[119] This underrepresentation not only narrows women's career opportunities but also hampers gender equality integration in digital technology design and implementation.

Leadership representation remains particularly concerning. A 2021 World Bank study found only 15 per cent of leadership positions in Kyrgyzstan's tech sector were held by women,[120] while the ADB reported only 12 per cent of ICT company leadership positions were held by women.[121] Similarly, a UNDP study found that women founded fewer than 20 per cent of innovative start-ups in 2022.[122]

Investment barriers further compound these challenges. Many investors express distrust towards women entrepreneurs and specifically request male co-founders with strong backgrounds. Nearly every second woman entrepreneur encounters this bias, with stereotypes favouring male leadership leading to cases where women must include men as co-founders to access major incubation and acceleration programmes.[123]

This systematic underrepresentation prevents women's perspectives from being incorporated into digital economy policymaking and strategic planning, resulting in technologies developed without adequately considering the needs of the female population.

### Gender stereotypes and cultural barriers discourage women from pursuing STEM/ICT education and career advancement

Educational choices reflect deep-seated gender biases. According to a 2020 UNICEF study, only 18 per cent of girls choose technical university majors, and merely 7 per cent continue ICT careers.[124] The prevailing societal perception that ICT is predominantly male discourages girls from pursuing education in these disciplines.

Skills development opportunities remain unequal. In 2020, only 30 per cent of women accessed specialized training in new technologies, compared to 50 per cent of men.[125] A 2023 study of 167 schoolgirls aged 14–22 revealed concerning literacy levels: only 41.3 per cent had high technological literacy, 46.7 per cent had moderate levels, and 12 per cent had low levels.[126]

Higher education patterns reflect persistent gaps. Women account for only 31.3 per cent of those with higher STEM education – insufficient for ensuring active participation in digital transformation.[127] Digital skills remain

**117** Sachs, J. et al. 2023. Sustainable Development Report 2023. Cambridge University Press.

**118** NDP (United Nations Development Programme). 2021. Independent Country Programme Evaluation: Kyrgyzstan.

**119** NSC. 2023. Employment in the ICT Sector 2020–2022.

**120** World Bank, Kyrgyz Republic. 2021. Digital Economy Country Assessment.

**121** ADB. 2022. Women in the Kyrgyz Republic's Digital Economy. Manila.

**122** UNDP Kyrgyzstan. 2022. Women in Innovation and Entrepreneurship Report.

**123** Ayperi Kasymbekova, Technowoman Public Foundation.

**124** UNICEF Kyrgyzstan. 2020. Girls in STEM Education in Kyrgyzstan.

**125** Ibraimova, R., D. Matisaeva, A. Sharshenkadyrova, A. Maksüdünov and S. Bozkuş Kahyaoğlu. 2023. "Technological Literacy Level of Girls in Kyrgyzstan," Proceedings of the V International Scientific Conference of Economics and Management Researchers. Baku, 22–25 June.

**126** Technowomen Kyrgyzstan. 2023. Survey on Technological Literacy among Girls (14–22).

**127** NSC. 2022. Education Indicators, by Gender.

limited: only 21 per cent of women aged 15–49 possess basic ICT skills, though this rises to 30 per cent among younger women aged 15–24.[128]

Current enrolment data demonstrate ongoing disparities. As of early 2023, women comprised 33.9 per cent of students in Computing and Information Technology programmes, while men accounted for 66.1 per cent.[129] Despite doubled enrolment in ICT disciplines for both genders, a significant gap persists: 9,145 male versus 5,279 female students.[130]

Structural barriers reinforce these patterns. Lack of family and teacher support often deters girls from choosing STEM programmes or pursuing careers in these fields. Contributing factors include limited mentorship opportunities, weak professional networks and persistent employer biases – all limiting women's access to well-paid digital economy roles.[131]

### Insufficient systematic government and institutional support undermines women's digital inclusion initiatives

National digital capacity remains limited across all demographics. Only 29.7 per cent of youth and adults had ICT skills of any kind as of 2018.[132] Employment prospects for digitally competent youth depend largely on evolving public-private partnerships and job creation, while sustained efforts to expand women's ICT participation will be crucial for realizing their potential and boosting productivity.

Data collection and monitoring remain inadequate, particularly with respect to data on gendered employment in digital transformation and other disaggregated data that would allow assessing gender equality progress in the digital world. There is a systematic absence of sex-disaggregated data across digital sectors. Therefore, current data-collection systems fail to capture gendered impacts of digital transformation, so that the possibilities of evidence-based policy development are limited. Data gaps affect the understanding of intersectional challenges faced by women from ethnic minorities, women with disabilities, rural women and other marginalized groups. Strengthening data systems to support intersectional analysis is essential for developing targeted interventions and measuring progress towards gender-inclusive digital transformation.

While some initiatives demonstrate promise, they lack systematic support. The Akyil Aiyym programme, implemented by the Technowomen Kyrgyzstan Public Foundation, successfully leveraged 75 computer hubs at CEC facilities during non-election periods to train over 600 women in basic computer literacy.[133] However, project leaders identified the need for greater Government support for future phases, highlighting the persistent gap between successful pilot programmes and sustained institutional backing.

## 4. GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Kyrgyzstan's legal framework addressing gender-based violence has evolved significantly in recent years. The 2017 revised Law on Prevention and Protection Against Family Violence[134] expanded protective mechanisms, allowing any individual to report domestic violence and broadening mandated responder categories to 17 entities, while introducing "economic violence" as a distinct abuse category. Critical 2024 Criminal Code amendments eliminated reconciliation-based case closures for rape, prohibited probation in rape cases, abolished sexual violence statute limitations, and removed probationary

128 NSC. 2020. Monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals Indicators in the Kyrgyz Republic 2014–2018. Statistical Compendium.

129 NSC. 2024. Women and Men of the Kyrgyz Republic 2019–2023.

130 Ibid.

131 World Bank. "Share of Graduates by Field, Female (%) — STEM" (Gender Data Portal).

132 NSC. "Open Data — Category 3025." Opendata Portal, Bishkek.

133 Technowomen Kyrgyzstan. Akyil Aiyym Programme Report, Bishkek. 2022.

134 Government of Kyrgyzstan. 2017. Law of the Kyrgyz Republic on Prevention and Protection Against Family Violence, No. 63 of 27 April 2017. CBD database.

supervision and bail options.[135] The Government also adopted a National Action Plan to Prevent Child and Forced Marriages (2023–2024)[136] and established an Inter-agency Instruction on Coordinated Response[137] to address violence risks during emergencies.

The country has expressed commitment to international standards through regular participation in UN treaty body reporting processes and adoption of national implementation plans to follow-up on UN Human Rights Committee recommendations. However, significant implementation gaps remained, particularly regarding CEDAW recommendations, including amending Criminal Code Article 161 for a consent-based rape definition protecting all women, criminalizing incitement to hatred based on sexual orientation and gender identity, and recognizing these factors as aggravating circumstances in hate-motivated crimes.

Amendments of national legislation, particularly the Labour Code, are required to align the national framework with C 190. While some reforms of the Labour Code have been initiated, it lacks a clear definition of violence and harassment, efficient labour inspections, and a national occupational health and safety system to address and prevent violence and harassment in the workplace. There is also a lack of guidance on the role of employers in eliminating violence and harassment in the workplace, and of mechanisms for reporting and remediation. The Ministry has developed a clear action plan on the implementation of C190 and the key elements of C190 have been integrated into the draft National Action Plan on Gender Equality.

Despite this legislative foundation, implementation challenges persisted across the justice system. Key issues identified included limited institutional capacity among the 17 mandated responder entities and insufficient access to qualified legal assistance for sexual violence survivors.[138] The most widespread forms of violence continued to include domestic violence, discriminatory marriage practices (child marriage, forced marriage, bride kidnapping) and sexual violence, indicating that legal reforms have not transformed the underlying drivers of gender-based violence.

## Key Issues

### Gender-based violence persists, requiring continued legal and administrative attention

The number of registered cases of GBV have been rising in recent years, with intensified legal response:[139]

In 2024, 12,001 temporary protection orders were issued (11,227 for women, 529 for men, 245 for children). Administrative protocols under Article 70 jumped from 2,663 in 2023 to 4,298 in 2024 – a 61 per cent increase.[140] This development was a result of the 2017 Family Violence Law,[141] which was welcomed by CEDAW as positive legislative development to criminalize domestic violence and enforce protection orders.

Court outcomes on domestic violence demonstrate improvement but indicate systemic problems. In 2024, court cases related to domestic violence reached 4,320, nearly double the 2022 figure.[142] Conviction rates rose to 86 per cent, while dismissed cases dropped to 8 per cent.[143] However, approximately 80 per cent of scheduled court hearings were postponed (20 per cent due to judicial decisions, 50 per cent due to lawyer absences, and the remainder due to absent

135 Government of Kyrgyzstan. 2024. Law of the Kyrgyz Republic on Amendments to Certain Legislative Acts, No. 72 of 15 February 2024.

136 Government of Kyrgyzstan. 2023. National Action Plan to Prevent Child and Forced Marriages 2023–2024.

137 Government of Kyrgyzstan. 2023. Inter-agency Instruction on Coordinated Response in Emergencies, Government Resolution No. 152 of 10 March 2023.

138 UNDP Kyrgyzstan. 2022. Assessment of Access to Justice for Survivors of Gender-Based Violence in Kyrgyzstan.

139 NSC. Undated. "Reported cases of domestic violence, 2022–2025," Open Data Portal. https://www.stat.kg/en/opendata/category/3025/

140 NSC. 2025. Cases of domestic violence: protection orders and administrative protocols, 2022–2024. Open Data Portal.

141 CEDAW Committee. 2021. Concluding Observations on the Sixth Periodic Report of Kyrgyzstan, CEDAW/C/KGZ/CO/6.

142 NSC. 2024. Women and Men of the Kyrgyz Republic: 2019-2023.

143 Ibid.

prosecutors). Research shows that judges' and defense attorneys' behaviour during victim questioning is often degrading, causing survivors to withdraw from proceedings. Experts emphasize the need to systematize judicial practice.[144]

### Institutional response and survivor support remain severely inadequate

Only 16 centres nationwide serve the entire country, with 13,244 women seeking assistance in 2024 (21.4 per cent increase from 2023).[145] Fifteen centres are NGO-run, facing financial instability and through short-term contracts under the State social contracting programme.[146] Approximately 10 out of 18 crisis centres receive State support, but limited scale, short-term contracts and unclear role division between the State and NGOs hindered sustainability.[147]

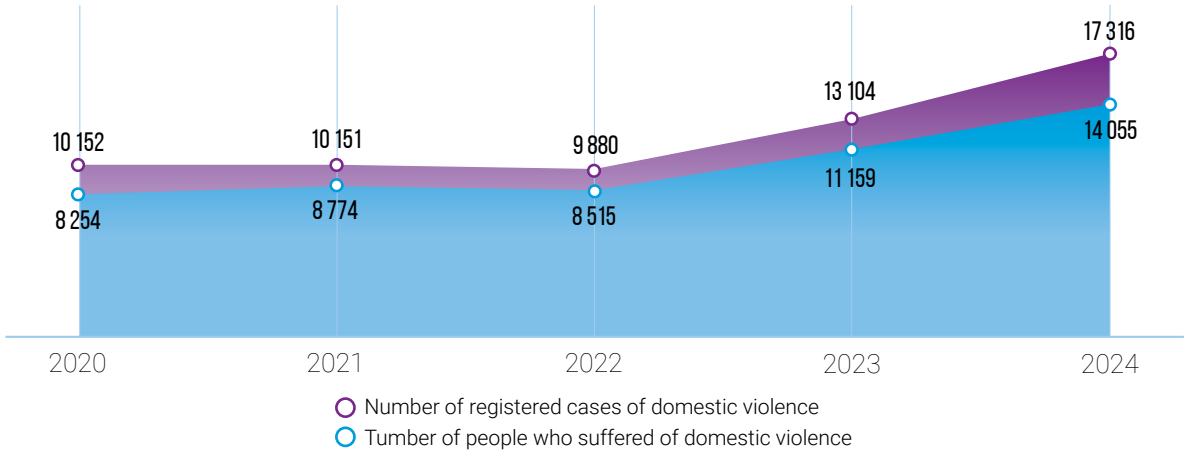
Most centres do not comply with National Service Standards adopted in 2018, lacking systematic case management, which is vital for documenting GBV instances and crafting tailored support strategies. Services remain reactive and tactical rather than strategic and holistic, with weak infrastructure and insufficient staff capacity.[148]

The ongoing "Solidarity Bus" initiative (since 2016) reached over 39,000 individuals with USD 6.7 million investment so far, providing legal documentation, social transfers access and GBV referrals.[149] However, the Law on State-Guaranteed Legal Aid does not ensure qualified legal assistance for sexual violence survivors regardless of financial situation.

### Data gaps undermine response effectiveness

Independent experts attribute increasing numbers of domestic violence reports to both improved reporting, while persistent barriers remain, including complex legal procedures and societal stigma. Data from administrative records and crisis centres cannot capture the full scale of violence due to stigma, fear of retaliation and institutional distrust leading to significant underestimation.

**FIGURE 3:**
**Domestic violence cases, in 2020-2024**




144 OSCE Programme Office in Bishkek. 2023. Judicial Practice in Domestic Violence Cases in Kyrgyzstan: Analytical Report.

145 NSC. 2024. Women and Men of the Kyrgyz Republic: 2019-2023.

146 National Institute for Standards and Metrology. Standards for social services: consultative and preventive centres for women

147 UNFPA Kyrgyzstan. 2024. Mapping of Crisis Centres for Survivors of Gender-Based Violence in Kyrgyzstan.

148 Standards for social services: consultative and preventive centres for women, National Institute for Standards and Metrology (NISM), Kyrgyz Republic, available at: http://standarts.nism.gov.kg/ru/catalog/856-sotsialynoe-obsluzhivanie-naseleniya-sotsialynie-uslugi-konsulytativno-profilakticheskih-tsentrov-zhenshtinam/show

149 UN Women Kyrgyzstan. 2023. "Solidarity Bus Initiative: Mobile Services for Women in Remote Areas".

### Prevention of gender-based violence remains underdeveloped

Kyrgyzstan's approach to addressing gender-based violence demonstrates an emphasis on crisis response and legal remedies, while prevention strategies remain underdeveloped and fragmented. Current prevention efforts are limited to isolated initiatives such as the Spotlight Initiative's community-based Gender Action Learning System (GALS) training in two provinces aimed at shifting social norms, capacity-building programmes for justice sector personnel and religious leadership interventions on child marriage.[150]

These efforts appear insufficient in scale and scope to address the systematic drivers of GBV, particularly given rising violence statistics and deeply entrenched patriarchal norms that continue to normalize various forms of violence against women and girls.

### Digital technologies contribute to greater visibility of GBV while also fuelling an increase in digital violence

Women and girls increasingly share GBV experiences on Facebook and Instagram. Nearly all participants in surveyed GBV cases reported learning about shelters and crisis centres through informal networks and social media rather than formal referral systems.

A mobile application developed with American University for Central Asia (AUCA)'s Center for Critical Gender Studies enabled survivors to safely disclose incidents via SOS function and receive rights information. A 2021 evaluation confirmed trained community actors actively used the app to raise awareness and support peers, reaching individuals beyond institutional service networks.[151]

However, technology-facilitated violence presents new challenges for law enforcement and judicial institutions. A recent study found 53.2 per cent of respondents experienced technology-facilitated violence in their lifetime. Over one-third encountered violence on social media platforms, and 1 in 10 via email or messaging applications. Common forms included non-consensual image-sharing, threats via messaging apps, online sexual harassment, cyberstalking, impersonation and financial harm. Young girls faced particular vulnerability to sexual exploitation, harassment and bullying online.[152] There is a pressing need for new legal protections, enhanced digital literacy and safeguards to uphold women's rights in digital spaces, considering the rapidly evolving technological landscape.

### Harmful marital practices, including forced marriage, bride kidnapping and child marriage, continue despite legal reforms

Since 2019, so-called bride kidnapping is classified as a serious criminal offense subject to public prosecution. Studies estimated over 20 per cent of all marriages involved bride abduction, with rural women twice as likely to

## IN FOCUS

**DOMESTIC VIOLENCE:**



**96%**

of victim of domestic violence are women



**93%**

of perpetrators are men

**150** UNFPA Kyrgyzstan. 2021. Engaging Religious Leaders to Prevent Child Marriage in Kyrgyzstan.

**151** Kim, E., F. Karioris and G. Neobis. 2021. Educating on Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in Kyrgyzstan (2017–2019): development and deployment of a mobile SOS application for survivors: UN Women Evaluation Report: Final Evaluation – Across Generations and Gender Borders.

**152** UN Women. 2023. "Europe and Central Asia region is steadfast in tackling technology-facilitated violence against women and girls and creating safer digital spaces."

be kidnapped for marriage.[153] Underreporting was widespread. In 2023, 13 cases were registered with 12 brought to court.[154] In the first half of 2024, 6 cases were reported with five resulting in convictions.[155]

According to the 2023 Multi-Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS), 11.8 per cent of women aged 20–24 were married before age 18 (slight decrease from 12.9 per cent in 2018).[156] Rural-urban disparities persisted: 14.1 per cent rural vs. 8.4 per cent urban women married before age 18. The proportion married before age 15 remained unchanged at 0.3 per cent.[157]

While bride kidnapping faced public prosecution, violations of minimum marriage age were prosecuted under quasi-public charges requiring victim/guardian complaints and allowing termination if parties reconciled. This created challenges when parents – often among the accused –must file complaints against those including the groom, minor's parents and officiating cleric. The possibility of reconciliation was abolished with the 2024 Law on Amendments to Certain Legislative Acts (Criminal and Criminal Procedure Code).

Religious and community responses demonstrate mixed results. The Spiritual Administration of Muslims issued a fatwa prohibiting imams from performing religious marriages with minors.[158] Anecdotal reports suggest possible declines due to increased fear of legal consequences, but these trends have not been substantiated by systematic studies or official data. Concerns remain about continued practices in communities where parental involvement or avoidance of prosecution is a factor.

### Women in public spaces and from vulnerable or marginalized groups face heightened risks of GBV and limited access to services

Nearly 90 per cent of women report experiencing unwanted touching, verbal abuse or harassment using minibuses, buses, trolleys or taxis. Yet only 3 per cent sought help from law enforcement or drivers, underscoring the urgent need for systematic action to ensure safety and dignity in public transit.[159] The prevalence and negative impact of gender-based political violence and of sexual harassment and violence in the world of work are discussed in sections 5A and 5B, respectively.

Current legislation and administrative action lack adequate mechanisms for persons with disabilities, people living with HIV and LGBTQI+ individuals. Women with disabilities experience systematic violence. Studies confirm violence against girls and women with disabilities was frequently underreported due to deeply rooted ableist discrimination.[160] Law enforcement reluctantly investigated GBV involving persons with disabilities. Lack of accessible shelters and specialized services increased vulnerability to repeat abuse and neglect.[161]

Lesbian, bisexual and transgender women faced physical, psychological, sexual and economic violence from relatives, homophobic individuals and law enforcement, but incitement to hatred and violent attacks based on sexual orientation and gender identity were not criminalized, nor were sexual orientation and gender identity recognized as aggravating factors in hate-motivated crimes. The definition of rape did not specifically address lesbian, bisexual and transgender women. Research demonstrates that 94 per cent of police officers believe homosexuality has no place in

**153** Open Society Foundation. 2020. Bride Kidnapping in Kyrgyzstan: Research and Statistics.

**154** News312. 2024. "In 2023, 13 cases of bride kidnapping were registered," 7 February. https://news312.kg/news/1817_v_2023_gody_zaregistrirovano_13_faktov_ala_kachyy.html

**155** Sputnik Kyrgyzstan. 2024. "Six cases of bride kidnapping were registered in Kyrgyzstan in the first half of the year — Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Kyrgyz Republic." 31 July. https://ru.sputnik.kg/20240731/kyrgyzstan-pohishchenie-nevesty-ugolovnoe-delo-1087485909.html

**156** NSC & UNICEF. 2024. Kyrgyz Republic Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2023 – Survey Findings Report.

**157** Girls Not Brides. 2023. Child Marriage Atlas: Kyrgyzstan; UNICEF. 2023. Child marriage data, by residence.

**158** UN Kyrgyzstan. 2018. "Law prohibition of child marriages entering its active phase of implementation," 13 February. https://kyrgyzstan.un.org/en/12868-law-prohibition-child-marriages-entering-its-active-phase-implementation

**159** Youth Human Rights Bureau, under the Ombudsman's Office, School of Social Activism, Ombudsman Institute. 2023. Study on harassment in public transportation among women and girls.

**160** UNDP Kyrgyzstan. 2021. Gender-Based Violence and Women with Disabilities in Kyrgyzstan: Analytical Report.

**161** Human Rights Watch. 2023. Abused by Relatives, Ignored by the State: Domestic Violence Against and Neglect of Women and Girls with Disabilities in Kyrgyzstan.

society –highlighting pervasive stigma leading to discriminatory practices and institutional justice barriers. Documented cases included threats, surveillance, extortion, assaults, illegal family detention and "corrective rape," including ritualized violence by religious figures.[162]

## 5. WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY

Kyrgyzstan's WPS agenda operates within a comprehensive international normative framework anchored by UNSCR 1325 and subsequent resolutions (1820, 1888, 1889, 1960, 2106, 2122, 2242, and 2467). This framework is complemented by CEDAW General Recommendation No. 30 and the Beijing Platform for Action, which designates "Women and armed conflict" as a critical area requiring women's meaningful participation in all peace processes.

At the national level, the fourth National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 (2022–2024)[163] established four strategic objectives: strengthening women's peacebuilding participation and leadership; ensuring protection and support services for violence-affected women and children; promoting gender balance in security institutions; and facilitating post-conflict recovery in border regions. The NAP aligned with broader national frameworks, including the Gender Equality Strategy and National Development Programmes, supported by constitutional guarantees and the Law on State Guarantees of Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities.

However, implementation demonstrates significant gaps between policy commitments and practice. National security discourse continues to frame women primarily as vulnerable victims rather than active peace agents, while insufficient institutional mechanisms and dedicated funding undermine effective NAP implementation. The Inter-Agency Working Group developed a new National Action Plan for 2025–2027 emphasizing enhanced women's participation in peace processes and institutionalizing the WPS agenda across sectors.

The UN CEDAW Committee, following its fifth periodic review of Kyrgyzstan, recommended that the State allocate adequate human, technical and financial resources to ensure the effective implementation and monitoring of the National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325, and report on the results of these efforts in its next periodic report.

Geographical and demographic factors render the WPS agenda particularly pressing for Kyrgyzstan. Approximately 94 per cent of the country's territory is mountainous, with less than 7 per cent arable land concentrated in the fertile Fergana Valley. Population density in this region reaches 360 people per square kilometre – 12 times higher than the national average – creating intense competition over scarce land and water resources and substantial potential for cross-border conflicts.[164] A long-running border conflict with Tajikistan was ended only in March 2025.

### Key Issues

#### The NAP on UNSCR 1325 remains formalistic and disconnected from national development priorities

Implementation of the NAP on UNSCR 1325 remains peripheral to national development priorities. The NAP remains a stand-alone document with limited integration into broader national strategies and budgeting processes, undermining its potential impact on peace and security outcomes.[165]

Monitoring of the 2022–2024 NAP demonstrated limited awareness among officials regarding the WPS agenda and its legal framework. Budget screening indicated that no government entity had allocated dedicated funding for NAP 1325

**162** Eurasian Coalition on Health, Rights, Gender and Sexual Diversity (ECOM). 2018. Attitudes of Key Service Providers towards LGBT People in Kyrgyzstan.

**163** Government of the Kyrgyz Republic, Fourth National Action Plan on the Implementation of UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (2022–2024), Bishkek, 2022, available at: https://www.gov.kg/ru/post/s/26855

**164** Economic Cooperation Organization Regional Child Care and Family Support, "Kyrgyz Republic country profile," available at: https://www.ecorccfs.org/en/countries/kyrgyz-republic/25aa3013-c041-4aad-8c67-c2ba30f053be/783dc387-c883-4ffa-bdc9-47dc9876555b

**165** UN Kyrgyzstan. 2021. Report on United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 and its Implementation in Kyrgyzstan.

implementation. This absence of resources, combined with weak political commitment, demonstrated that WPS remained marginalized within broader development and security programming.

Historical patterns confirmed persistent challenges. The first NAP (2012–2015) achieved only 60 per cent completion due to funding shortages and weak coordination.[166] The 2016–2017 cycle demonstrated improved completion rates (32 of 34 activities) but relied entirely on existing ministerial resources. The 2018–2020 plan review found that while some results were achieved, most activities remained formal rather than substantive.[167]

Some specific initiatives were undertaken during implementation periods. In Osh City, a task force was established under the mayor's office and local action plans were developed for border regions. The Forum of Women Parliamentarians issued a road map on WPS issues. With international support, training sessions were conducted for local self-governments and security agencies, and monitoring forms were introduced in pilot districts.[168] However, these isolated efforts could not compensate for systemic resource and commitment gaps.

### Women remain severely underrepresented in decision-making positions within security and justice sectors

Women's representation in security and justice leadership remains critically low across all institutions. As of 2022, women held only 46 per cent of leadership positions in law enforcement –the highest among security agencies – while representation dropped dramatically in other sectors: 5–10 per cent in customs and prosecution services, and merely 6 per cent in the Ministry of Defense.

The situation demonstrates regression rather than progress. Between 2019 and 2022, women's representation in the Ministry of Internal Affairs leadership declined from 5.7 to 4.6 per cent.[169] Current figures across security agencies indicate persistent exclusion of women: 5.6 per cent in Customs, 5 per cent in the Prosecutor's Office, 6.7 per cent in Border Protection and 6 per cent in Defence.[170] While the penitentiary service (24.2 per cent) and Ministry of Emergency Situations (21 per cent) demonstrate relatively higher representation, these remained far below parity and highlight the exceptional nature of women's leadership in traditional security institutions.[171]

These patterns reflect structural barriers and entrenched stereotypes that contribute to excluding women from decision-making roles where their perspectives on peace and security could prove crucial for institutional effectiveness and conflict prevention.

### Cross-border conflicts demonstrate both women's vulnerability and their untapped potential as peacebuilding leaders

Kyrgyzstan experienced significant cross-border violence with Tajikistan in 2021 and 2022, with major outbreaks from 29 April to 1 May 2021, and 14–17 September 2022. The September 2022 escalation resulted in 269 casualties, 63 deaths and the displacement of over 142,000 people – predominantly women and children. The conflict destroyed over 600 homes and dozens of public facilities, highlighting the disproportionate impact on civilian populations.[172]

There is very little data on the involvement of women and local community activists, civil society organizations and women's initiatives in the response to hostilities in the Batken region. Anecdotal evidence confirms that women activists, volunteers and members of affected communities have organized population evacuations, temporary shelter and the

166 Ibid.

167 Ibid.

168 UN Women. 2021. TRANSFORM — The Women, Peace and Security National Action Plans Issue, 21.

169 NSC. 2024. Statistical Yearbook of the Kyrgyz Republic 2023.

170 Ibid.

171 NSC. 2022. Women and Men of the Kyrgyz Republic: 2017–2021.

172 Human Rights Watch. 2022. "Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan Border Clashes Prove Deadly for Civilians," 21 September. https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/09/21/kyrgyzstan-tajikistan-border-clashes-prove-deadly-civilians

collection of food, clothing and hygiene supplies, considering the specific needs of women and children (e.g., diapers, sanitary pads, etc.).

The conflicts demonstrated women's remarkable capacity for peacebuilding leadership. In Aksai village, one of the most conflict-affected areas in Batken oblast, women's initiative groups collaborated with local councils to develop a comprehensive Joint Plan for Peaceful and Non-Conflict Development in 2022.[173] This plan established community protocols for early warning systems, evacuation procedures, emergency preparedness measures and information dissemination about evacuation routes and emergency kit contents.

This grass-roots response demonstrates how women can effectively localize the WPS agenda when given agency and support. Their lived experience of conflict, combined with community networks and leadership skills, positioned them as indispensable actors in building resilience and preventing escalation.

### Grass-roots women's initiatives drive localized WPS implementation despite limited institutional support

Women's organizations and grass-roots activists are pioneering innovative approaches to WPS implementation at the local level, often with minimal institutional backing. The 2024 simulation exercises in Batken oblast exemplified this trend – over 600 participants, including local activists and representatives from key government bodies, tested emergency protection mechanisms for women and children. These exercises indicated critical gaps in inter-agency coordination while demonstrating women's leadership in crisis preparedness.[174]

A 2020 assessment highlighted the proactive role of women and women-led NGOs in local action, such as the development of so-called "community security passports" in the Leilek District, which is intended to serve as a practical guide in situations of emergency or conflict. In some aiyl okmotus (local government units), residents received training in conflict-sensitive negotiation techniques and emergency preparedness measures.

These grass-roots efforts achieve concrete institutional results. Women's organizations in Batken successfully collaborate with local authorities to integrate WPS principles into municipal governance. Nine Local Self-Government Bodies developed comprehensive socioeconomic development plans incorporating gender equality, climate resilience and local security considerations.[175] These plans serve as tools for sustainable territorial development, taking into account all aspects of residents' lives, including safety and peacebuilding, while enabling effective resource-allocation towards conflict prevention.

This bottom-up momentum contrasts sharply with top-down implementation failures. While national institutions struggle with formalistic approaches and resource constraints, women-led initiatives demonstrate how WPS principles could be effectively operationalized through community networks and local partnerships. However, the lack of systematic integration into government structures limits scaling and sustainability potential.

## 6. GENDER EQUALITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE, INCLUDING WATER AND OTHER NATURAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

While Kyrgyzstan's constitutional framework establishes gender equality principles and the Law on State Guarantees of Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities provides comprehensive anti-discrimination provisions, the country lacks dedicated climate legislation that explicitly addresses gender-specific impacts or women's contributions to climate action. However, climate policy frameworks increasingly integrate gender dimensions

173 UNDP Kyrgyzstan. 2024. "Initiative Groups Foster Inclusive Decision-Making and a Culture of Dialogue for Peace," 8 October. https://www.undp.org/kyrgyzstan/stories/initiative-groups-foster-inclusive-decision-making-and-culture-dialogue-peace

174 UN Women Kyrgyzstan. 2024. Simulation Exercise on Women, Peace and Security in Batken.

175 UN Kyrgyzstan. 2023. Integrating Women, Peace and Security into Local Governance: Case Studies from Batken.

through the Concept for Long-Term Actions to Achieve Carbon Neutrality by 2050[176] and national climate commitments under the Paris Agreement, which include a dedicated "Gender Aspects of Climate Implementation" section.[177] The Green Economy Development Programme (2024–2028)[178] incorporates responses to climate change with gender markers, while National Adaptation Plans are under development for agriculture, emergency response, forests and biodiversity, and healthcare in targeted regions.

Between 2022 and 2024, implementation progressed from planning to piloting climate policies that address women's needs. The Gender Policy Department, collaborating with the Ministry of Environment and UNDP, completed gender-focused reviews of climate strategies and conducted regional vulnerability assessments highlighting specific risks for rural women and youth.[179] A Cabinet-endorsed monitoring mechanism began tracking gender-sensitive adaptation indicators in early 2024, achieving targets such as ensuring women constitute at least 30 per cent of energy-efficiency loan beneficiaries.[180] However, implementation remains limited with full national roll out pending; specific legal provisions for climate policies that address women's needs in water and natural resource management are yet to be developed.

Kyrgyzstan's international commitments create a comprehensive framework for climate policies that address women's needs through multiple instruments. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development establishes gender-responsive targets under SDG 13.b to promote climate planning mechanisms focusing on women, youth and marginalized communities, with linkages to water access (SDG 6) and energy (SDG 7). The Paris Agreement, ratified in 2019, mandates climate policies that address women's needs in adaptation and capacity-building, while the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015–2030) emphasizes gender-responsive disaster risk governance. Additionally, the Enhanced Lima Work Programme on Gender and its Gender Action Plan provide specific mechanisms for advancing gender equality in climate policymaking and programming, creating binding international obligations that form part of the national legal system under Article 6 of the Constitution.

## Key Issues

### Climate policies remain gender-neutral despite systematic exclusion of women from natural resource governance structures

Kyrgyzstan's agriculture-based economy, employing around 20 per cent of the workforce, is highly vulnerable to climate change, especially water scarcity and land degradation. However, national climate policies still largely overlook gender dynamics, relying on technical solutions like flood infrastructure while neglecting social inequalities. Women are systematically excluded from key governance bodies such as Water User Associations and pasture committees, due to structural barriers like land ownership requirements. According to 2024 national statistics, women held only 18.5 per cent of land titles, yet over 70 per cent of rural women were active in agriculture. Additionally, 46 per cent of employed women worked in the sector, compared to just 17.5 per cent of men, highlighting a clear gap between contribution and control over resources.[181] Women's systematic exclusion from natural resource governance (detailed in Chapter 5B) adds to the gender impact of climate change.

Despite growing climate threats, national climate policies in Kyrgyzstan continues to be framed as gender-neutral, focusing primarily on infrastructure and technical solutions. However, this neutrality masks a deeper issue: the exclusion of women from climate-related governance

176 EKOIS. 2024. Concept for Achieving Carbon Neutrality in the Kyrgyz Republic.

177 Kyrgyzstan United Nations. 2021. Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC): Gender Aspects 2021.

178 Ministry of Economy, Kyrgyzstan. 2024. Midterm Forecast and Economic Strategy Document, available at:

179 United Nations in Kyrgyzstan. 2022. "Road to Gender Equality: Kyrgyzstan continues to integrate gender-sensitive indicators into national systems." UN News, September. https://kyrgyzstan.un.org/en/262762-road-gender-equality-kyrgyzstan-continues-integrate-gender-sensitive-indicators-national.

180 EBRD. 2024. Kyrgyz Republic Country Strategy 2024–29.

181 NSC. 2024. Women and Men of the Kyrgyz Republic: 2019-2023.

structures is not the result of oversight, but institutional arrangements that reflect and reinforc existing gender hierarchies. The absence of gender analysis means that responses to climate change frequently fail to address the specific needs and vulnerabilities of women. For example, programmes responding to climate change often emphasize technical solutions such as the construction of flood protection infrastructure while neglecting social aspects like improving women's access to resources or strengthening their role in natural resource management.

### Women face restricted access to productive resources that are depleting due to climate change

Limited access to productive resources heightens vulnerability to climate change, with poor households disproportionately affected by its impacts and natural disasters. In Kyrgyzstan, women are predominantly engaged in small-scale farming and subsistence agriculture, which limits their ability to adopt new technologies or influence market trends. Gender disparities in access to resources including energy, credit and institutional networks remain significant and exacerbate women's marginalization.

Because of women's discrimination in access to land, finance and education, only a small proportion of women farmers have access to the credit required to expand their agricultural production, severely limiting their prospects for sustainable development. Customary and institutionalized practices related to resource ownership and use often exclude women from exercising their rights such as in pasture management. Women are not sufficiently involved in pasture governance and often lack information on communal pastures and reforms.

Since the opening of irrigation canals often requires physical strength or occurs at night, these tasks were traditionally viewed as male responsibilities. Consequently, men dominate decision-making in Water User Associations. In regions with high male labour migration, women-headed households contribute to canal maintenance yet still face limited access to irrigation for their farms and land plots.

### Women's critical knowledge for building climate resilience remains underutilized in formal decision-making processes

Women's unique knowledge and lived experience, particularly at the local level, related to agriculture, conservation and resource management makes their inclusion in climate action and governance processes essential for effective, informed responses. Despite this potential, their knowledge remains underrecognized and underutilized and their involvement in decision-making and natural resource governance limited.

Some noteworthy examples of women's leadership in biodiversity conservation exist. In the village of Saruu, a micro-reserve was established thanks to the initiative of a women's group from the local kenesh (local elected council). The project mobilized women and youth to promote sustainable resource use and restore the floodplain ecosystems of the Juku River. This experience expanded to the Sary Jaz and Karkyra areas in eastern Issyk-Kul region, where, since September 2021, a network of four micro-reserves had been established.

Capacity-building of women-led NGOs particularly in Batken, Osh and Jalal-Abad regions enables participants to propose local solutions to climate risks such as drought-induced livelihood loss, water scarcity and rising disease incidence. Local women's organizations play a transformative role in facilitating the adoption of climate-resilient agricultural practices and the sharing of climate information, resources and livelihood opportunities.

### Women experience disproportionate climate impacts due to their social roles and intersecting vulnerabilities

Between 2022 and 2024, Kyrgyzstan experienced more than 20 major mudflow floods, causing extensive damage across multiple regions, particularly in rural areas where most of the victims were women and children. Approximately 20 per cent of women reported difficulties in accessing household

water supplies during natural disasters, compared to only 4 per cent of men.[182]

While women report feeling equally vulnerable to climate change as men in quantitative surveys, most participants in focus group discussions emphasize that climate change impacts women more severely. Women's lived experiences reflect deeper impacts due to their social roles, intersecting vulnerabilities, reproductive health concerns, limited access to resources and a lack of decision-making power.

Male labour migration abroad has increased women's roles in family-level decision-making as they assumed greater responsibilities for household and agricultural tasks. However, this has also heightened their physical and emotional burdens, increasing both economic and social vulnerability. Domestic violence significantly exacerbates women's vulnerability. Yet, the linkages between climate-related shocks and increased domestic violence have not yet been systematically studied in Kyrgyzstan. International data indicates, however, that extreme weather events such as droughts, floods or resource scarcity are correlated with higher rates of domestic violence due to heightened household tensions, economic insecurity and food shortages.

### Gender disparities in education and digital access limit women's participation in climate solutions

According to its 2021 national climate commitments, Kyrgyzstan prioritizes public health, education and gender equality as critical intersectoral dimensions of responses to climate change. Education, particularly for women and girls, was identified as a cross-cutting enabler for resilience-building. Yet, as of 2023, only 20.3 per cent of students enrolled in the field of engineering, manufacturing, and construction in higher education were women, while men accounted for 79.7 per cent, reflecting persistent gender disparities in access to technical and energy-related professions.

Gender gaps in digital access and the disproportionate burden of unpaid care and domestic work constrain women's ability to participate in climate education and green skills training. As of 2023, only 64.4per cent of women aged 15–74 reported using the Internet, compared to 74.2 per cent of men. Additionally, because of their unpaid domestic and care responsibilities, women's time and mobility to engage in educational or training opportunities is more limited.

As the country intensifies its focus on climate education, modules on sustainable development and 'green' skills have reached more than 800 educators.[183] Eighteen pilot initiatives in rural communities were implemented for youth and women, with 70 per cent of the participants being women. Special climate courses have been developed at Osh and Naryn State Universities in teacher training programmes, where women traditionally predominate. However, in classical energy disciplines, male dominance persisted due to entrenched stereotypes.

## 7. SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS OF WOMEN

Kyrgyzstan's reproductive health framework operates within international and domestic legal contexts establishing binding obligations for women's healthcare access. CEDAW obligates the State to eliminate healthcare discrimination and ensure appropriate pregnancy, childbirth and postnatal services, including free care where necessary. The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights affirms the right to the highest attainable standard of health, while the Beijing Platform establishes women's right to control their sexuality and reproductive health decisions without coercion.

Domestically, Constitutional Article 26 recognizes motherhood as subject to State protection, while the Law on State Guarantees establishes comprehensive anti-discrimination provisions for healthcare access. The Law on

**182** UN Women and partners. 2021. The Impact of COVID-19 on Women's and Men's Lives and Livelihoods in Central Asia: Evidence from the Kyrgyz Republic.

**183** UN Women. 2025. Beijing +30 National Review Report: Kyrgyzstan [in Russian].

Public Health Protection[184] grants free medical assistance during pregnancy and childbirth, and Labour Code provisions protect pregnant women from employment discrimination while ensuring compliance with ILO Convention 103 regarding maternity leave and benefits.

A critical legislative gap emerged in 2024 with the repeal of the Law on Reproductive Rights of Citizens and Guarantees for Their Realization.[185] This removal eliminated explicit guarantees for comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services, confidentiality and reproductive autonomy from stand-alone legislation, potentially weakening accountability mechanisms. Current implementation relies on the National Reproductive Health Strategy (2021–2030) and sectoral provisions, but enforcement is uneven.

## Key Issues

### Healthcare system failures create comprehensive barriers to women's reproductive care access

Kyrgyzstan's healthcare system excludes women from reproductive care through interconnected failures spanning insurance coverage, infrastructure and service-delivery. Only 35.3 per cent of women aged 15–49 had health insurance coverage, with rural women (27.7 per cent) and adolescents (24.6 per cent) facing the lowest rates.[186] This represents a regression from the Mandatory Health Insurance Fund's 2015 introduction, as coverage fell from 76 per cent in 2016 to 69 per cent in 2019, affecting vulnerable groups, including low-income women, internal migrants and rural residents the most.[187]

These coverage gaps directly restrict reproductive health access. Only 40.2 per cent of women use modern contraceptive methods, with usage dropping significantly among low-income, rural and uninsured populations.[188] Despite nominal 50 per cent reimbursement eligibility, inadequate public financing forces women to purchase contraceptive methods at full cost.[189]

Infrastructure challenges compounded insurance failures. Rural healthcare workforce shortages were severe, with significant deficits in the competencies of medical personnel and transportation barriers preventing basic service access. Service delivery gaps further undermined existing policies through administrative reforms lacking awareness campaigns or accountability mechanisms. The absence of gender-sensitive communication frameworks created disconnects between policy development and implementation support, systematically excluding vulnerable women from comprehensive reproductive healthcare.

### Kyrgyzstan records Central Asia's highest maternal death rates, at 46.5 per 100,000 live births

Kyrgyzstan's high maternal death rates underscore persistent structural inequities affecting vulnerable women. Geographic disparities demonstrate the depth of the crisis: 73 per cent of maternal deaths in 2024 occurred in rural areas where emergency obstetric care, transportation and referral systems remained severely limited.[190] Only 89.5 per cent of women received skilled antenatal care, falling below 83 per cent in rural areas.[191]

Care quality failures are systematic. A national enquiry demonstrated substandard care in 58 per cent of maternal deaths through diagnostic delays, severity recognition failures and clinical

**184** Government of Kyrgyzstan. 2021. Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic of 5 May 2021, Article 26.

**185** Government of Kyrgyzstan. 2008. Law of the Kyrgyz Republic on State Guarantees of Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities for Men and Women, No. 184 of 4 August 2008.

**186** NSC. 2024. Women and Men of the Kyrgyz Republic: 2019–2023.

**187** Mandatory Health Insurance Fund. 2020. Annual Report 2019.

**188** UNFPA Kyrgyzstan. 2023. Contraceptive Prevalence and Family Planning in Kyrgyzstan: Analytical Brief.

**189** Ibid.

**190** UNICEF. 2023. Kyrgyzstan Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) 2023: Key Findings Report.

**191** Ibid.

protocol non-compliance.[192] Cause-specific analysis indicated 39 per cent of deaths attributed to unclassified obstetric conditions, 15 per cent to hypertensive disorders, and 15 per cent to post-partum complications, underscoring gaps in antenatal screening and emergency care.[193]

Underlying health conditions create dangerous risk combinations. Anaemia among pregnant women increased from 30 per cent in 2021 to 30.7 per cent in 2022.[194] Poor maternal nutrition and systematic emergency response gaps compound structural challenges. COVID-19 exposed system fragility with 61 maternal deaths in 2020 (13 urban, 48 rural), demonstrating how health shocks disproportionately impacted rural women.[195]

### Rising HIV transmission among women signals deepening gender inequalities in sexual health

An alarming change of patterns is seen in the feminization of HIV in Kyrgyzstan, with heterosexual transmission increasing from 66 to 88 per cent between 2018–2022.[196] This trend directly correlates with GBV and structural inequalities, indicating that women have limited power to negotiate condom use due to coercive norms, male-dominated decision-making and widespread misogyny.

The feminization of HIV reflects deeper power imbalances, requiring interventions tailored to women's lived realities. Marginalized populations face compounded discrimination, with women with disabilities, those living with HIV and LGBTQI+ individuals severely restricted in accessing sexual and reproductive health services.[197] No supportive programmes exist for these vulnerable groups despite significant legal, institutional and cultural barriers.

This changing pattern underscores the urgent need for gender-transformative interventions addressing underlying power dynamics, strengthening women's sexual decision-making agency and ensuring accessible, stigma-free healthcare services regardless of identity or circumstances.

### Adolescent birth rates remain 2.5 times higher than regional averages due to inadequate sexuality education

Kyrgyzstan's adolescent birth rate of 65 per 1,000 girls aged 15–19 exceeded Ukraine by 2.5 times and Norway by 11 times, reflecting comprehensive failures in sexual and reproductive health education and youth services.[198] This indicates that youth-friendly services are inaccessible and early marriage/childbirth is normalized, particularly in rural areas.

Despite general contraception awareness, structural and sociocultural barriers limited adolescent decision-making. Contraceptive use among reproductive-age women declined from 22.2 per cent in 2019 to 14.5 per cent in 2023, with steeper declines among unmarried youth who remained invisible in national statistics.[199] School-based sexuality education remains optional and fragmented, lacking standardized curriculum and linguistically appropriate materials in Kyrgyz, which can compound existing taboos.

Data-collection limitations obscure the situation. For example, MICS surveys exclude unmarried adolescents/youth, while showing that 22 per cent of married women report unmet family planning needs. Demographic trends create additional burden: while youth population proportions declined, birth rates increased, meaning younger women bore more children with shorter intervals. This intensified reproductive health burden and foreshadowed

**192** Ministry of Health, Kyrgyzstan. 2024. National Maternal Mortality Enquiry Report 2023.

**193** WHO Regional Office for Europe. 2022. Maternal and Newborn Health Profile: Kyrgyzstan.

**194** NSC. 2024. Women and Men of the Kyrgyz Republic: 2019–2023.

**195** UNFPA. 2021. Impact of COVID-19 on Maternal Health in Central Asia.

**196** UNAIDS. 2023. Kyrgyzstan HIV Country Factsheet 2023.

**197** Human Rights Watch. 2023. Abused by Relatives, Ignored by the State: Domestic Violence Against and Neglect of Women and Girls with Disabilities in Kyrgyzstan.

**198** UNFPA. 2023. Adolescent Birth Rates in Eastern Europe and Central Asia: Regional Overview.

**199** NSC. 2024. Women and Men of the Kyrgyz Republic: 2019–2023.

significant healthcare, labour market and pension consequences.

### Women with disabilities face systematic denial of reproductive autonomy and healthcare access

Women with disabilities experienced severe restrictions in accessing sexual and reproductive health services through persistent societal, legal, and institutional discrimination. Despite equal legal rights, entrenched stigmas denied their autonomy and dignity, particularly at family and community levels.

Healthcare access barriers were extensive: 26 per cent of women with disabilities could not leave homes without permission, over one-third believed they were not entitled to romantic/sexual relationships, 23 per cent could not decide whether/whom to marry, and 21 per cent had no say in childbearing decisions.[200] These restrictions indicate fundamental rights violations, demonstrating how disability intersects with gender to create compounded discrimination.

### Inadequate data-collection systems conceal the true scale of women's reproductive health vulnerabilities

Kyrgyzstan's sexual and reproductive health data collection contains systematic methodological limitations that undercount vulnerable population experiences and undermine evidence-based policy development.

MICS, the primary reproductive health statistics source, measures family planning unmet needs only among married women, excluding unmarried adolescents/youth and concealing vulnerability among populations facing the greatest service barriers. Geographic data-collection remains inadequate, with limited and inconsistently reported distribution patterns despite 73 per cent of maternal deaths occurring rurally. Data systems fail to capture the fine-grained subregional data needed for targeted resource allocation.

The needs of vulnerable populations such as women with disabilities, ethnic minorities and internal migrants are largely underrepresented in policy frameworks. Surveys rarely disaggregate data by multiple characteristics simultaneously, preventing understanding of compounding marginalization. Real-time surveillance systems are lacking, with maternal mortality data reported months after deaths, preventing immediate policy impact tracking.

**200** Human Rights Watch. 2023. Abused by Relatives, Ignored by the State: Domestic Violence Against and Neglect of Women and Girls with Disabilities in Kyrgyzstan.

# 4

# STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ADVANCING GENDER EQUALITY IN KYRGYZSTAN (2025-2030)

# STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ADVANCING GENDER EQUALITY IN KYRGYZSTAN (2025–2030)

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The following recommendations emerge from comprehensive analysis of gender disparities and implementation gaps across the legal, political, economic, social and environmental sectors. Drawing on statistical evidence, policy evaluation and international monitoring body observations, concrete actions are identified to transform legal commitments into measurable improvements towards gender equality and women's empowerment – advancing SDG 5 and its interlinkages across the 2030 Agenda.

Kyrgyzstan has established a comprehensive international legal framework through ratification of CEDAW (1997) and its Optional Protocol (2002), eight ILO Fundamental Conventions, including the Convention on Violence and Harassment (No. 190) in 2024, and integration of the Beijing Platform for Action and 2030 Agenda into national strategies. Article 6 of the Constitution gives these international obligations binding domestic force. The country's National Sustainable Development Strategy (2018–2040) and National Development Programme through 2026 explicitly integrate the SDGs, with Kyrgyzstan ranking 48th globally with an SDG Index score of 74.2, leading Central Asia.

However, UN monitoring bodies have consistently identified critical implementation gaps. The 2021 CEDAW concluding observations highlighted delayed anti-discrimination legislation, problematic use of undefined terms like "morality" and "traditional family values" undermining women's rights, systematic barriers to justice access, weak enforcement of gender-based violence legislation, insufficient coordination within national gender machinery, and reproductive health access limitations exacerbated by the 2024 repeal of reproductive rights legislation. The ILO Committee of Experts noted legislation failing to reflect equal pay for work of equal value (SDG 8.5), absence of clear legal definitions of indirect discrimination, lack of violence and harassment, including sexual harassment provisions and weak enforcement mechanisms. The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights observed that almost half the population cannot meet daily nutritional requirements (SDG 2.1).

These assessments align with domestic evidence: women's declining labour force participation from 49.3 to 43.8 per cent (undermining SDG 8.5), systematic exclusion from decision-making positions with only 4.5 per cent of cabinet and 2.4 per cent of pasture committees (SDG 5.5), inadequate gender-based violence response infrastructure with 16 centres nationwide, Central Asia's highest maternal mortality rates at 46.5 per 100,000 live births (SDG 3.1), and deteriorating conditions for civil society. UN bodies have expressed particular concern about government pressure on human rights defenders in a narrowing civic space.

The persistence of gender-based violence across domestic, public, political and virtual spaces fundamentally undermines implementation of gender equality commitments. Violence systematically excludes women from economic participation, political leadership and civic engagement, creating barriers that no legal framework alone can overcome. With domestic violence cases continuously increasing and technology-facilitated violence affecting most women, addressing this violence is central.

These recommendations aim to accelerate substantive gender equality and women's empowerment over 3–5 years, with identification of early deliverables where possible. They prioritize structural reforms addressing the root causes of inequality while recognizing that sustainable progress requires simultaneous action across legislative, policy, institutional and financing dimensions. The recommendations adopt an intersectional lens consistent with the 2030 Agenda's commitment to leave no one behind, emphasizing the vulnerabilities of rural women, ethnic minorities, women with disabilities and LGBTQI+ individuals who face compounded discrimination – concerns repeatedly highlighted by UN monitoring bodies. Implementation success depends on adequate resourcing aligned with SDG target 5.c, meaningful participation of affected communities, robust accountability mechanisms supporting SDG 16, protection of civic space for human rights defenders and sustained political commitment.

## 2. KEY ELEMENTS FOR IMPLEMENTING THE COMMITMENTS TO GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

Translating Kyrgyzstan's commitments to gender equality and women's empowerment into tangible results requires concrete mechanisms.

**Comprehensive gender-disaggregated data systems.** Evidence-based implementation requires systematic collection and analysis of sex-disaggregated data (SDG 17.18). With only 17.5 per cent of SDG indicators currently sex-disaggregated in Kyrgyzstan, strengthening data infrastructure is essential. The Government should strengthen NSC capacity to close data gaps in climate vulnerability (SDG 13), unpaid care work (SDG 5.4), and informal sector participation. UN partners should support methodological development for gender statistics. And civil society should document lived experiences that official statistics may not capture.

**Gender mainstreaming across all policy domains.** Effective implementation integrates gender equality across all sectors and SDGs rather than treating it as stand-alone objective. Government should consider reinstating mandatory gender analysis requirements in planning and budgeting following the 2025 repeal. UN partners should integrate gender considerations across all technical assistance. And civil society should support accountability for gender mainstreaming implementation. This addresses CEDAW concerns regarding insufficient coordination within national gender machinery and supports the 2030 Agenda's integrated approach.

**Developing and implementing a holistic approach to address the persistent challenges and barriers to women's economic empowerment.** Meeting the commitments to gender equality in economic empowerment and the world of work requires adaptations in the legal framework, mechanisms to support women and girls to develop skills in emerging areas such as green jobs and the IT sector, eliminating discrimination such as the gender pay gap, advancing women's employment in formal jobs, including by investing in the care economy, addressing the unpaid care burden on women, and generating decent jobs and a safe working environment for women that is free from violence and harassment.

**Integrating gender equality in emerging policy priorities.** Two critical policy areas for Kyrgyzstan's future development – climate change and digital transformation – currently fail to adequately incorporate gender equality considerations. Climate policies remain largely gender-neutral, overlooking women's roles

as agricultural workers and their systematic exclusion from natural resource governance, limiting their capacity to adapt to climate impacts they experience disproportionately. Similarly, digital transformation strategies proceed without addressing significant gender gaps in internet access, technical education and ICT sector representation. Without proactive gender integration in these transformative policy areas aligned with SDG 5, SDG 13 and inclusive development goals, existing inequalities will be reinforced. Gender impact assessments and women's participation requirements are preconditions for gender transformative programming.

**Robust institutional accountability and monitoring mechanisms.** Achieving results requires transparent monitoring systems, regular public reporting and defined consequences for non-compliance – essential for SDG 5 implementation and aligned with SDG 16. Strong institutional mechanisms aligned with international standards are needed. UN partners should support independent monitoring capacity and systematic tracking of treaty body recommendations. And civil society needs to increase their accountability and pressure through shadow reporting to UN treaty bodies. UN treaty bodies have consistently identified weak enforcement as a critical gap.

**Intersectional approaches addressing compounded vulnerabilities.** Successful implementation recognizes that women's experiences of inequality vary significantly based on overlapping identities. Rural women, women with disabilities, ethnic minorities and LGBTQI+ individuals face compounded discrimination requiring targeted interventions—consistent with the 2030 Agenda's commitment to leave no one behind. Disaggregated needs assessments and tailored strategies are needed, based on evidence about marginalized groups' experiences. UN monitoring bodies have emphasized insufficient protection for women with disabilities facing violence and inadequate measures to protect LGBTQI+ rights.

**Meaningful participation structures for women and marginalized groups.** Effective implementation depends on creating genuine opportunities for substantive participation from design through implementation to monitoring and evaluation, supporting SDG 16.7. CEDAW recommendations specifically emphasize strengthened cooperation with civil society and protection of women's human rights defenders – particularly critical given current civic space constraints.

**Sustainable financing mechanisms.** Sustained implementation requires establishing predictable financing systems aligned with SDG target 5.c. Government should establish dedicated budget lines with clear expenditure tracking, addressing disconnects exemplified by the State Programme for Supporting Women's Entrepreneurship (2022–2026) that lacks corresponding budget allocation. UN partners should design programmes with sustainability strategies emphasizing domestic ownership. And civil society should monitor budget allocations and advocate for adequate resourcing.

These operational elements build on demonstrated successes such as financial sector engagement, government accelerators expanding childcare access supporting women's labour force participation (SDG 8.5) and community-level women, peace and security initiatives (SDG 16). The gap between Kyrgyzstan's comprehensive international legal framework – including 90 per cent of necessary legal provisions for SDG 5 – and implementation outcomes underscores the importance of strengthening these concrete mechanisms.

## 3. PRIMARY ACTORS AND THEIR ROLES

Effective implementation requires coordinated action across three primary stakeholder groups, each with distinct mandates in advancing the 2030 Agenda:

Government authorities (including line ministries, Parliament, the Ministry of Labour, Social Welfare and Migration as national gender machinery, the NSC and local self-government bodies) bear primary responsibility for fulfilling

Kyrgyzstan's international obligations under CEDAW, ILO conventions, the Beijing Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda. They advance gender equality through legislative reforms harmonizing domestic law with international standards; policy development aligned with SDG targets; financing ensuring adequate budget allocations and resource mobilization ending donor dependency (SDG 5.c); and institutional reforms strengthening organizational capacity, coordination mechanisms, and service-delivery systems (SDG 16). The Government must address UN treaty bodies' concerns about weak enforcement, inadequate legal definitions and insufficient protection for marginalized groups.

UN agencies and international development partners support Kyrgyzstan's implementation through technical assistance providing expert support on aligning legislation with CEDAW and ILO standards, financing supporting co-investment in priority programmes; capacity-building strengthening skills and knowledge for treaty reporting and SDG monitoring; and coordination facilitating partnerships consistent with SDG 17, knowledge-exchange and systematic monitoring of treaty body recommendations. UN partners play a critical role in supporting civic space protection and strengthening cooperation with women's human rights defenders.

Civil society organizations serve as essential partners in treaty implementation, SDG monitoring and accountability, as emphasized by CEDAW recommendations and SDG 17 on multi-stakeholder partnerships. They advance gender equality through advocacy campaigns promoting legal reforms and challenging policies using undefined terms that undermine rights. Their service-delivery fills gaps in State provision, particularly for marginalized groups. The provide social accountability monitoring through shadow reporting to UN treaty bodies and VNRs. In addition, their outreach mobilizes communities, builds coalitions and amplifies marginalized voices. Civil society's watchdog role is particularly critical given current restrictions on civic space that threaten SDG 16 commitments.

## 4. CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS

Beyond operational mechanisms, transforming these recommendations into tangible progress towards SDG 5 and the broader 2030 Agenda depends on enabling conditions that create the environment for successful implementation. UN monitoring bodies have consistently identified gaps in these fundamental preconditions.

**Political will and sustained leadership.** Implementation ultimately depends on champions at the highest levels of Government demonstrating genuine commitment through resource allocation, institutional reforms and personal accountability for gender equality outcomes. This includes protecting rather than restricting civic space for women human rights defenders, consistent with SDG 16.

**Ensuring an enabling environment for civil society.** Creating conditions where civil society organizations, women's human rights defenders and independent media can operate without fear of reprisals or restrictive legislation is fundamental to implementation. UN bodies have expressed concerns about narrowing civic space that undermines implementation of international obligations and threatens multi-stakeholder partnerships essential for SDG 17. Civil society's essential role in democracies and their watchdog role and advocacy all relies on having an enabling environment.

**Cultural transformation alongside legal reform.** Addressing discriminatory attitudes, gender stereotypes and patriarchal practices across institutions and communities requires sustained commitment beyond legislative change. The persistence of gender-based violence across domestic, public, political and virtual spaces both reflects and reinforces these discriminatory norms, fundamentally hindering equality. Undefined terms like "traditional family values" can legitimize discrimination and undermine SDG 5's transformative objectives. A cultural shift – through education, media engagement and community mobilization – creates the social foundation for legal and policy reforms to take root.

**Long-term institutional commitment beyond political cycles.** Structural transformation cannot be achieved through short-term projects or donor-funded initiatives; it requires permanent mechanisms, sustained funding and resilience across political and economic fluctuations. This includes maintaining rather than repealing systematic gender mainstreaming requirements that support integrated SDG implementation. The 2025 repeal of mandatory gender analysis requirements illustrates how implementation gains can be reversed without sustained institutional commitment.

These enabling conditions determine whether the operational mechanisms outlined above can function effectively. Kyrgyzstan's demonstrated successes, achieving 90 per cent of necessary legal provisions for SDG 5 and leading Central Asia with an SDG Index score of 74.2, show what is possible. Implementation calls for all stakeholders to work in coordinated partnership, leveraging their distinct strengths towards substantive gender equality that fulfils Kyrgyzstan's international commitments and transforms legal obligations into lived realities for all.

# 5

# ANNEXES

# ANNEX 1

## SUMMARY OF KEY CHALLENGES ON ADVANCING GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT:

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| **Gender equality in governance, political and civic participation and leadership of women** | Five main barriers systematically limit women's political participation and leadership advancement, despite comprehensive legal frameworks for gender equality. These interconnected challenges create a multilayered system of exclusion that operates across institutional, cultural and structural dimensions.<br>• **Institutional design gaps limit women's executive power:** While gender quotas have proven effective for elected positions (39 per cent representation in local councils), their absence in appointed roles creates systematic exclusion, with women holding only 5 per cent of cabinet positions and 3.5 per cent of rural administrative leadership roles.<br>• **Pervasive gender-based violence deters political participation:** 97 per cent of respondents were aware of sexual harassment in politics, with 32 per cent experiencing direct threats. This violence operates across digital and physical spaces, creating hostile environments that receive no institutional recognition or response.<br>• **Economic barriers undermine political independence:** 30 per cent of women experience economic violence through exclusion from financial decision-making, directly undermining their capacity for independent political action and campaign financing.<br>• **Media reinforcement of gender stereotypes delegitimizes women's authority:** Men receive seven times more political coverage and eight times more economic coverage than women, with only 17 per cent of women's media coverage relating to politics and economics, systematically undermining public perception of women's political competence.<br>• **Shrinking civic space compounds gender-specific barriers:** Restrictions on civil society organizations and hostile rhetoric against women's rights groups compound gender-specific barriers by limiting support systems and advocacy networks essential for women's political advancement. |
| **Women's economic and social rights and economic empowerment** | Six main barriers systematically limit women's economic advancement and participation in the formal economy. They create a multilayered system of exclusion that operates despite legal frameworks guaranteeing gender equality in economic relations. |

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| | • **Declining employment levels despite economic growth:** Women's employment levels declined by 11.3 per cent over 15 years, dropping from 49.3 to 43.8 per cent between 2015–2022, driven by traditional gender roles and religious influences that prioritize domestic duties over employment.<br>• **Concentration in informal and lower-paid sectors, and wage gaps:** Women are concentrated in sectors with lower wages (77 per cent in education and health services) while men dominate better-paid sectors (99 per cent in construction, 96 per cent in transport). In addition, there is a high rate of informal employment (for both women and men). While about 61 per cent of women are employed informally for their main job (63.2 per cent of men), the rate of informal employment of women goes up to almost 100 per cent for women employed by private households, which includes all domestic workers.[1] As a result, there are significant differences in men's and women's earnings with men's average salaries exceeding women's by approximately 25 per cent. The gender pay gap between women and men does not only deepen the gender inequalities and discrimination in the labour market but also has a longer-term impact on pension rights and women's poverty.<br>• **Disproportionate unpaid care responsibilities:** Women dedicate 4 hours and 20 minutes per day to household tasks compared to 55 minutes for men, with rural women spending 1.3 times more time on domestic work than urban counterparts, limiting their economic opportunities and official employment participation.<br>• **Systematic exclusion from asset ownership:** Only 29 per cent of real estate is officially owned by women, with men owning 61 per cent of business buildings and land, 80 per cent of land, 90 per cent of private vehicles, and 93 per cent of farm equipment, creating barriers to credit access, banking and financial services, and business scaling.<br>• **Limited access to natural resource governance:** Women represent over 60 per cent of water users but hold only 1.2 per cent of Water User Association director positions, while comprising just 2.4 per cent of pasture committee leadership and 20.2 per cent of farm business heads, excluding them from decisions affecting their livelihoods.<br>• **Structural barriers to entrepreneurship:** Women represent only 27 per cent of all entrepreneurs and face systemic barriers limiting access to banking and financial services, with rural women's access to banking and financial services declining by 1.1 per cent and women's businesses concentrated in very small businesses with limited opportunities for growth. |
| **Women and ICT** | Six main barriers systematically limit women's participation in the digital economy and technology sectors, creating a multilayered system of exclusion that operates despite legal frameworks guaranteeing gender equality in digital access and employment.<br>• **Systematic exclusion from technology access creates significant barriers to women's economic participation** and competitiveness through limited Internet access (45 per cent rural women vs. 65 per cent men), restricted business financing (28 vs. 45 per cent loan access) and affordability constraints affecting digital device ownership. |

1 ILO. 2023. Diagnostic report: Transition from informal to formal employment: Extension of social protection schemes (maternity and unemployment) in Kyrgyzstan.

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| | • **Women's declining representation in technology employment and leadership restricts their influence on digital innovation and policymaking**, with employment falling from 40.8 per cent to 31.9 per cent between 2020–2022 and women holding only 15 per cent of tech sector leadership positions.<br>• **Gender stereotypes and cultural barriers deter participation in STEM education and technology careers**, with only 18 per cent of girls choosing technical majors and 7 per cent continuing ICT careers, while women comprise just 33.9 per cent of computing programme students despite doubled enrolment.<br>• **Educational and skills development gaps perpetuate exclusion from high-paying digital sector jobs**, with only 30 per cent of women accessing specialized technology training compared to 50 per cent of men and limited basic ICT skills among women aged 15–49 (21 per cent overall, 30 per cent for younger women).<br>• **Insufficient systematic government and institutional support undermine the scalability and effectiveness of women's digital inclusion initiatives** through inadequate data collection systems, absence of sex-disaggregated digital sector data, and gaps between successful pilot programs and sustained institutional backing.<br>• **Investment and entrepreneurship barriers systematically exclude women from digital economy leadership**, with investor bias requiring male co-founders, stereotypes favouring male leadership in technology startups, and systematic underrepresentation preventing women's perspectives from informing digital policy development. |
| **Gender-based violence** | Six main barriers systematically limit effective prevention and response to gender-based violence, creating a multilayered system of institutional failures that operate despite legal frameworks criminalizing violence and protecting survivors.<br>• **Inadequate legal-criminal response despite strengthened legislation:** While conviction rates improved to 86 per cent in 2024, systematic court hearing postponements (80 per cent), degrading victim treatment during proceedings, and inconsistent judicial practices undermined effectiveness despite legal reforms and CEDAW implementation efforts.<br>• **Crisis support infrastructure overwhelmed by rising demand:** Only 16 crisis centres served the entire country, with demand increasing by 21.4 per cent in 2024. NGO-run centres face financial instability because of the delayed disbursement of funds for agreed contracts and lacked systematic case-management protocols despite mobile outreach successes.<br>• **Prevention strategies remained underdeveloped and fragmented:** Current prevention efforts were insufficient in scale and scope to address systematic drivers of GBV, with reactive approaches dominating over systematic community mobilization, educational reforms and male engagement initiatives needed for long-term violence reduction. |

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| | • **Digital protection legislation absent for emerging violence forms:** Technology-facilitated violence affected 53.2 per cent of women while digital platforms served as critical alternative reporting channels, requiring urgent legal framework development for emerging online violence forms and enhanced digital literacy safeguards.<br>• **Harmful marital practices persisted despite criminalization:** Limited prosecution of bride kidnapping and child marriage continued despite strengthened criminal penalties, with rural-urban disparities and structural legal challenges that allowed reconciliation-based case termination undermining enforcement effectiveness.<br>• **Limited access to services for vulnerable groups and inadequate public safety:** Women with disabilities + individuals faced violence and discrimination within a deteriorating rights climate, while 90 per cent of women reported harassment in public transportation, and specialized services remained inadequate across all vulnerable populations.<br>• **A safe working environment must be promoted alongside prevention of violence and harassment in the world of work.** The Labour Code requires further amendments to align the national framework with C190, by ensuring a clear definition of violence and harassment, efficient labour inspections, and a national occupational health and safety system to address and prevent violence and harassment in the workplace. |
| **Women, peace and security** | Four main barriers systematically limit the implementation of the WPS agenda in Kyrgyzstan, creating a multilayered system of institutional failures that operate despite legal frameworks and policy commitments establishing women's participation in peace processes.<br>• **Formalistic NAP implementation without dedicated resources:** The disconnect between WPS commitments and national development priorities, combined with absence of dedicated funding and weak institutional awareness among officials, undermines the country's capacity for effective peacebuilding and conflict prevention.<br>• **Systematic exclusion of women from security leadership positions:** Persistent underrepresentation in decision-making positions within security and justice sectors (only 5-10 per cent in most agencies) deprives institutions of critical perspectives and limits the effectiveness of peace and security responses.<br>• **Failure to institutionalize women's proven peacebuilding capacity:** Despite demonstrated leadership in community-level conflict response and development of Joint Plans for Peaceful Development, women's agency and expertise remains underutilized in formal security frameworks and crisis-management systems.<br>• **Limited integration of grass-roots WPS initiatives into government structures:** While women-led organizations drive localized implementation and have developed comprehensive socioeconomic development plans incorporating security considerations, a lack of systematic integration constrains the scaling and sustainability of these promising approaches. |

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| **Gender equality and climate change, including water and other natural resources management** | Five main barriers systematically limit women's participation in climate action and natural resource management, creating a multilayered system of exclusion that operates despite legal frameworks guaranteeing gender equality and international commitments to climate policies that address women's needs.<br>• **Institutional exclusion from climate governance structures:** Women remained systematically excluded from Water User Associations, pasture committees, and climate decision-making bodies despite comprising the majority of agricultural workers (46 vs. 17.5 per cent of men), resulting in policies that failed to address their specific vulnerabilities and knowledge.<br>• **Resource access barriers exacerbating climate vulnerability:** Limited access to land ownership (only 18.5 per cent of titles held by women), agricultural credit and irrigation infrastructure constrained women's adaptive capacity while increasing their exposure to climate risks, particularly in the context of widespread male out-migration.<br>• **Underutilization of women's environmental knowledge and leadership capacity:** Despite demonstrated success in biodiversity conservation initiatives and community resilience programs, women's expertise remained marginalized in formal climate planning and natural resource management frameworks.<br>• **Disproportionate burden of climate impacts on women:** Women experienced more severe climate consequences through increased household responsibilities, health risks and water access difficulties (20 vs. 4 per cent for men during disasters), compounded by existing vulnerabilities including domestic violence and economic dependency.<br>• **Educational and digital gaps limiting green economy participation:** Persistent gender disparities in technical education (only 20.3 per cent of women in engineering programmes), Internet access (64.4 vs. 74.2 per cent for men), and time constraints from unpaid care work restrict women's ability to engage with climate solutions and benefit from emerging green opportunities. |
| **Sexual and reproductive health and rights of women** | Six main barriers systematically limit women's access to sexual and reproductive health services, creating a multilayered system of healthcare exclusion that operates despite legal frameworks guaranteeing equal healthcare access and reproductive rights.<br>• **Healthcare system failures create comprehensive access barriers:** Inadequate insurance coverage (only 35.3 per cent of women covered), severe rural workforce shortages, infrastructure deficits and service-delivery gaps force women to pay full costs for reproductive care despite nominal reimbursement eligibility.<br>• **Kyrgyzstan's maternal death rates remain Central Asia's highest:** At 46.5 per 100,000 live births, with 73 per cent of deaths in rural areas, substandard care documented in 58 per cent of cases, and rising anaemia rates creating dangerous risk combinations that disproportionately threaten vulnerable women. |

- **Rising HIV feminization reflects deepening gender inequalities and structural violence:** Heterosexual transmission increased from 66 to 88 per cent between 2018–2022 as women cannot negotiate safe sex due to coercive norms and male-dominated decision-making, while marginalized populations face compounded discrimination without supportive programmes.
- **Adolescent reproductive health failures persist with regional consequences:** Birth rates 2.5 times higher than regional averages, declining contraceptive use (from 22.2 to 14.5 per cent between 2019–2023), fragmented sexuality education and demographic trends creating intensified reproductive health burdens on young women.
- **Women with disabilities face systematic denial of reproductive autonomy:** 26 per cent cannot leave homes without permission and 21 per cent have no say in childbearing decisions, reflecting deep-rooted societal attitudes that deny their sexuality, agency and fundamental human rights to reproductive healthcare access.
- **Inadequate data-collection systems conceal vulnerability:** Methodological limitations exclude unmarried youth from family planning statistics, lack geographic detail for targeting interventions, underrepresent marginalized groups and provide delayed surveillance data that undermines evidence-based policy development reaching the most vulnerable women.

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