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COUNTRY GENDER PROFILE MOLDOVA

EU4GENDEREQUALITY
REFORM HELPDESK

DECEMBER 2023



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[**The project does not provide support to the Government of Belarus; it only supports the EU Delegation and civil society].

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CGP	Country Gender Profile
CLIP	Country Level Implementation Plan
CoE	Council of Europe
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease 2019
CPA	Central Public Administration
CSO	civil society organisation
EaP	Eastern Partnership
EBRD	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
EU	European Union
EUD	European Union Delegation to the Republic of Moldova
GAP III	EU Gender Action Plan III
GDI	Gender Development Index
GDP	gross domestic product
GEWE	gender equality and women's empowerment
GII	Gender Inequality Index
GRB	gender-responsive budgeting
HDI	Human Development Index
HIV	human immunodeficiency virus
ICT	information and communications technology
ILO	International Labour Organization
LGBTIQ	lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer
LPA	local public administration
MDL	Moldovan Leu
NAP	National Implementation Programme
NBS	National Bureau of Statistics
NGO	non-governmental organisation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

PFM	public finance management
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SME	small and medium-sized enterprise
STEM	science, technology, engineering and mathematics
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WBL	Women, Business and the Law Index

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This updated Country Gender Profile (CGP) of the Republic of Moldova, aligned with the European Union (EU) Gender Action Plan III (GAP III), examines challenges and recent progress on advancing gender equality in 2021–2023. It offers recommendations for the EU Delegation to inform its updating of the Country Level Implementation Plan (CLIP) in 2023.

In 2021–2023, Moldova demonstrated steadfast commitment to advancing gender equality through a range of international and national commitments. These include adherence to pivotal frameworks such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Political Rights of Women, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), among others. The enactment of the Law on Ensuring Equal Opportunities between Women and Men of 2006 further solidifies Moldova's dedication to fostering gender equality.

Moldova has intensified its efforts to fortify legal and institutional frameworks for gender equality. Notable developments include the approval of the Programme for the Promotion and Ensuring Equality between Women and Men 2023–2027, the National Programme on Preventing and Combatting Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, and the adoption of the National Action Plan for the Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. These initiatives span various sectors, aiming to enhance gender equality in health, education, labour, entrepreneurship, social protection and local development. However, certain sectors – such as energy, digital transformation, infrastructure, transport and climate change – still lack explicit gender mainstreaming in their legal and institutional frameworks.

Despite Moldova's commitment to international and national gender equality frameworks, persistent challenges require targeted interventions. This Country Gender Profile's gender analysis by sector identifies the following gender imbalances and challenges that should be addressed to promote gender equality and women's empowerment in Moldova.¹

Women in decision-making and leadership

- Women's representation in parliament (38.6%) has improved, but falls short of gender parity.
- Women's representation in the Cabinet of Ministers varies. At present, there only three of 16 ministers are women.

¹ The sources of the statistics in this executive summary are all provided in the main body of the Country Gender Profile.

- Despite positive strides in local governance, with women's participation reaching 22%, challenges persist, such as women's low levels of representation as mayors (21.8%).

Gender and employment

- Gendered disparities in economic activity persist. Women's economic activity rate (37.8%) is considerably lower than the rate for men (46.3%), indicating an enduring gender gap in workforce participation.
- Sectoral gender segregation is evident, with pronounced imbalances in construction, transport, and agriculture – sectors in which men predominate.
- The gap in unemployment rates for men (3.5%) and women (2.6%) has decreased, but this gap widens during periods of economic shock.
- There is a persistent gender pay gap across sectors (13.6% in formal jobs), with variations across sectors.

Women's entrepreneurship

- Women own or manage 34% of businesses, highlighting underutilised potential.
- Educational disparities exist, with men with higher education more prominently engaged in entrepreneurship.
- Women entrepreneurs face financial challenges, including higher reliance on loans (especially on borrowing from friends and relatives), unequal treatment by banks and authorities, and limited access to support programmes.

Gender and care work

- Women perform 66% of total unpaid work, and perform a disproportionate amount of care activities such as cooking, caring for livestock, and dish-washing.
- People in rural areas dedicate more time to unpaid work, reflecting traditional roles and economic disparities.
- The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated gender inequalities in caregiving, impacting women's mental well-being.

Gender, infrastructure and public transport

- Women rely more on public transport (76.5%) than men, highlighting their specific transportation needs.
- Rural-urban disparities in public transport usage highlight infrastructure challenges in rural areas.
- Underdeveloped infrastructure hinders women's access to basic services, posing life-threatening consequences in times of crisis.

Gender and health

- The gender gap in life expectancy has increased, with women living, on average, 9 years longer than men.

- The mortality rate for men has increased more than for women. Women seek medical consultations more frequently than men.
- Disparities in access to health services persist, especially for rural women.

Gender and education

- Low-income families generally cannot afford tertiary education for their children, affecting academic paths, especially in Roma families.
- There is a significant gender gap in tertiary education, with boys far less represented (59.3%) than girls (81.7%) among tertiary students.
- Gender disparities in teaching staff persist, as do challenges to mainstreaming gender in education policy.

Women, peace and security

- Women's representation in Moldova's National Army is low (20.2%).
- Women's representation in the General Police Inspectorate has increased slightly, but only 11% of women hold decision-making positions.
- Gender stereotypes hinder women's enrolment and career progression in the security and defence sectors.

Gender-based violence

- The prevalence of domestic violence in Moldova is high. Approximately 73% of women have experienced some form of abuse from their partners.
- Despite an increase in domestic violence complaints, the number of criminal cases has declined, revealing challenges in terms of legal responses. Limited legal assistance for survivors of domestic violence contributes to under-reporting.

Gender, the green transition and digital transformations

- Inadequate gender data on environmental issues hinders policy-making.
- Women account for 31% of workers in Moldova's ICT sector, and face a gender pay gap of 33% in the sector.
- Digital access disparities are pronounced in rural areas, exacerbating existing gender disparities.

Groups living in vulnerable conditions

- Rural women-headed households face higher absolute poverty rates (29.3%) than households headed by men (25.6%).
- Roma women encounter challenges in terms of education, unemployment, discrimination in healthcare, and labour market integration.
- Acceptance of the LGBTIQ community is limited in Moldova, with 92% of respondents in one survey "opposing" homosexuality.
- Women with disabilities face intersectional challenges, particularly in rural areas.

- Ukrainian refugees – including women, children and older persons – face challenges to accessing food, education, medical services and jobs in Moldova.

Based on its findings, the Country Gender Profile proposes a number of **recommendations for the EU Delegation**, including:

- **Recommendations on CLIP development:** Advocate for a comprehensive gender mainstreaming approach in CLIP development, emphasising the integration of gender-responsive indicators, regular gender impact assessments, and a focus on addressing sector-specific gender disparities, to ensure that the implementation plan is aligned with evolving needs and challenges.
- **Recommendations on supporting the Government:** Provide targeted support to strengthen Moldova's gender equality policy framework, advocating for legislative enhancements that increase women's participation in decision-making, addressing existing loopholes, and promoting transparent practices. Emphasise the importance of ongoing institutional capacity building, gender-disaggregated data collection, and tailored interventions to support groups living in vulnerable conditions.
- **Recommendations on supporting civil society:** Allocate funding to CSOs for projects that monitor government policies related to gender equality and women's empowerment, with a focus on addressing stereotypes, cultural barriers, and promoting shifts in attitudes. Encourage CSOs to engage in advocacy, awareness raising and mobilisation, including initiatives targeting young people. Support capacity building initiatives led by CSOs to address gender disparities in key sectors and empower women in agriculture, while fostering collaboration on justice, security and support for Ukrainian refugees.



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Context

This Country Gender Profile (CGP) provides a snapshot of gender equality issues in Moldova as of November 2023. It summarises progress related to gender equality, as well as barriers to equality and gender inequalities that persist, analysing their root causes and proposing recommendations to address them. This is an updated version of the Country Gender Profile of Moldova developed in 2021, and follows the same basic structure. It was updated in September-November 2023 with the support of the EU4Gender Equality Reform Helpdesk project, in coordination with the European Union (EU) Delegation to the Republic of Moldova.

This Country Gender Profile follows the recommendations of the European Commission's Gender Action Plan III (GAP III) Brief No. 1, "Gender country profile and gender sector analysis", of February 2021. It includes a description of the national context in Moldova, the legal and institutional framework, gender analysis by sectors, as well as the impact of the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine and the COVID-19 pandemic, in terms of their effects on both women and men. It highlights the status of women's rights in Moldova and describes needs, challenges and opportunities in the context of thematic sections: an analysis of the national framework and policy; women's leadership and political participation, including the Women, Peace and Security Agenda; women in the economy; violence against women and girls; health services, including maternal health; women's access to justice; social status; and access to information and communication technology (ICT). The last chapter outlines key findings and recommendations for the development of the Country Level Implementation Plan (CLIP), in order to support the Government of Moldova and civil society.

The purpose of this Country Gender Profile is to assist the EU Delegation to mainstream gender in programming during the 2021–2027 period in Moldova, to identify priorities, key objectives and actions of the CLIP, and to support the Government to integrate gender in reforms so as to maximise efforts to advance both gender equality and poverty reduction. Key gender issues raised by the Country Gender Profile are aligned with the EU Gender Action Plan III, as well as with Moldova's National Plan for Gender Equality. This document also serves to provide gender analysis and recommendations for the Government of the Republic of Moldova, as well as guidance for other development partners and civil society organisations.

1.2. Goals and objectives

The overall objective of this updated Country Gender Profile is to provide a snapshot of gender equality in Moldova, with a focus on developments in 2021–2023, in order to facilitate the development of gender-sensitive country strategies, programmes and projects, and to contribute to dialogue.

The goals of this document are to:

- Analyse gaps and opportunities in the national legal framework on women's and family rights, and commitments towards international women's rights frameworks on advancing gender equality and equity.
- Provide an overview of women's representation and participation in decision-making processes, including in the Women, Peace and Security Agenda, women's access to and control over resources, livelihoods and their participation in the economy, the prevention of and response to gender-based violence and violence against women and girls, and women's and girls' access to health facilities and services.
- Inform and facilitate the development of gender-responsive policies, strategies and programmes in a context of transition from humanitarian to recovery and development programming, considering the links between gender equality, democracy, development, peace and security.

1.3. Methodology

This Country Gender Profile examines a large spectrum of social, political, economic issues through a gender lens, using available data, case studies, surveys and other evidence.

Since the scope of this assessment encompasses all aspects of gender equality in Moldova – including the public sector, the private sector, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), academia and public sentiment – the methodology used aims to provide a holistic overview of all the possible gender implications across key sectors. The selected methodology seeks to enable the development of recommendations for the EU Delegation's updated Country Level Implementation Plan, alongside recommendations for supporting the Government and civil society on gender mainstreaming.

National level data sources are used to the greatest extent possible, as these tend to have greater credibility among stakeholders at the country level. These sources cover the 2018–2023 period. Wherever possible, priority is given to the most up-to-date data and information. Official statistical data on demographics, education, employment, the gender pay gap, and access to decision-making in public service are augmented by surveys conducted by private research companies and international organisations. All available recent gender surveys produced by the Government, international development partners and other stakeholders have been collected and their findings are summarised in this updated Country Gender Profile.

Nevertheless, several challenges related to data quality and missing data must be taken into account. The most common are outdated and unreliable data, the absence of sex-disaggregated data and the absence of any data at all on specific issues. Qualitative data and research on issues such as the implementation of policies are also often difficult to obtain.

The scarcity of data and limited sample sizes in existing data sets pose significant challenges for identifying and monitoring the status of those left “furthest behind”. Data collection instruments are often designed to assess national outcomes, with sampling methodology that cannot accommodate extensive subgroup analysis. No data exists on the correlation of the conflict-related humanitarian situation and gender, either from the National Bureau of Statistics or through analysis/studies by independent researchers.

This Country Gender Profile analyses gender equality in Moldova without including Transnistria, due to insufficient data available on gender equality and women’s empowerment in Transnistria.

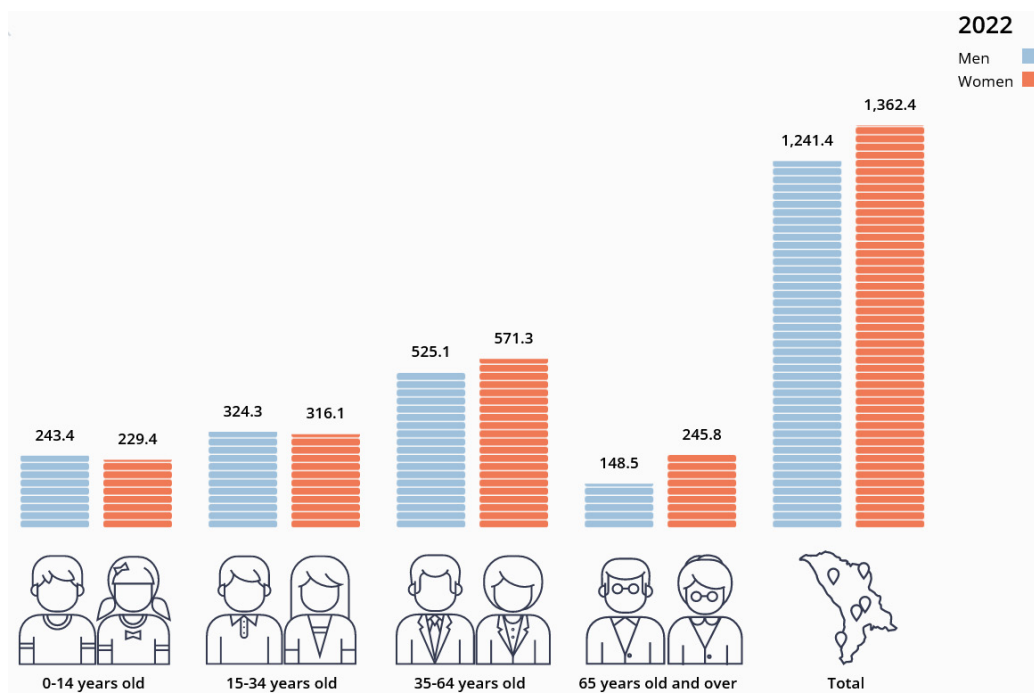


2. NATIONAL CONTEXT

2.1. Gender aspects of the demographic situation

Women and girls account for a greater proportion of Moldova's population (52.3%) than men and boys. As of 2022, there were 91 men in the country for every 100 women. The ratio differs significantly by age group. Boys predominate in the 0-14-year-old age group, in which the ratio is 106 boys for every 100 girls. In the 15–34-year-old age group, the number of men and women is almost identical – 103 boys and men for every 100 girls and young women. Gender differences are more pronounced in the 35–64-year-old and 65-year-old and over age groups, with 92 men and 60 men per 100 women, respectively.²

Figure 1. Moldova's population size by sex and age groups, 2022



Source: <https://genderpulse.md/en/demography/population-structure/sex-ratio>

² <https://genderpulse.md/en/demography/population-structure/sex-ratio>

On average, women in Moldova live 7.8 years longer than men. In 2021, life expectancy at birth was 73.0 years for women and 65.2 years for men. This gap is caused by higher levels of premature mortality among men, especially those of working age (16–62 years old), often caused by men's greater engagement in risky behaviours and hazardous jobs compared to women.³

Women marry somewhat earlier than men. In 2021, the average age at which women first marry was 26 years old, compared to 29 years old for men. Most men who married in 2021 were between 25 and 29 years old (35.2%), while most women were between 20 and 24 years old (33.9%). Marriages of individuals under 20 years old are more common in rural areas – 10.1% of marriages registered in rural areas involved women under the age of 20, compared to 4.2% in urban areas.⁴

The fertility rate in Moldova was 1.81 children per woman in 2021.⁵ On average, there were 46.1 live births per 1,000 women between 15 and 49 years old. This indicates a gradual decline in the fertility rate, down from 57.1 live births per 1,000 women aged 15–49 in 2014.⁶ The adolescent fertility rate has declined in recent years – there were 16.1 live births per 1,000 girls between 15 and 18 years old in 2022, compared to 22.9 live births per 1,000 adolescent girls in 2014.

2.2. Gender-sensitive country poverty profile

The poverty rate in Moldova has been declining – falling from 26.8% in 2020 to 24.5% in 2021, lower than pre-COVID-19 levels (25.2%) recorded in 2019. This reduction is attributed to overall economic recovery, particularly in the labour market, and the nearly doubled minimum pension implemented as of October 2021.⁷

However, the positive trend in poverty reduction observed in 2021 did not continue into 2022. Year-on-year inflation in Moldova in 2022 reached 28.7%, primarily due to elevated food and fuel prices following Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Food prices rose by almost one-third, electricity prices surged by 56%, gas prices more than tripled, and the cost of central heating increased by 62%. Solid fuel prices, essential for the poor, also rose substantially.⁸

High inflation, coupled with the disproportionate share of expenditure on food and fuel among poorer Moldovans, is anticipated to increase the incidence and depth of poverty through both direct and secondary impacts.

³ Ibid.

⁴ https://www.ipn.md/en/statistics-ahead-of-march-8-women-prevail-among-moldovas-7967_1095652.html

⁵ <https://tradingeconomics.com/moldova/fertility-rate-total-births-per-woman-wb-data.html>

⁶ <https://genderpulse.md/en/demography/female-fertility>

⁷ https://databankfiles.worldbank.org/public/ddpext_download/poverty/987B9C90-CB9F-4D93-AE8C-750588BF00QA/current/Global_POVEQ_MDA.pdf

⁸ Ibid.

While the Government's Energy Vulnerability Reduction Fund may partially alleviate the impact of fuel inflation for wealthier households connected to the gas network and central heating, the means-tested cold season benefit (APRA) is expected to help mitigate rising fuel costs among poorer Moldovans.

Additional challenges include a reduction in remittances, a crucial income source for Moldovan households, which decreased by approximately 2.2% in the first three-quarters of 2022, according to preliminary balance of payments data. There are also concerns about potential challenges stemming from return migration due to the deteriorating economic situation in key migrant destination countries, including the Russian Federation, Ukraine, and EU Member States.

Labour market indicators appear to have improved in 2022, with increased employment compared to 2021. This improvement may be partially attributed to the absorption of Ukrainian refugees into the labour market, potentially mediating further increases in poverty.

While gender is not a decisive factor in terms of poverty rates, the intersection between gender and other social factors influences vulnerability to relative and absolute poverty. For example, the rural-urban divide is a significant factor in determining household poverty levels, with rural households disproportionately affected. In 2019, the poverty rate in the South region was 40.4%, compared to 4.4% in Moldova's capital, Chisinau.⁹ Households headed by women experience higher absolute poverty rates, and rural women are four times more likely than rural men to live in absolute poverty, facing challenges such as limited employment opportunities and greater vulnerability due to intersecting factors like lower education levels and old age.

Wages are the population's primary source of income, followed by social benefits, transfers from abroad, and income from individual agricultural activities. Rural residents, pensioners and self-employed individuals engaged in agriculture have lower disposable incomes than the national average, with remittances playing a crucial role in preventing one-third of rural households from falling below the poverty line.¹⁰ The COVID-19 pandemic and Russia's invasion of Ukraine disrupted remittance flows to Moldova, which has a particular impact on rural women, who depend on remittances for almost one-third of their income, on average. The impact of declining remittances on rural poverty rates has yet to be fully assessed, but concerns exist about increased income and non-income inequalities.

Rural households headed by women derive less income from wages and self-employment compared to those headed by men, with social protection payments, especially remittances, playing a more significant role. A multidimensional understanding of poverty highlights the high risks for rural women in Moldova, including not only monetary poverty but also issues like poor quality work, time poverty, and disempowerment.¹¹

⁹ <https://www.undp.org/moldova/press-releases/profiling-poverty-beyond-income-shows-where-have-biggest-impact-world-crisis>

¹⁰ National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova, 2021.

¹¹ <https://www.fao.org/3/cb9555en/cb9555en.pdf>

Older rural populations face greater financial challenges than their urban counterparts, and they rely heavily on social allowances. Factors such as the number of children in a household, single-parent households, and family status contribute to the vulnerability of women in rural areas. Older women, in particular, face the risk of impoverishment in retirement due to lower earnings and smaller pensions. While poverty in Moldova has not been traditionally considered feminised, women – especially in rural areas – are more likely to face multidimensional poverty, highlighting the need for targeted interventions and support.

2.3. Gendered impact of the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine

Since Russia's invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022, over 852,500 Ukrainians have sought refuge in Moldova. As of November 2023, most have either returned to Ukraine or moved to other countries. However, 113,132 Ukrainian refugees were recorded to be residing in Moldova as of 12 November 2023.¹²

The Government of Moldova does not provide social payments to refugees. Therefore, humanitarian aid and support from local communities and civil society organisations (CSOs) are the only source of support for refugees, in addition to their own resources. Common issues experienced by most Ukrainian refugees in Moldova include access to food and non-food-items, education (for instance, laptops for remote education) and jobs. Most Ukrainian refugees who have been in Moldova for more than 18 months are focusing on enhancing their social and economic integration as the ongoing war in Ukraine shows no signs of resolution.¹³

In terms of the demographics of Ukrainian refugees in Moldova, most are women, children and older individuals, due to Ukrainian legislation limiting younger men (eligible for conscription) from leaving the country. This demographic mix has shaped gender roles and household dynamics among refugee populations. Notably, refugees from Ukraine form a heterogeneous group with varied needs, priorities and capacities, influenced by factors such as gender, age and other diversity considerations. Vulnerable groups, including older individuals, people with disabilities, Roma individuals, single women, children, and single women-headed households with multiple children, face intersecting forms of discrimination and heightened protection risks in the context of conflict and displacement.¹⁴

Displacement is having an impact on traditional gender roles. Women refugees are assuming increased caregiving responsibilities, single women with children are taking on non-traditional roles, and adult male refugees are experiencing a shift away from their traditional roles as providers and protectors.

¹² <https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine/location/10784>

¹³ <https://reliefweb.int/report/ukraine/real-time-response-review-ukraine-humanitarian-appeal-2022-disasters-emergency-committee-dec-synthesis-report-submitted-07-february-2023>

¹⁴ <https://reliefweb.int/report/moldova/liminal-lives-gender-and-diversity-assessment-refugees-ukraine-moldova-after-one-year-forced-displacement>

While refugees generally feel safe in Moldova and report positive relations with host communities, most express their intention to permanently return to Ukraine when the security situation allows. This contributes to a state of uncertainty among refugees, affecting livelihoods, education and social integration.¹⁵

Employment-related challenges abound for refugees, particularly for single women-headed households, Roma women, older persons, and people with disabilities. They face barriers including a lack of flexible work opportunities, a lack of childcare services, language-related obstacles, limited job opportunities, skills-job mismatches, and inadequate information about employment options.

The inadvertent marginalisation of male refugees has been reported, especially in terms of livelihood opportunities and mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) programmes. So too has discrimination against Roma refugees on the grounds of their ethnicity, with Roma women experiencing compounded discrimination due to their gender and ethnicity, with a negative impact on their access to housing and livelihoods. Concerns persist about sexual exploitation and abuse, especially for single women refugees with children who are particularly reliant on assistance and shelter, as do challenges in terms of accessing mental health services.¹⁶

These concerns highlight the importance of tailored interventions for diverse groups of refugees and the need for greater inclusivity in humanitarian planning and assistance, considering underrepresented groups such as Roma people, persons with disabilities, older persons, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ) individuals, rural residents, and host communities.

2.4. Country ranking on international gender indices and ratings

The four major international indices that measure progress towards gender equality are the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report, the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) Gender Development Index (GDI) and Gender Inequality Index (GII), and the World Bank's Women, Business and the Law (WBL) Index.

Moldova ranks 19th of 146 countries in the **Global Gender Gap Report 2023** with a score is 0.788 (on a scale from 0.001 to 1, where 1 means full gender parity).¹⁷ In the past 10 years, Moldova has progressed steadily in terms of its Global Gender Gap score and ranking. For example, in 2013 it ranked 52nd with a score of 0.704.¹⁸

¹⁵ <https://reliefweb.int/report/moldova/liminal-lives-gender-and-diversity-assessment-refugees-ukraine-moldova-after-one-year-forced-displacement>

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ World Economic Forum, *Global Gender Gap Report 2023*, WEF, Cologny, 2023. https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2023.pdf

¹⁸ https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GenderGap_Report_2013.pdf

Moldova's performance as measured by the Global Gender Gap Index is also better than other Eastern Partnership countries and many EU Member States. Considering each of four dimensions of the index separately, Moldova fares best in terms of economic opportunities (ranking 3rd, with a score of 0.863), and health and survival (ranking 40th, with a score of 0.977). However, Moldova is the farthest from gender parity in the spheres of political empowerment (ranking 44th, with a score of 0.314), and educational attainment (ranking 53th, with a score of 0.996).¹⁹

The **Gender Development Index** measures gender gaps in human development achievements by accounting for disparities between women and men in three basic dimensions of human development – health, knowledge and living standards. A country's GDI value is obtained by calculating its Human Development Index (HDI) value separately for women and men, and then expressing the female HDI as a percentage of the male HDI. Moldova ranked 80th of 191 countries on the Human Development Index 2021, with its HDI value of 0.767 placing it in the “high human development” category. The impact of crises like COVID-19 and the war in Ukraine have exacerbated inequalities, leading to a 7.3% loss in Moldova's HDI value due to inequality.

Moldova's **Gender Inequality Index** value is 0.205, and it ranked 51st of 170 countries on the index in 2021, as women have an HDI value of 0.771, compared to 0.763 for men.²⁰ The Gender Inequality Index is a composite measure reflecting inequality in achievement between women and men in three dimensions: reproductive health, empowerment and the labour market. In 2020, Moldova ranked 44th in the world on the index.²¹ The key challenges which underlie Moldova's ranking continue as in previous years, namely gender gaps in the labour force participation rate, and women's underrepresentation in parliament.

Figure 2. Moldova's progress on the Gender Inequality Index

Moldova (Republic of)			
2020 GII value	0.228		
GI change from 2019	-0.001		
Maternal Mortality Ratio	19.0 death/100,000 live births		
Adolescent Birth Rate	27.4 births/1,000 women age 15-19		
	Female	Male	Gender gap
Share of seats in parliament	24.8%	75.2%	-50.5%
Population with at least some secondary education (age 25 and older)	96.1%	98.0%	-1.8%
Labour force participation rate (age 15 and older)	36.1%	45.0%	-8.9%

Source: <https://hdr.undp.org/data-center/thematic-composite-indices/gender-inequality-index#/indicies/GII>

¹⁹ World Economic Forum, *Global Gender Gap Report 2023*, WEF, Cologny, 2023. https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2023.pdf

²⁰ <https://www.undp.org/moldova/press-releases/moldova-multidimensional-shocks-exacerbate-inequalities>

²¹ <https://hdr.undp.org/data-center/thematic-composite-indices/gender-inequality-index#/indicies/GII>

The **Women, Business and the Law Index** measures the laws and regulations that affect women's economic opportunity in 190 economies. The index presents eight indicators structured around women's interactions with the law as they move through their lives and careers: mobility, the workplace, pay, marriage, parenthood, entrepreneurship, assets, and pension.²² Better performance in these areas measured is associated with a more narrow gender gap in development outcomes, higher female labour force participation, lower levels of vulnerable employment, and women's greater representation in national parliaments. Moldova's value on the Women, Business and the Law Index has improved from 81.9 in 2011–2016 to 87.5 out of 100 in 2018–2022. This is higher than the regional average for Europe and Central Asia (84.1).²³ Moldova excels in aspects such as freedom of movement, laws impacting women's pay, marriage-related constraints, and gender differences in property and inheritance. However, there is room for improvement in terms of legal equality, particularly concerning laws affecting women's work-related decisions and the size of a woman's pension, with suggested reforms including equalising the retirement age for men and women.

Figure 3. Moldova's performance on the areas of the Women, Business and the Law Index 2022



Source: <https://wbl.worldbank.org/content/dam/documents/wbl/2022/snapshots/Moldova.pdf>

²² <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/35094>

²³ <https://wbl.worldbank.org/content/dam/documents/wbl/2022/snapshots/Moldova.pdf>



3. LEGAL AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

3.1. International and regional commitments on gender equality and women's empowerment (GEWE)

Moldova is committed to international frameworks that promote gender equality and women's empowerment, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the United Nations' (UN) Convention on the Political Rights of Women (1953), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1979), the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995), the Millennium Declaration (2000), the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2015) and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and relevant Conventions of the International Labour Organization (ILO), among others.

Moldova's GEWE commitments are aligned with CEDAW's emphasis on women's rights and their political and economic empowerment, including women's vital role in economic development. The country's commitment to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development reflect its dedication to addressing gender disparities, especially in rural areas, emphasising women's access to productive resources and equal rights in agriculture and rural livelihoods. The Government is actively integrating the SDGs into national planning, with a focus on gender-sensitive indicators, reflecting a commitment to gender equality as a cross-cutting consideration for achieving multiple SDGs, particularly SDG 5, the standalone goal on gender equality. This ongoing process includes streamlining gender equality goals into national policies, aligned with the National Development Strategy, "Moldova 2030". Additionally, specific gender-sensitive indicators have been defined and approved, covering multiple SDGs and emphasising the importance of leaving no one behind, particularly women and girls in rural areas.

By ratifying CEDAW, the ILO Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention (No. 111), the Equal Remuneration Convention (No. 100) and the Maternity Protection Convention (No. 183), as well as by signing the Beijing Platform for Action and the EU Association Agreement, Moldova has committed to ensure gender equality and promote women's participation in decision-making processes as agents and beneficiaries of sustainable development.

On 23 June 2022, the European Council granted Moldova candidate status. It invited the European Commission to report to the Council on the fulfilment of the conditions specified in the Commission's opinion on the country's membership application. On 8 November 2023, the European Commission recommended that the European Council start negotiations with Moldova on EU accession. Moldova's integration into the EU requires adherence to gender equality and women's empowerment priorities enshrined in relevant instruments. These include the Amsterdam Treaty (1999), the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, the revised European Criterion of Democracy adopted at the Fourth European Ministerial Conference on Equality between Women and Men in Istanbul (1997), the Declaration and Action Plan adopted at the Third Summit of the Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe in Warsaw (2005), the Resolution on Achieving Gender Equality: A Challenge for Human Rights and a Prerequisite for Economic Development adopted at the Sixth European Ministerial Conference on Equality between Women and Men in Stockholm (2006), the Framework Strategy for Equality between Women and Men 2001–2005, and the Roadmap for Equality between Women and Men 2006–2010, among others.

Despite progress on Moldova's international commitments, more needs to be done to achieve gender equality, particularly in terms of women's representation in decision-making positions. In its Concluding Observations, the CEDAW Committee noted the persistence of patriarchal attitudes and deep-seated stereotypes regarding the roles and responsibilities of women and men in the family and society. These are the root causes of (i) women's disadvantaged position in political and public life, (ii) violence against women, and (iii) gender segregation, as reflected in the educational choices of women and girls, as well as in employment options.²⁴

The most recent development in the field of Moldova's international commitments on gender equality is the long-awaited ratification of the **Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combatting Violence against Women and Domestic Violence** through the Law on the convention's ratification (No. 144 of 14.10.2021), in force as of 1 May 2022.

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

Moldova's national legislative framework for equality between women and men is in line with its international commitments. However, implementation lags behind, and women continue to face discrimination and inequality in social, economic and political life. Article 16 (part 2) of the Constitution of the Republic of Moldova guarantees equal rights irrespective of sex, as well as a number of other characteristics. Separate legislation reiterates the principles of gender equality and non-discrimination in all areas of public and private life.

²⁴ Buzu Alexei, Cantarji Vasile, Precup Galina, *Gender Barometer. How do men and women participate in decision-making*, 2018, <http://www2.unwomen.org/-/media/field%20office%20moldova/attachments/publications/2018/gender%20barometer.pdf?la=en&vs=34>

For example, in February 2006, Parliament adopted the Law on Ensuring Equal Opportunities between Women and Men. Its purpose is to ensure that both women and men exercise equal rights in the political, economic, social, cultural and other spheres of life – rights guaranteed by the Constitution – in order to prevent and eliminate all forms of discrimination based on sex (Article 1). The law’s adoption represented an important step forward. It marked the first time national legislation in Moldova defined the concept of discrimination, especially on the basis of sex. It also defined a range of other concepts – such as equal opportunities – and established a solid legal and institutional framework for equality between women and men.

The Law on Ensuring Equality (2012) prohibits discrimination on the basis of several protected characteristics, including sex. It specifies three areas in which discrimination has a particularly negative impact: employment, education, and access to public services and goods. This law establishes the Council for Preventing and Eliminating Discrimination and Ensuring Equality, which is now part of Moldova’s national institutional machinery for gender equality.

Significant amendments have been introduced in the legal framework relevant to labour and childcare in 2022 and 2023. These changes include provisions for employers to provide childcare services, the principle of equal remuneration for equal work or work of equal value, and enhanced measures against gender-based differences in salaries. Other improvements include flexible work arrangements, paid paternity leave, and strengthened measures against workplace sexual harassment. Table 1 summarises recent legislative amendments in the field of gender equality and women’s empowerment.

Table 1. Legislative developments on gender equality and women’s empowerment in Moldova, 2022–2023

Legal framework	Scope/amendments
Law No. 46 of 10.03.2022 to amend some normative acts	Includes an amendment on childcare services for children up to the age of 3 that can be provided by employers for the benefit of employees at the unit level (amendments made to the Labour Code and the Education Code).
Law No. 107 of 21.04.22 to amend some normative acts	<p>The amendments to the normative acts aim to introduce into legislation the principle of equal remuneration for equal work or for work of equal value.</p> <p>Five new concepts are defined: remuneration, salary level, the gender pay gap, equal work, and work of equal value (the Labour Code; Salary Law).</p> <p>An important amendment introduced to the Salary Law is as follows (highlighted in bold): “Article 3-4. The system of evaluation and classification of functions for establishing salary levels. (5) If the gender differences in pay exceed 5%, and these differences cannot be justified by objective and gender-neutral factors, the employer must remedy the situation.”</p>

Legal framework	Scope/amendments
<p>Law No. 195 of 14.07.22 to amend some normative acts</p>	<p>The main amendments to the Labour Code concern:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexible work formulas – work programmes that allow employees to adapt their work schedules, including through the use of remote work, working at home, a flexible work regime, part-time work or a compressed work week. • Partially paid leave for the care of a child up to the age of 3. This is granted, optionally, to one parent, one grandparent, another relative who directly takes care of the child, as well as tutors. • Paternity leave: (1) Paternity leave is granted to ensure the effective participation of the father in the care of the newborn child. (2) The father of the newborn child benefits from the right to paternity leave of 14 calendar days. (3) Paternity leave is granted based on a written request during the first 12 months after the birth of the child. <p>Amendments to Law No. 289/2004 on allowances for temporary incapacity for work and other social insurance benefits include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The right to paternal allowance for the care of a newborn child. • The conditions for establishing the paternal allowance. • The entitlement of the insured individual, who is on paternity leave, to paternity allowance. • The basis for calculating the social insurance allowance.
<p>Law No. 367 of 29.12.2022 on alternative childcare services</p>	<p>The law establishes the normative framework for the creation, organisation and operation of alternative care services for children up to 3 years old, and the legal regime regarding the initiation and development of these activities in Moldova.</p> <p>Alternative childcare services for children up to 3 years old are those organised by an employer at the workplace, by a qualified childcare worker at his/her home/temporary residence, or at the home/temporary residence of the legal representatives of children, under the terms of this law.</p>
<p>Law No. 2 of 02.02.2023 on modification of some normative acts (revision of the legal framework regarding non-discrimination and ensuring equality)</p>	<p>The Contravention Code No. 218/2008 is supplemented with the following articles: harassment; victimisation; and obstructing the work of the Equality Council.</p> <p>Law No. 121/2012 on ensuring equality aims to harmonise certain concepts with other laws (discrimination, direct discrimination, indirect discrimination, discrimination by association, continuous discrimination, prolonged discrimination, and positive measures).</p> <p>Law No. 298/2012 on the activity of the Council for Equality has been entirely revised and completed.</p>

Legal framework	Scope/amendments
Law No. 74 of 31.03.23 to amend some normative acts	<p>Amendments to the Labour Code include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compliance with the principle of non-discrimination, ensuring measures to prevent and combat sexual harassment and any other form of harm to dignity at work. • Measures to prevent and combat discrimination based on any criterion, sexual harassment and victimisation at work. <p>Amendments to Law No. 5/2006 on ensuring equal opportunities between women and men include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Including procedures necessary to ensure equality between women and men, as well as provisions related to the prevention and combatting of sexual harassment at the workplace, in individual employment contracts, in collective employment contracts, and in collective agreements as obligations of the employer and the employee.
Law No. 250 of 31.07.2023 on the amendment of Law No. 45/2007 regarding the prevention and combatting of family violence	The law establishes the National Agency for the Prevention and Combatting of Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, including its foundation and organisation.

3.3. National gender policies

To implement Moldova's international and national commitments to gender equality and women's empowerment, a series of national strategies and action plans to promote gender equality have been designed since 2006. In 2016, a law on temporary special measures introduced a 40% quota for each gender in cabinets and electoral lists, provisions for paternity leave, and a ban on sexist advertising. However, the implementation of gender equality measures remains slow. Women still face discrimination and inequality in social, economic and political life, and their representation in Moldovan politics and decision-making remains below international benchmarks.

An example of the recently implemented gender policy is the Strategy to Ensure Equality Between Women and Men for 2017–2021 (approved through Government Decision No. 259 of 28.04.2017). Its main goal is to foster respect for the rule of law in terms of implementing human rights protection measures, ensuring rule of law values, promoting economic growth, and strengthening society as a whole. Equality between women and men implies equal rights, opportunities and responsibilities for both women and men in all spheres of public and private life.

As of November 2023, three key gender strategies in place in Moldova are:

- The Programme for the Promotion and Ensuring Equality between Women and Men in the Republic of Moldova, 2023–2027.
- The National Programme on Preventing and Combatting Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, 2023–2027.

- The National Action Plan for the Implementation of Resolution 1325 of the UN Security Council on Women, Peace and Security, 2023–2027.

In April 2023, the Government of Moldova approved the **Programme for the Promotion and Ensuring Equality between Women and Men, 2023–2027** (by Government Decision No. 203/2023).²⁵ The programme is aligned with the priorities of the National Development Strategy, “Moldova 2030”, and Moldova’s international commitments from the perspective of human rights. The programme’s main goal is to increase gender equality in areas such as health, education, the labour market, entrepreneurship, social protection and local development, as well as to strengthen interventions to produce positive results, with a view to promoting gender equality as a fundamental right.

In May 2023, the Government approved the **National Programme on Preventing and Combatting Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, 2023–2027**.²⁶ The programme aims to contribute to advancing gender equality and combatting gender stereotypes, ensuring zero tolerance towards all forms of violence against women and domestic violence in line with the Istanbul Convention, and ensuring an effective multidisciplinary response to cases of violence. The programme is aligned with relevant regional and international frameworks, including: the Istanbul Convention, CEDAW, the Association Agreement between the Republic of Moldova and the European Union 2021–2027, the Recommendation of the Group of Experts for Action against Violence against Women and Family Violence (GREVIO) No. 1 on the digital dimension of violence against women, and Recommendation 2030 (2013) of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on violence against women. The programme also reflects Moldova’s EU accession priorities, specified in the Action Plan for the implementation of the measures proposed by the European Commission in its Opinion on country’s application for accession, regarding measure no. 9, “strengthening the protection of human rights, especially in the case of vulnerable groups and solidifying commitments to strengthen gender equality and combat violence against women”. This was approved by the National European Integration Commission on 4 August 2022.

Another legal development in 2023 was the adoption of the **National Action Plan (NAP) for the Implementation of Resolution 1325 of UN Security Council on Women, Peace and Security for 2023–2027**.²⁷ The National Action Plan’s objectives are to ensure cohesion between actors in the security and defence sector, in order to reduce stereotypes and barriers in the field, improve women’s representation in all sectoral areas of security and defence, increase the efficiency of mechanisms for preventing, reporting and investigating cases of violence, increase women’s participation in international peacekeeping missions, and facilitate women’s and men’s participation in equal conditions at all stages of conflict resolution.

²⁵ https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=137409&lang=ro

²⁶ https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=138005&lang=ro

²⁷ <https://maisgurinue.md/en/the-republic-of-moldova-has-approved-a-national-action-plan-that-provides-women-with-an-active-role-in-creating-the-security-context>

3.4. Gender dimension of national development strategies, gender mapping of national reforms, and gender-sensitive indicators in national policies

Public policies impact women and men differently. Therefore, it is important that state institutions use sex-disaggregated data throughout the process of policy formulation, planning and development.²⁸ Considering gender differences in policy development is aligned with Moldova's legal framework, including laws such as the Law on the Ensuring Equal Opportunities for Women and Men and the Law on Ensuring Equality, as well as strategies that emphasise the need to collect sex-disaggregated data in various socio-economic domains. Global frameworks also highlight the importance of sex-disaggregated data, including SDG targets on gender equality, poverty, health, climate change, and labour force employment.

Moldova's National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) is responsible for the quality of gender statistics in line with international standards and the Law on Official Statistics, as well as for disseminating gender statistics through a dedicated section in the Statistical Data Bank. Despite the development of the National Development Strategy, "Moldova 2030",²⁹ the strategy was subsequently withdrawn due to political circumstances, which have also contributed to the stagnation of sectoral strategies and programmes. Existing national strategies and programmes, including those related to women's economic empowerment, face delays in terms of being updated and revised.

Major categories of statistical data that reflect public spending are data on public life, the labour market and employment, and social protection (pensions and health).

In 2021, the EU4 Gender Equality Reform Helpdesk project conducted a gender mapping of 39 ongoing reforms in Moldova. It concluded that most national strategies and programmes behind the reform processes – especially in thematic areas such as energy, digital transformation, infrastructure, transport and climate change – are largely gender neutral. The reforms that most integrate gender are in the field of ICT and strengthening the legal and institutional framework on gender equality and women's empowerment. The reforms that take gender into account least concern the domains of pensions, the banking sector, and justice and law enforcement.³⁰

²⁸ Mincu Georgeta, Profile of Women in Economy and Business, 2016. https://www.undp.org/content/dam/unct/moldova/docs/04_machet-FEMEILE_econom_2018_ENG.pdf

²⁹ https://www.imf.md/press/SND_MD2030_25_Jun_eng.pdf

³⁰ <https://euneighbourseast.eu/news/publications/country-gender-profile-of-the-republic-of-moldova>

A recent development in this field is the adoption of the **Roadmap on Women's Economic Empowerment**, developed by the Secretariat of the Economic Council under the Prime Minister,³¹ and launched by the Government on 13 May 2022. The roadmap has five major objectives:

- Eliminating barriers to equal access to resources.
- Developing education, skills and abilities.
- Promoting women's entrepreneurship.
- Improving access to participation in the labour market.
- Strengthening partnerships with the private sector to implement the principles of women's empowerment.

After its launch in May 2022, several development partners – such as the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the German Agency for International Development (GIZ), the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), and others – joined the roadmap with concrete actions. The roadmap functions as a guide that informs programming of both governmental and development partners in the field of women's economic empowerment.

3.5. Institutional framework/machinery

The institutional framework for ensuring equal opportunities between women and men, in the context of Law No. 5 of 09.02.2006 (articles 15-20), with amendments introduced in 2016, and subsequent laws adopted in 2022–2023, refers to 10 authorities:

- Parliament.
- The Government.
- The Government Commission for Equality between Women and Men.
- The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection.
- The State Labour Inspectorate.
- Line ministries and other central administrative authorities.
- Local public administration authorities.
- The National Bureau of Statistics.
- The Equality Council (until recently known as the Council for the Prevention and Elimination of Discrimination and Ensuring Equality).
- The National Agency for the Prevention and Combatting of Violence against Women and Domestic Violence.

These institutions have different mandates but together form Moldova's national machinery for advancing gender equality.

³¹ https://consecon.gov.md/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/FP_-Abilitarea-Economica-Femeilor_12.12.22_FIN.Actualizata.pdf

Parliament has legislative responsibility for ensuring gender equality across all domains, which involves the formulation, monitoring and assessment of gender equality principles in state policies.

The **Government** is empowered to integrate the principle of equality into policies, to approve national plans, and to periodically report to parliament on gender equality.

The **Government Commission on Gender Equality** coordinates gender-related activities, analyses national plans, and assesses the utilisation of financial resources to advance gender equality.

The **Ministry of Labour and Social Protection** houses a specialised unit responsible for developing and implementing gender equality policies, including legal framework enhancement, project development and programme coordination.

Other central public administration authorities are tasked with ensuring gender equality in their respective domains, addressing personnel policies and submitting reports to the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection. A Gender Focal Point within each central body monitors compliance with gender equality legislation, approves reports, handles cases of gender-based discrimination, and collaborates with relevant authorities. Local public administration authorities are mandated to implement gender equality principles at the local level, including by monitoring programmes, cooperating with organisations, and submitting reports to the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection.

Gender units within local public administration bodies submit proposals for gender mainstreaming, address discrimination issues, participate in case examinations, and report on the implementation of gender equality measures.

The **Ministry of Finance** serves as the national aid coordination body, managing foreign aid and coordinating with external partners. The Inter-ministerial Council on Preventing and Combatting Gender-based Violence includes representatives from public authorities and civil society.

The **People's Advocate** ensures the guarantee and observance of gender equality as an integral part of constitutional human rights and freedoms.

Article 22 of the Law No. 5 of 09.02.2006 determines the conditions for the development of gender statistics. Therefore, the **National Bureau of Statistics** is responsible for collecting, processing and analysing statistical information disaggregated by sex. At the same time, central and local public administration authorities, parties, other socio-political organisations, legal entities and natural persons who carry out entrepreneurial activities are required to present sex-disaggregated information to the National Bureau of Statistics.

Important developments in the institutional framework on gender equality in Moldova in 2022–2023 include the revision of the status and functions of the Council for the Prevention and Elimination of Discrimination and Ensuring Equality (now known as the

Equality Council), and the establishment of the National Agency for the Prevention and Combatting of Violence against Women and Domestic Violence.

The Equality Council, formerly the Council for the Prevention and Elimination of Discrimination and Ensuring Equality, underwent a significant transformation with Law No. 2 of 02.02.2023. The revision aimed to enhance the mechanism for preventing and combatting discrimination, incorporating insights from the council's ten years of activity. Over this period, the council processed 2,109 complaints, issued 201 advisory opinions and made 1,772 decisions, 496 of which were related to gender-based discrimination.³² The amendments focus on improving legislation, changing practices, increasing public awareness, monitoring implementation, fostering cooperation, sanctioning discrimination, and examining complaints. These changes involve expanded powers, clarified procedures and increased personnel to enhance effectiveness.

The **National Agency for the Prevention and Combatting of Violence against Women and Domestic Violence** was established through the amendment of Law No. 45/2007. As of 11 August 2023, the Agency operates under the Government's authority, coordinating inter-institutional efforts to prevent and combat violence against women and family violence.³³ It undertakes functions such as implementing national programmes, monitoring public policies, facilitating civil society cooperation, and reporting on the national application regarding the Istanbul Convention. The creation of the National Coordinating Council in this domain, comprising representatives of central authorities, civil society and other stakeholders, further reflects a comprehensive approach to addressing violence against women and family violence.

3.6. Accountability framework of gender policies and national machinery

In line with Law No. 5 of 09.02.2006 on Ensuring Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, Moldova has established a structured framework for accountability vis-à-vis implementation and reporting on policies to promote gender equality. Various administrative levels, ranging from local authorities to government commissions, are involved in fostering equal opportunities for men and women. This legal foundation reflects a comprehensive approach to address and eliminate discrimination and inequality.

According to the Law, **gender units** within local public administration bodies are mandated to periodically submit reports on their activities to the corresponding authorities. Simultaneously, these units develop comprehensive reports on the execution of the national policy on equal opportunities for women and men, and forwarding these to specialised bodies.

³² <https://egalitate.md/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Brosura-A5-10-ani-Consiliul-pentru-Egalitate-ro-web.pdf>

³³ https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=138505&lang=ro

Local public administration authorities are required to submit reports detailing the status of implementation of the national policy on equal opportunities within their respective territories to the Ministry of Labour, and Social Protection. Similarly, gender units operating within central public authorities prepare reports on the policy's implementation and seek approval from the Gender Coordination Group.

Gender Focal Points within central specialised public administration bodies play a crucial role by approving reports from gender units, proposing measures to eliminate discriminatory conditions, and submitting these approved reports to specialised bodies. Central public administration authorities, following established procedures, submit reports on the status of national policy implementation to the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection.

The **Ministry of Labour and Social Protection** is the central authority for gender equality policies. It not only develops and submits policy documents for government approval, but also coordinates various activities, including the development of periodic national reports and the implementation of recommendations from international committees.

The **Government Commission on Gender Equality**, operating under an approved statute, examines reports on policy implementation across various fields, and disseminates information to the public about the state of gender equality.

The **Equality Council**, tasked with safeguarding Moldovans against discrimination, submits an annual general report to Parliament by 15 March.

Parliament, in accordance with Moldova's legislation, hears reports from the Government and the People's Advocate on the state of affairs in the field of gender equality.

In 2021–2023, evaluations of several national strategies and programmes were reported and presented. In addition, a number of evaluations and reports were developed by international partners on the effectiveness of government actions and on progress achieved. Key reports include:

- The Government's Voluntary National Review on its implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, submitted in 2020.³⁴
- The Government's national progress report on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, submitted on 15 September 2023.³⁵
- The final evaluation report on the strategy for ensuring equality between women and men in 2017–2021.³⁶
- A 2022 report on the implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on Combatting Violence against Women and Domestic Violence.³⁷

³⁴ <https://cancelaria.gov.md/ro/apc/monitorizarea-si-evaluarea-implementarii-agendei-de-dezvoltare-durabila-2030>

³⁵ <https://gov.md/ro/content/guvernul-publicat-raportul-national-de-progres-privind-implementarea-agendei-de-dezvoltare>

³⁶ https://social.gov.md/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Raport_Evaluare_FINAL_StrategiaEgalitateGen2017-2021c-1.pdf

³⁷ <https://egalitate.md/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/raport-final-2022-rev-1.pdf>

- A 2023 study on the compatibility of Moldova's legal and institutional framework with the provisions of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combatting Violence against Women and Domestic Violence on a digital level.³⁸
- The 2020 "Generations and Gender Study", developed by the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, the National Bureau of Statistics, UNFPA and the Netherlands Interdisciplinary Demographic Institute's Generations and Gender Programme (NIDI-GGP).³⁹
- A 2022 report on the state of preventing and combatting discrimination in Moldova.⁴⁰
- An evaluation report of the National Strategy to Prevent and Combat Violence Against Women and Violence in the Family, developed by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) in 2023.⁴¹

These evaluations and reports by national and international entities during 2021–2023 contribute significantly to a comprehensive assessment of Moldova's progress in implementing various strategies and programmes, offering valuable insights into achievements and areas that require further attention.

3.7. Financing for gender equality: Gender-responsive budgeting

In 2022–2023, Moldova has been actively engaged in evaluating and enhancing its approach to gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) within the framework of its international commitments. While national legislation does not explicitly mention gender-responsive budgeting, the legal and strategic framework includes elements that provide a reliable basis for work in this direction. Notably, the Law on Public Finance and Budgetary Fiscal Responsibility emphasises principles such as the equitable distribution of resources between women and men, and budgetary transparency. It highlights:

- The principle of performance (Art. 11): budgetary resources are allocated and used economically, efficiently and effectively, in line with the principles of good governance.
- The principle of transparency (Art. 12): draft normative acts in the field of public finances are subject to public consultation; budgets are drawn up, approved and administered in a transparent manner.

Government Decision No. 933 of 2009 recognised the importance of gender-responsive budgeting for promoting gender equality. However, subsequent evaluations revealed challenges in implementation, including gender dimensions not being valorised in the budgetary process, a lack of gender-sensitive indicators, and insufficient analysis in the draft budget.

³⁸ <https://social.gov.md/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Studiu-violenta-digitala.pdf>

³⁹ https://social.gov.md/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/raportul_studiului_generatii_si_gen_Republica-Moldova.pdf

⁴⁰ <https://egalitate.md/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/raport-final-2022-rev-1.pdf>

⁴¹ <https://moldova.unwomen.org/ro/digital-library/publications/2023/03/raport-de-evaluare-a-strategiei-nationale-de-prevenire-si-combatere-a-violentei-fata-de-femei-si-violentei-in-familie>

Government Decision No. 259 of 2017 aimed to integrate gender-responsive budgeting into the budgetary process. However, the lack of a legislative framework and budgetary instructions remained a challenge.

Efforts to mainstream gender-responsive budgeting have faced obstacles due to the absence of a comprehensive framework and insufficient understanding of gender-responsive budgeting concepts. Civil society and academia have played a crucial role in conducting gender analyses of public expenditures, although their impact has been limited due to a lack of systematic implementation.

In 2022, Moldova underwent a fifth Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability (PEFA) assessment, including a supplementary assessment on Gender Responsive Public Financial Management (GRPFM).⁴² The results confirm that Moldova does not have a comprehensive gender-responsive budgeting framework in place. The lack of guidance through a budget circular has led to a non-systematic presentation of integrated information in budget documentation. The Ministry of Finance and line ministries lack systematic information on gender-related spending.

The PEFA supplementary assessment reveals that Moldova's GRPFM practices are at an early stage, with initial efforts to mainstream gender impact analysis in relevant public financial management processes. However, gender considerations are not consistently integrated, reflecting scores below the required level.⁴³

In terms of public financial management reform, the completion of the Public Financial Management Reform Strategy 2013–2022 and the subsequent development of the Public Finance Management Development Strategy 2023–2030⁴⁴ represent significant steps forward. The new strategy incorporates cross-sectoral objectives, including objectives related to gender equality based on recommendations from the GRPFM 2022 and various reports assessing Moldova's financial performance.

In September 2023, the Ministry of Finance and UN Women formalised their notable collaboration by signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU).⁴⁵ This three-year commitment aims to strengthen cooperation in integrating gender-sensitive budgeting into policy and budget planning processes. Activities include capacity building for officials, aligning national legislation with international norms on gender-sensitive budgeting, and advancing gender-responsive public finance management.

Overall, Moldova has made strides in recognising the importance of gender-responsive budgeting and is taking concrete steps to address challenges and incorporate gender dimensions into its financial management systems.

⁴² <https://mf.gov.md/sites/default/files/documente%20relevante/Ex-post%20evaluation%20Report%20of%20the%202013-2022%20Public%20Financial%20Management%20Strategy.pdf>

⁴³ <https://www.imf.md/press/wpia2022050-print-pdf.pdf>

⁴⁴ https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=135819&lang=ro

⁴⁵ <https://moldova.unwomen.org/en/stories/comunicat-de-presa/2023/09/ministerul-finantelor-si-un-women-vor-colabora-in-domeniul-bugetarii-sensibile-la-gen>

Nevertheless, most activities related to gender-responsive budgeting in Moldova focus on just one of its stages – gender analysis of public expenditures and revenues. This is performed by civil society organisations in an ad hoc manner in the framework of different projects and scientific research.

Reform efforts on gender-responsive budgeting can build on achievements in strengthening the public finance management system (such as medium-term budgeting, spending reviews and public investment management) in recent years. At the same time, gender-responsive budgeting reforms are most effective when they are prioritised within the overall reform agenda. The development of Moldova's Public Finance Management Strategy provides a starting point to integrate gender equality into the broader public finance management reform agenda.

Collaboration between the Ministry of Finance and development partners, such as the EU and UN Women, reflects a commitment to advancing gender equality through comprehensive policy and budgetary approaches.

3.8. Non-state actors working on gender equality and women's empowerment

In Moldova, various non-state actors are actively involved in advancing gender equality and women's empowerment. These organisations undertake a range of initiatives, such as empowerment training, raising awareness of women's issues, advocating for gender-sensitive legislation, establishing shelters for survivors of domestic violence, and championing women's rights. Over time, women's groups and organisations have demonstrated increasing effectiveness and impact through their endeavours.

Some of these organisations opt for a collaborative approach, forming loose networks or platforms that facilitate concerted efforts through targeted campaigns that address specific gender-related issues. Platforms serve as connectors for women's organisations, fostering collaboration on issues like domestic violence and advocating for legislative amendments to enhance gender sensitivity. Campaigns mobilise the collective energy of women's organisations, generating discussions related to women's interests and drawing attention to violations of women's human rights in the media.

Notable civil society organisations and platforms actively engaged in advancing gender equality in Moldova include:

- The Platform for Gender Equality: Launched on 19 June 2015, the platform is a voluntary union of individuals and legal entities. It currently has 26 members, and functions as a unified voice for actively promoting gender equality.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ <https://womenplatform.net/organization/the-platform-for-gender-equality>

- The National Coalition, “Life Without Domestic Violence”: This national network, consisting of 23 non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and public institutions, is committed to promoting the rights of women and children who have been subjected to domestic violence. The coalition aims to reduce violence in both families and society at large.⁴⁷
- National Centre for Studies and Information on Women’s Issues - Partnership for Development: Established in 1998, this non-governmental organisation fosters inclusive discourse on gender issues, women’s status, and equal opportunities for women and men.⁴⁸
- Women’s Law Centre (WLC): Founded in 2009, the centre is dedicated to promoting and protecting women’s rights, and thereby contributing to the reduction of domestic violence in Moldova. Between 2020 and 2023, it conducted significant studies and surveys, and developed reports addressing domestic violence against women, femicide, fatalities, and the perceptions of women police officers on sexual harassment.⁴⁹

In addition to civil society organisations, academic institutions play a vital role in promoting gender equality and women’s empowerment, particularly the Academy of Economic Studies of Moldova. Academia actively contributes to the implementation of gender-responsive budgeting by incorporating this subject into the academic curriculum and serving as the main disseminator and developer of the concept of gender-responsive budgeting within the central public administration (CPA) and local public administrations (LPAs).

Other stakeholders, including citizens and international organisations, also contribute to promoting gender equality and women’s empowerment. Key organisations in this regard include UN Women, UNDP, the World Bank, the EU Delegation to Moldova, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), Austrian Development Cooperation (ADC), and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection – as the sectoral coordinator of foreign aid – is the central public administration body responsible for sectoral policies in the domain of gender equality within the Aid Coordination and Management Mechanism administered by the Ministry of Finance, and serves as the national coordinating authority.⁵⁰

In 2022–2023, women’s rights organisations (WROs) and other civil society organisations in Moldova quickly mobilised to support Ukrainian refugees. These entities receive funding from international agencies, donors and humanitarian organisations to offer humanitarian assistance and protection to women and girl who are refugees, to promote women’s leadership in the humanitarian response, and to build inclusive communities.⁵¹

⁴⁷ <https://womenplatform.net/organization/national-coalition-life-without-violence>

⁴⁸ <https://www.ourbodiesourselves.org/global-projects/moldova-center-partnership-for-development>

⁴⁹ <https://cdf.md/en/home>

⁵⁰ Government Decision on the approval of the institutional framework and mechanism for the coordination and management of foreign aid, no.377 of 25.04.2018.

⁵¹ <https://eca.unwomen.org/en/stories/news/2023/02/responding-with-care-beauty-services-coupled-with-counselling-for-ukrainian-refugees-in-moldova>

As Moldovan women's rights and civil society organisations had not previously been engaged in humanitarian work, they lacked knowledge and experience on humanitarian standards. Initially, as refugees began entering Moldova, their work with affected people was somewhat chaotic. Nevertheless, many of these organisations have longstanding experience of addressing protection concerns, including gender-based violence and providing support to vulnerable groups.

As most international humanitarian organisations were not present in Moldova in late February 2022 – and affected people did not receive aid from most such organisations until April – Moldovan civil society organisations, including women's rights organisations, alongside volunteers and local authorities became the first entities to provide support to people affected by the war in Ukraine, using their own enthusiasm, resources and skills. Since the humanitarian crisis began, women's rights organisations have been on hand to offer food, temporary accommodation, clothes, hygiene items, medicines, other basic essentials, psychological support and protection to internally displaced people and residents in areas where hostilities occurred. They have also provided life vests, clothes and medicines, among other support, to women serving in the armed forces, police, and other security and defence institutions.⁵²

After the initial weeks of the war in Ukraine, Moldovan women's rights organisations began conducting regular needs assessments of affected people. This has since become a relatively institutionalised practice, especially since international humanitarian organisations arrived and brought necessary resources with them.⁵³ As of 2023, the response provided by women's rights organisations is two-fold – they both react to direct requests for aid, and base their response programming on the findings of needs analyses.

Women's rights organisations in Moldova are clearly learning actively – both from trainings offered to them by international partners, as well as from their own experiences – and sharing their experiences with one another. During 2022–2023, women's rights organisations further intensified collaboration and attempts to coalesce into a unified movement. However, to achieve this, more resources need to be invested in networking and advocacy for gender equality and women's rights, since most resources are currently used to provide humanitarian aid to affected populations.

⁵² <https://reliefweb.int/report/ukraine/real-time-response-review-ukraine-humanitarian-appeal-2022-disasters-emergency-committee-dec-synthesis-report-submitted-07-february-2023>

⁵³ Ibid.

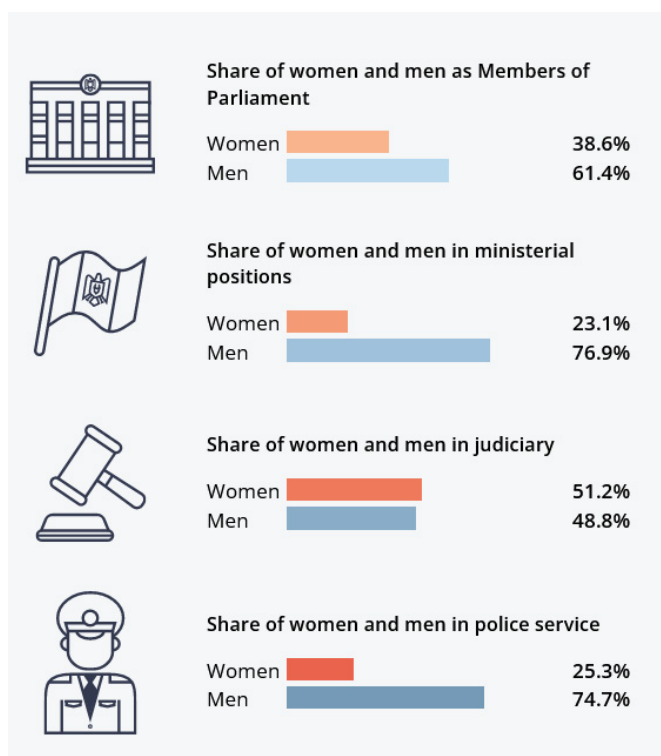


4. GENDER ANALYSIS BY SECTOR

4.1. Women in decision-making and leadership

Women's participation in leadership and decision-making roles has gradually increased, reflecting a noteworthy departure from historical norms. The landmark election of the first woman President in 2020, and the subsequent peak in the percentage of elected women Members of Parliament (40.6%) and the appointment of a woman Prime Minister in 2021, mark significant milestones

Figure 4. Women's representation in decision-making in Moldova, 2023



Source: <https://genderpulse.md/en/participation-in-decision-making/representation-of-women-and-men-in-decision-making-bodies>

Women in parliament: Women account for the majority of registered voters in Moldova (53.5%). As of November 2023, women's representation in parliament reached 38.6%, far higher than in the early years of Moldova's independence (1990–1994) when women comprised only 3.7% of Members of Parliament. During the last parliamentary elections in 2021, 46.7% of candidates were women,⁵⁴ underscoring the changing nature of gender representation in Moldovan politics.

Women in government: The period up to August 2021 was distinctive for Moldova, and a rare case globally, as both the President and Prime Minister were women, reflecting a unique and progressive political landscape. However, over the past decades, the representation of women in the Cabinet of Ministers has fluctuated over time, ranging from 9% in 1999–2001 to 5% in 2009–2011, 53.8% in mid-2019, 11.1% at the end of 2019, and 29.4% in 2021.⁵⁵ This varied representation highlights challenges in achieving consistent gender balance within the upper echelons of political decision-making.

The presidency continues to be held by a woman. Among the 16 ministers in the current Cabinet, three women hold pivotal positions – Minister of Justice, Minister of Health, and Minister of the Environment.⁵⁶

Public sentiment regarding women's access to decision-making: Results from a 2018 survey provide insight into shifting attitudes, with 61.3% expressing indifference to gender in voting decisions. However, a noteworthy 43% of respondents perceived the number of women in parliament as insufficient, indicating a growing awareness of the need for women's increased representation.⁵⁷

Gender quotas: The discourse surrounding gender quotas in Moldova dates back to the 1990s, with various initiatives aimed at fostering greater inclusion. A significant stride was made in 2016 when a law introduced a 40% minimum quota for each gender. However, subsequent reforms in 2017 and 2019 diluted the impact of this provision. Despite these challenges, the 2021 elections reflect a positive trajectory, with women parliamentarians reaching over 40%, thus meeting the target established by gender quota.⁵⁸

Local governance: There has been a notable upswing in women's participation in local governments, with their representation reaching 22% in 2019 – a testament to the increasing influence of women in crucial decision-making spheres. At the local level, the introduction of the 40% quota for each gender in the 2019 elections sought to address disparities in candidate positioning. However, implementation challenges persisted, notably regarding the rounding of quota requirements, raising concerns about the rulings of electoral commissions. In the 2019 local elections, women accounted for 45% of candidates for local councils and 43% of candidates for district and municipal councils, but only 27% of mayoral candidates.

⁵⁴ https://data.ipu.org/node/139/data-on-women?chamber_id=13501

⁵⁵ <https://www.gmfus.org/news/breaking-barriers-womens-participation-politics-georgia-moldova-and-ukraine>

⁵⁶ <https://gov.md/en/profiles/team>

⁵⁷ UN Women, *Gender Barometer: How do Women and Men Participate in Politics and Decision-Making?*, 2018.

⁵⁸ <https://www.gmfus.org/news/breaking-barriers-womens-participation-politics-georgia-moldova-and-ukraine>

The elections saw a sharp increase in women's representation in district councils, which rose to 27.1%, up from 18.5% in 2015. The proportion of women as members of city councils also improved to 36.5%, compared to 30% in 2015. There was only a slight increase in the proportion of women mayors, which rose to 21.8%, up from 20.6% in 2015.⁵⁹

Despite these advancements, women in politics continue to grapple with multifaceted challenges. Non-transparent recruitment practices within political parties, legislative loopholes enabling parties to side-step quotas, and the perceived ineffectiveness of formal gender mainstreaming institutions pose significant hurdles to women's political participation. Deeply ingrained societal gender stereotypes act as an additional barrier, hindering women's active participation in political decision-making processes.

While Moldova has made noteworthy strides in increasing women's representation in politics, challenges persist. The evolving political landscape requires sustained efforts to address recruitment practices, reinforce gender quotas, and challenge deeply rooted stereotypes. Achieving a more equitable political playing field requires a comprehensive and ongoing commitment to dismantling barriers and fostering an environment where women can contribute meaningfully to political decision-making.

4.2. Gender and economic and social rights

4.2.1. Gender and employment, and the gender pay gap

Moldova's economic landscape is marked by gender disparities in various facets of employment, reflecting nuanced challenges that affect women's economic participation. While progress has been made in narrowing certain gender gaps, persistent issues – such as the impact of family responsibilities on women's employment, unequal labour force participation rates, and gender segregation in specific sectors – underscore the need for a comprehensive understanding of the gendered aspects of employment in Moldova.

Economic activity of men and women: The overall economic activity rate of Moldova's population is low – that is, the percentage of people aged 15 and older who are either employed, are own-account workers, are seeking a job, or are entrepreneurs.

Women's economic activity rate (37.8%) is considerably lower than men's (46.3%), according to the 2023 Gender Pulse. In rural areas, these rates are 34% and 40.5%, respectively, compared to 43.5% and 56% in urban areas, respectively. Gender differences in economic activity have gradually narrowed over time. Between 2003 and 2018, men's economic activity rate decreased slightly faster than that the rate for women, leading to a certain convergence of participation levels.

⁵⁹ UNDP, *Gender Profile of the 2019 Local General Elections*, 24 January 2020.

Higher levels of economic activity among men have also contributed to the migration of more men abroad in search of employment, historically, compared to women. After 2008, the number of men involved in external migration increased almost in tandem with the number of women, but the number of women migrating increased slightly faster. Thus, between 2008 and 2018 the number of men migrating abroad in search of a job increased by 38.4%, while the number of women migrating to work abroad rose by 43%. Before 2008, the number of men who migrated abroad was much higher than that the number of women who did so. Therefore, men account for a larger share of Moldovans working abroad. In the 2008–2018 period, the share of men among total population who migrated to work abroad has practically not changed, fluctuating around 65%.⁶⁰ As of 2022, the gender ratio of Moldovan migrants abroad is estimated at 64 to 36.⁶¹

Employment of men and women: While men's unemployment rate remains higher (3.5% in 2022) than the rate for women (2.6%), the gap in unemployment rates has been narrowing. The reduction of this gap is not a unique or long-lasting trend, but it is characteristic of periods of economic growth and the general decrease in unemployment in the national economy. The gap in unemployment rates between men and women increases sharply in times of economic shocks, almost exclusively due to the much more significant increase in unemployment levels among men than among women. In periods of economic growth, the gender gap in unemployment gradually narrows, due to the faster decline in men's unemployment rate. For example, after the 2009 economic crisis, men's unemployment rate increased from 5.5% to 9.9% in just two years, while women's unemployment rate rose from 3.8% to 6.4%. The same scenario was repeated in 2015. After 2015, due to a period of economic growth, the gender gap in unemployment rates narrowed again to just 1.2%, although it began rising gradually following the economic shocks related to the COVID-19 pandemic.⁶²

However, the percentage of unemployed young women aged 15-24 (12.6%) is 4.8 times higher than the overall unemployment rate for women. Among men of the same age, 9.4% are unemployed.

The Global Gender Gap Report 2023 differences in the labour force participation rate (calculated as the labour force divided by the total population of working age) between women (70.59%) and men (74.7%).

Having children is the most critical factor affecting men's and women's economic activity, especially among 25–49-year-olds. The share of employed men with children who carry out economic or social activities for an income (64.6%) is almost twice as high as the share of women in this age group (37%).

More women (6.2%) than men (4%) are employed part-time. Having family responsibilities is cited as a key reason for part-time employment, especially among women.

⁶⁰ https://mei.gov.md/sites/default/files/document/attachments/studiu_piata_muncii_md_.pdf

⁶¹ <https://genderpulse.md/en>

⁶² https://mei.gov.md/sites/default/files/document/attachments/studiu_piata_muncii_md_.pdf

In terms of informal employment, the majority of informal workers (55%) are own-account workers, followed by contributing family workers (13%). Women account for 75% of contributing family workers. The sectors where informality is most common are agriculture and construction, with shares of informal employment above 60%.⁶³ Women working informally face risks, including a lack of social protection, insurance coverage and access to healthcare. Many women also risk losing their jobs or seeing their wages decrease because of their disproportionate burden unpaid domestic and care work. Unpaid care work in the household and family are barriers to labour force participation, especially for women, who disproportionately take on unpaid caregiving responsibilities. Moreover, women in rural areas have less access to employment opportunities.⁶⁴

In 2021, the share of young women who were not in employment, education or training (NEET) stood at 24%. The employment rate among the Roma population is about seven times lower than the population overall (40.9%), while the employment rate of people with disabilities is about four times lower.

Gender segregation in women's and men's employment by sectors: According to Gender Pulse, the structure of Moldova's working population is changing, with a gradual increase in employment in the service sector (from 55.6% in 2014 to 64.4% in 2022). At the same time, the share of persons employed in industry and agriculture has decreased. As of 2022, almost the same proportion of women (14.6%) and men (15%) are employed in industry. Women account for a greater share of workers in the service sector (69.5%) than men (59.6%), while men account for a larger share of workers in agriculture (25.4%) compared to women (15.9%). A significant gender gap exists among persons employed informally in non-agricultural sectors, with more men (18.1%) than women (4.4%) employed informally. Among women in informal employment, the largest share are between 15 and 24 years old (7.3% of whom are employed informally).

Employment in Moldova is characterised by horizontal gender segregation, with women and men concentrated in different sectors. As of the end of 2021, the economic sectors in which men predominate were construction (in which 87.9% of workers are men, and 12.1% are women), transport and storage (71.7% and 28.3%, respectively), and agriculture (73.7% and 26.3%, respectively). Women account for the majority of workers in sectors such as health (79.9% of workers in the sectors are women, and 20.1% are men), education (77.1% and 22.9%, respectively), and finance and insurance (65.7% and 34.3%, respectively). The table below presents additional details.

In most Eastern Partnership countries, women dominate in lower-paid economic sectors, while men dominate higher paid sectors. However, this trend is not entirely apparent in Moldova. For instance, women account for the majority workers in finance and insurance, sectors in which salaries are well above the national average, while men predominate in agriculture, a sector in which salaries are below average.

⁶³ https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_mas/---program/documents/genericdocument/wcms_828846.pdf

⁶⁴ <https://moldova.unfpa.org/en/news/moldova-lags-behind-achieving-gender-equality-all-spheres-life-according-un-moldova-country>

This is one reason why the gender pay gap in Moldova is the lowest among Eastern Partnership countries, and remains low when compared to most EU Member States.

Table 2. Women's and men's employment and average salary in different sectors of Moldova's economy

Economic sector	% of women in the workforce	% of men in the workforce	Women's average salary (lei)	Men's average salary (lei)	Gender pay gap (%)
Agriculture	26.3%	73.7%	5,266.2	5,856.9	10.8%
Industry	48.5%	51.5%	7,304.1	9,124.8	20%
Construction	12.1%	87.9%	7,322.9	8,248.6	11.2%
Trade	50.2%	49.8%	6,967.4	8,257.6	15.6%
Transport and storage	28.3%	71.7%	6,627.4	7,427.3	10.8%
Information and communication	41.6%	58.4%	16,079.1	25,445.8	39.2%
Finance and insurance	65.7%	34.3%	12,672	21,625.3	41.4%
Real estate transactions	45%	55%	6,438.1	7,880.5	18.3%
Scientific activities	54.4%	45.6%	9,827	11,103.5	11.5%
Public administration	43.6%	56.4%	10,042.2	10,856.7	7.5%
Education	77.1%	22.9%	7,520.3	7,266.7	3.5%
Health	79.9%	20.1%	10,643.9	12,960.3	17.9%

Source: <https://genderpulse.md/en/economic-empowerment/earnings-and-wage-gap/gender-pay-gap>

Gender pay gap: According to the 2023 Gender Equality Index in Moldova, the gender pay gap is 13.6% in formal jobs,⁶⁵ and the year-to-year salary growth rate has averaged 11% over the past decade. The smallest gender pay gap was recorded in 2015 (13.2%).

By economic sectors, the gender pay gap is the greatest in finance and insurance (41.4%), followed by information and communications (39.2%). In both sectors, salaries are significantly above average for Moldova's economy. The lowest gender pay gaps are observed in sectors such as education (3.5%), public administration (7.5%), agriculture, and transport and storage (10.8%)⁶⁶ (see the table above for details). In all sectors, the gender pay gap disfavours women. The sectors of education, public administration and health (the gender pay gap is 17.9% in the health sector) are largely funded by national and local state budgets. That is, in the public sector, the gender pay gap is somewhat lower than in the private sector – a trend observed across the EU and Eastern Partnership countries.

⁶⁵ https://www.ipn.md/en/2023-gender-equality-index-presented-7967_1095659.html

⁶⁶ <https://genderpulse.md/en/economic-empowerment/earnings-and-wage-gap/gender-pay-gap>

The main reasons for inequality in salaries are not easy to track. They include the perception that women will eventually abandon their careers in order to raise their children, or will spend less time on paid work in order to spend more time with their families. In fact, the difference between the amount of time women and men spend on income-generating activities is small. As of 2012 (the most recent data available), women spent 7 hours per day on income-generating activities, while men spent 7 hours and 30 minutes, on average.

Another reason for gender pay gap is that women are more disadvantaged by sexism and gender stereotypes than men. Stereotypes may prevent women from pursuing certain professions, such as careers in IT and construction. Gender-based stereotypes in Moldovan society tend to downplay women's professional abilities and hold that, since men are "heads of households" and "breadwinners", they should be paid more, even for the same jobs.

Active labour market policies: Moldova has gradually expanded and adjusted its active labour market policies (ALMPs) in line with EU requirements, particularly following the enactment of the new law on employment promotion and unemployment insurance in 2019. Despite facing challenges due to a lack of previous experience, the National Employment Agency (NEA) has diversified its efforts to enhance the effectiveness of these policies. Professional information and counselling services have been pivotal, with increased demand during the COVID-19 pandemic when the number of unemployed individuals seeking assistance rose. Labour intermediation, despite a general decrease, witnessed a notable increase in 2020 and 2021. Career guidance services experienced growth, particularly among the unemployed. Active labour market policies – spanning vocational training, job subsidies, financial support for job creation, and labour mobility incentives – cater to both unemployed workers and employers. Vocational training, a longstanding measure, has witnessed a decline in beneficiaries, potentially influenced by the shift to online education during the pandemic. Despite challenges, vocational training has proven effective, and a higher number of women benefiting from such programmes. Vocational training appears to have a positive impact on employment, with over 85% of participants securing jobs.⁶⁷

Sex-disaggregated data on the beneficiaries of active labour market policies is only available for vocational training. No such data is available for labour intermediation and career guidance services. In 2021, 645 women and 241 men benefited from vocational training programmes. Since 2021, the number of women beneficiaries of these programmes was between 1.5 and 2.5 times higher than number of men beneficiaries, per year.⁶⁸ Since no information on National Employment Agency's intention to target women is available, a possible reason for the greater number of women beneficiaries is that the agency concluded contracts for vocational training programmes with educational institutions for trades or professions in which women tend to work.

⁶⁷ https://www.utgjiu.ro/revista/ec/pdf/2023-01/08_Birca.pdf

⁶⁸ Ibid.

Continued attention is required for new measures to ensure their successful implementation and contribution to gender-sensitive labour market outcomes.

Although Moldova does not have longstanding experience of implementing active labour market policies, recent legal developments are expected to encourage women's participation in the labour market. These include the expansion of childcare options, including allowing employers to provide childcare services to benefit their employees, promoting alternative childcare services for children up to 3 years old, whether organised by employers, qualified childcare workers, or legal representatives of children, and encouraging men to engage in childcare so that women have more time for productive employment (see more details below). While these measures are not considered active labour market policies per se, they are expected to contribute to the increased participation of women, especially younger women, in the workforce.

Legal developments: A number of legal developments have been introduced in 2022–2023 to address gender imbalances in the labour market. The legislative landscape in Moldova has witnessed significant changes aimed at enhancing labour rights, gender equality and childcare services. The most notable developments are:

- Law No. 46 of 10.03.2022 introduces amendments to certain normative acts, specifically impacting childcare services for children up to 3 years old. These allows employers to provide childcare services for employees at the unit level. The affected normative acts include the Labour Code and the Education Code.
- Law No. 107 of 21.04.22 focuses on amending normative acts to incorporate the principle of “equal remuneration for equal work or work of equal value”. Key concepts such as remuneration, salary level, the gender pay gap, equal work, and work of equal value are defined. Notably, an amendment to the Salary Law (Article 34) addresses the evaluation and classification of functions to establish salary levels, emphasising corrective actions if gender pay differences exceed 5%.
- Law No. 195 of 14.07.22 introduces significant amendments, particularly to the Labour Code, including provisions for flexible work arrangement, partially paid leave for childcare, and paternity leave. Changes also affect Law No. 289/2004 on allowances for temporary incapacity to work and other social insurance benefits, outlining the conditions for the paternal allowance.
- Law No. 367 of 29.12.2022 establishes the normative framework for alternative childcare services for children up to 3 years old, organised by employers, qualified childcare workers, or children's legal representatives.
- Law No. 2 of 02.02.2023 revises the normative framework regarding non-discrimination and equality, amending various laws, including the introduction of articles on harassment, victimisation, and obstructing the work of the Equality Council.
- Law No. 74 of 31.03.23 amends the Labour Code and Law No. 5/2006 on Ensuring Equal Opportunities for Women and Men. The changes emphasise non-discrimination principles, measures to prevent and combat sexual harassment, and the inclusion of equality-related provisions in employment contracts and agreements.

The gendered dynamics of employment in Moldova reveal nuanced patterns, reflecting both progress and persistent challenges. While economic activity rates have shown a gradual convergence between men and women over the years, women still have lower rates of economic activity, particularly in rural areas. Migration trends indicate that higher economic activity among men has historically driven their greater levels of external migration for job opportunities. Despite recent reductions in the unemployment gap between men and women, gender disparities spike during economic shocks, underscoring vulnerabilities. Additionally, the concentration of women in part-time employment, influenced by family responsibilities, underscores potential risks related to social protection and career progression. Sectors marked by gender segregation highlight disparities in workforce distribution, impacting the gender pay gap. Although Moldova boasts a relatively low gender pay gap, challenges persist, rooted in societal stereotypes and expectations regarding women's roles. Addressing these complexities requires comprehensive strategies that tackle stereotypes, support work-life balance, and foster equal opportunities across diverse sectors.

4.2.2. Women's entrepreneurship

While the discourse on supporting women's entrepreneurship has been a global policy focus for decades, recent initiatives display an international landscape marked by fragmentation. Despite the notable attention paid to the challenges women face in entering the labour market, including through entrepreneurship, in both the European Union and Eastern Partnership countries, most countries continue to lack gender-sensitive data on small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

Women's entrepreneurship in Moldova is increasing, as women own or manage nearly 34% of businesses. Approximately 20% of women-led businesses operate in ICT and related services, and a significant 17.5% of enterprises in agriculture are owned by women entrepreneurs between 15 and 34 years old. This age group of women entrepreneurs also holds substantial shares in hotels and restaurants (31.8%), as well as retail trade (31.4%), while men of this age group dominate among entrepreneurs in construction (31.7%) and industry (31%).⁶⁹

Despite both women and men entrepreneurs holding university degrees, the participation of men with higher education in entrepreneurial activities is more pronounced. Women often encounter challenges related to financial resources. Women-owned enterprises rely less frequently on bank loans as a primary source of financing (6.8%) than businesses owned by men (9.4%). Women entrepreneurs often turn to friends, relatives, or personal resources and their own savings for business financing. Support from the state and development partners is accessed more frequently by enterprises owned by men.⁷⁰ Most companies (approximately 74%) utilise their own financial resources for business activities.

⁶⁹ https://eca.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Field%20Office%20ECA/Attachments/Publications/2021/8/Expo%20Report/Republic%20of%20Moldova_Factsheet-min.pdf

⁷⁰ https://eca.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Field%20Office%20ECA/Attachments/Publications/2021/8/Expo%20Report/Republic%20of%20Moldova_Factsheet-min.pdf

Women-led enterprises, across all sectors, tend to be smaller on average than those led by men, with the exception of hotel and restaurant services. Despite notable progress, women entrepreneurs encounter unequal treatment from banks and public authorities. For instance, they face more stringent collateral requirements and tax scrutiny for bank loans in retail trade.⁷¹

Challenges persist for women's micro-enterprises, including insufficient financing, heightened market competition, inadequate demand for goods, and a workforce with limited skills. Although women's participation in entrepreneurship has increased in recent years, they still have underutilised growth potential.

Noteworthy patterns exist in terms of the size and initiation of businesses by women. Women tend to dominate micro-businesses (90.3%) compared to men (82.3%), and are less likely to own medium and large enterprises. Women's businesses show faster growth rates upon inception, expanding by an average of 84% compared to about 78% for their male counterparts. Women-led medium-sized and large enterprises are more active in export activities, reflecting an interest in engaging in global markets.⁷²

Moldova is a frontrunner among Eastern Partnership countries in terms of women's entrepreneurship. The 2016 Small Business Act for Europe Assessment noted a significant shift, with Moldova prioritising women's entrepreneurship through well-established policy frameworks and consistent investment. This commitment is underscored by Moldova's inclusion of women's entrepreneurship as a dedicated section in national policies, strategies, programmes and action plans, marking a noteworthy evolution since 2016.⁷³

Moldova has made substantial progress in supporting women entrepreneurs through non-formal policy partnerships, an innovative approach rarely seen at the national level. These partnerships – involving women's business associations, networks and international collaborators – actively cooperate with the Government, contributing to a more comprehensive policy vision. However, challenges persist, such as a lack of sex-disaggregated data hindering gender-responsive policy design. Moldova's Women's National Platform, an integral part of the institutional landscape, plays an important role in fostering connections among women entrepreneurs and sharing success stories at the local level.

Despite progress in policy, data collection and training provision, challenges remain, particularly concerning access to finance. Unequal treatment by banks and public authorities raises concerns, exemplified by more stringent collateral requirements and severe tax scrutiny for women in retail trade compared to men, as noted above. The assessment of the COVID-19 pandemic's impact underscores the need for tailored policies to mitigate economic disempowerment and address gender gaps in employment, highlighting the continuous efforts required to advance women's entrepreneurship in Moldova.⁷⁴

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² <https://www.undp.org/moldova/press-releases/although-more-women-involve-entrepreneurship-their-potential-not-fully-capitalized>

⁷³ <https://www.oecd.org/south-east-europe/programme/small-business-act-assessment.htm>

⁷⁴ <https://www.undp.org/moldova/gender-equality>

Women entrepreneurs receive less support within entrepreneurship programmes compared to men, with the percentage of women entrepreneurs benefiting from support programmes lagging behind the overall representation of women's entrepreneurship at the national level (23.8% compared to 33.9%).⁷⁵ The landscape of women's entrepreneurship underscores the need for nuanced policies and targeted interventions to foster inclusivity and amplify the impactful contributions of women in the sphere of business.

4.2.3. Gender and the care economy, unpaid care and domestic work

Gender imbalances in terms of reconciling family and professional responsibilities are a critical factor preventing women from entering the labour market, pursuing careers and taking up leadership positions across all sectors of the economy.

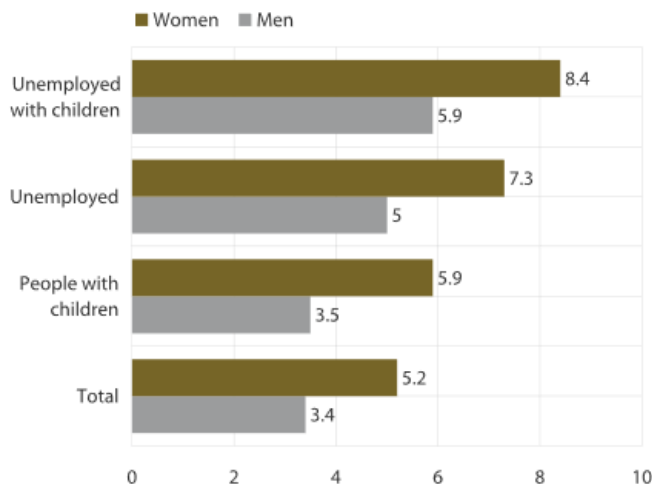
In Moldova, the share of unpaid care and domestic work performed by men and women is unequal. The most recent available data on the distribution of unpaid care between men and women is from 2012 – notably, the time use survey conducted by the National Bureau of Statistics.⁷⁶ The dynamics of unpaid work, predominantly performed by women, reflect a multifaceted picture. Unpaid care work significantly contributes to economic development, but remains largely invisible in macroeconomic indicators. On average, individuals engage in 3.9 hours of unpaid work per day, with this seemingly mundane daily commitment having an annual value equivalent to the entire gross domestic product (GDP).⁷⁷ This underscores the pivotal role that unaccounted-for activities play in Moldova's socio-economic landscape.

Gender disparities are clear in the care economy, as **women contribute 66% of the total working time devoted to unpaid work**, amounting to 4.9 hours per day. This discrepancy is not only stark but also exceeds similar imbalances in countries that are members of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), reflecting unique challenges in Moldova. Women, particularly those unemployed and responsible for childcare, find themselves at the intersection of paid employment and household chores, highlighting the intricate balancing act demanded by societal expectations.

⁷⁵ <https://www.undp.org/moldova/press-releases/although-more-women-involve-entrepreneurship-their-potential-not-fully-capitalized>

⁷⁶ <https://genderpulse.md/en/economic-empowerment/paid-work-and-domestic-work/participation-in-domestic-activities>

⁷⁷ https://statistica.gov.md/public/files/publicatii_electronice/Utilizarea_timpului_RM/Note_analitice_eng/07_brosur_ENG.pdf

Figure 5. Time spent on unpaid work by 25-64-year-olds, by sex (hours per day)

Source: https://statistica.gov.md/public/files/publicatii_electronice/Utilizarea_timpului_RM/Note_analitice_eng/07_brosur_ENG.pdf

The breakdown of unpaid work activities further underscores gendered roles, with women predominantly involved in cooking, poultry rearing, livestock breeding and dish-washing, while men allocate significantly less time to these tasks. This reflects a complex interplay of socio-cultural norms and economic circumstances shaping gender roles in Moldova.

Rural-urban distinctions add another layer to this landscape, with the rural population dedicating more time to unpaid work (4.9 hours per day) compared to urban residents (3.8 hours) and residents of the municipality of Chisinau (3.6 hours). This divergence reflects not only traditional gender roles but also economic disparities, as rural areas often offer fewer opportunities for income-earning activities and require a greater focus on domestic responsibilities.⁷⁸

The repercussions of the **COVID-19 pandemic** have laid bare existing gender inequalities, particularly in the division of care responsibilities. The closure of educational institutions amplified the caregiving burden, especially for women who, during social isolation, spent over 50% of their time on lessons with their children. The pandemic has exacerbated existing gendered norms, with women shouldering more demanding household tasks while men engage in comparatively lighter activities.⁷⁹

Beyond immediate challenges, the unequal distribution of care responsibilities during the pandemic has had profound psychological implications, contributing to increased anxiety and isolation for women. Survey data indicates that men were more likely to interact with people outside their households during the pandemic, heightening the risk of exposure to COVID-19, while women endured prolonged periods of isolation at home.

⁷⁸ https://statistica.gov.md/public/files/publicatii_electronice/Utilizarea_timpului_RM/Note_analitice_eng/07_brosur_ENG.pdf

⁷⁹ <https://progen.md/analiza-impactului-covid-19-asupra-rolurilor-de-gen>

Addressing these entrenched gender disparities is not only crucial for social justice but also imperative for Moldova's holistic development. As economic and policy frameworks evolve, recognising, valuing and redistributing unpaid work equitably should form an integral part of Moldova's journey towards a more inclusive and gender-responsive society.

4.2.4. Gender and social protection

As of early 2023, the demographic landscape of Moldova reveals that individuals aged 60 and older constitute 23.8% of the population. A noteworthy majority (over 60%) are **older women**, as reported by the National Bureau of Statistics.⁸⁰ This demographic shift mirrors global trends and has significant implications for Moldovan society, including concerns about human rights related to ageing.

The standard retirement age for women is 60.5 years old, with a requisite contribution time of 33 years and six months. By contrast, the standard retirement age for men remains unchanged at 63 years, accompanied by a contribution period of 34 years. The National Social Insurance Fund mandates that women with a complete contribution period must certify 36 years and six months of insurance experience starting from 1 July 2023, when they apply for an early retirement pension. For men, the contribution period remains 39 years. Anticipating future changes, Moldovan legislation envisions a gradual increase in the retirement age for women to 63 years by 2028, with a corresponding adjustment in the contribution period to 34 years.⁸¹

In terms of disparities in pensions, data from the National Bureau of Statistics in 2022 indicates that the average pension for men, irrespective of their field of work, is MDL 3,592.50 MDL. The average pension for women was MDL 2,965.97, indicating a **gender gap** of MDL 627 (15.8%).⁸² This represents an improvement compared to 2015 when the pension gap was 20.7%, as the average pension for men was MDL 1,268.10 compared to the average pension for women of MDL 1,050.40. Pension payments increased significantly in 2019, with men's pensions increasing by MDL 671.90 MDL and women's by MDL 469.8 MDL, marking an increase of 53% and 45%, respectively, compared to 2015.⁸³

Despite these improvements, the elderly population, especially older women, remains highly vulnerable to the impact of past and ongoing crises, including grappling with elevated inflation rates for essential needs such as food, energy and housing. Approximately 20% of older persons in Moldova are estimated to be living in poverty, with older women in rural areas facing additional challenges, such as receiving smaller pensions, on average.

⁸⁰ https://statbank.statistica.md/PxWeb/pxweb/en/30%20Statistica%20sociala/30%20Statistica%20sociala__09%20PRO/PRO011900reg.px/?rxid=9a62a0d7-86c4-45da-b7e4-fecc26003802

⁸¹ <https://www.infotag.md/populis-en/308768>

⁸² https://statbank.statistica.md/PxWeb/pxweb/en/30%20Statistica%20sociala/30%20Statistica%20sociala__09%20PRO/PRO011900reg.px/?rxid=9a62a0d7-86c4-45da-b7e4-fecc26003802

⁸³ <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/olderpersons/statements/20231115-eom-statement-moldova-ie-older-en.pdf>

The gender pension gap, coupled with unequal family and care responsibilities, lower employment rates linked to education levels, and the likelihood of widowhood due to women's higher life expectancy, collectively render retirement for older women in Moldova synonymous with an increased risk of poverty.

4.3. Gender, infrastructure and public transport

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable underscores the pivotal role of gender equality, enshrined in SDG 5 and integrated within all other SDGs. Recognising the interconnectedness of goals and targets, gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls are deemed essential for achieving holistic sustainable development.

In terms of infrastructure development, it is vital to acknowledge and address the **diverse roles and needs of women and men who interact with public infrastructure**. This recognition is particularly pertinent given the distinct patterns of employment and unpaid domestic work that women often undertake.⁸⁴ As noted above, women are statistically more likely to be engaged in part-time employment and shoulder the majority of unpaid domestic responsibilities. Additionally, their leisure and sporting activities tend to be limited compared to men. The unequal division of roles in the labour market and the allocation of time for domestic tasks significantly influence how women and men utilise or require certain types of infrastructure.

Notably, **women are more likely to use public transport** and take on care-taking responsibilities for young children. Consequently, tailored infrastructure enhancements – such as buses with lowering platforms, and strategically positioned stops near schools, nurseries, workplaces and shops – could substantially benefit women and men who use public transport and access these locations regularly. Such subtle adjustments not only facilitate ease of travel for those with children, but also contribute to increased mobility and reduced social isolation.

Based on the most recent survey available from 2014, over 83.5% of individuals aged 10 and over engage in daily travel for various purposes, averaging about 1.4 hours a day. While both women and men dedicate similar amounts of time to travel, there are differences in the modes of transportation they tend to use. Men predominantly use cars (either their own or those of others as hitch-hikers), while women rely more on public transport, particularly buses. Women's more intensive use of public transport, encompassing 76.5% of their travel time, highlights their reliance on this mode of transportation compared to men.⁸⁵

⁸⁴ <https://eige.europa.eu/news/what-does-infrastructure-have-do-gender-equality>

⁸⁵ <https://www.undp.org/moldova/publications/analytical-brief-3-how-much-time-do-moldovans-spend-various-types-transport>

Further dissecting the data reveals that buses and trolleybuses are the primary modes of public transport for women, with their use constituting 57.9% and 16.4%, respectively, of women's travel time. By contrast, men allocate significantly less time to these modes of transportation (32.2% for buses and 6.1% for trolleybuses). Despite these gender-specific preferences, public transport remains the predominant choice for both genders across various travel purposes.⁸⁶

The urban-rural divide significantly influences transportation patterns. The rural population dedicates approximately twice as much time to travel by public transport compared to their urban counterparts. This discrepancy is attributed to factors such as limited access to alternative transport services, poor road quality, and shorter travel distances within rural settlements.

In terms of specific modes of transport, buses are the primary choice for public transport in villages, constituting 90.2% of the total travel time. In urban settings, where travel alternatives are more diverse, trolleybuses supplement buses. Taxis are used more frequently in towns, while financial constraints in rural areas limit their usage.⁸⁷

Recognising the nuanced dynamics of gender-specific transportation needs is vital to design inclusive infrastructure aligned with diverse societal requirements. Such considerations contribute to achieving SDG 5, as well as fostering broader progress on other SDGs by promoting inclusivity and equitable access to essential services.

Underdeveloped and gender-neutral infrastructure is one of the leading causes for women and girls being unable to access basic services that support their upward social mobility and reduce gender gaps. In effect, gender-neutral infrastructure is gender-blind, as it fails to consider the different roles, responsibilities and particular needs of women, men, girls and boys in specific contexts, and how these affect their ability to use or access infrastructure. In times of crisis, this can have life-threatening consequences for women and girls. They are at risk not only from poor health infrastructure, but from inadequate infrastructure across all sectors, which can limit access to essential services and prevent them from maintaining security and self-sufficiency during social and economic upheaval.⁸⁸

Investment in infrastructure alone cannot result in inclusive growth. However, the quality of infrastructure services, and the costs of accessing these services, determine the potential of infrastructure investments to impact low income and marginalised groups, particularly women.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/infrastructure-gender-equality-and-empowerment-women-report>

⁸⁹ <https://www.womenalliance.org/sustainable-infrastructure-a-powerful-driver-for-gender-equality-iaw-statement-csw63>

On the Logistics Performance Index 2022 (LPI) – the international score that employs six key dimensions to assess countries' logistical performance – Moldova receives a score of 2.51 on a scale of 1 (low) to 5 (high).⁹⁰ The index's six indicators include the efficiency of the clearance process, the quality of trade and transport-related infrastructure, the ease of arranging competitively priced shipments, the competence and quality of logistics' services, the ability to track and trace consignments, and the timeliness of shipments reaching their destination within the scheduled or expected delivery time. The LPI is a weighted average of a country's scores across these dimensions. The scorecard facilitates comparisons globally, allowing for benchmarking against the world's best performers.

As the COVID-19 pandemic and the war and humanitarian crisis in Ukraine demonstrate, women and girls are particularly affected by crises – economically, socially and in terms of health. Poor infrastructure can worsen the impact of crises, limiting access to critical resources such as clean water, proper health and sanitation services, and digital communications technology.⁹¹

4.4. Gender and health

Health is the sector in which indicators and results for men in Moldova are traditionally worse than for women. A prominent indicator of gender equality in the health sector is **life expectancy at birth**, disaggregated by sex. There has been a decline in life expectancy for both women and men in Moldova in recent years. In 2019, life expectancy for both was roughly 71 years, but this dropped to 68.8 years as of the end of 2021 (73.5 years for women and 64.5 years for men). The gender gap in life expectancy increased from 7.8 years in 2019 to 9 years in 2021.⁹²

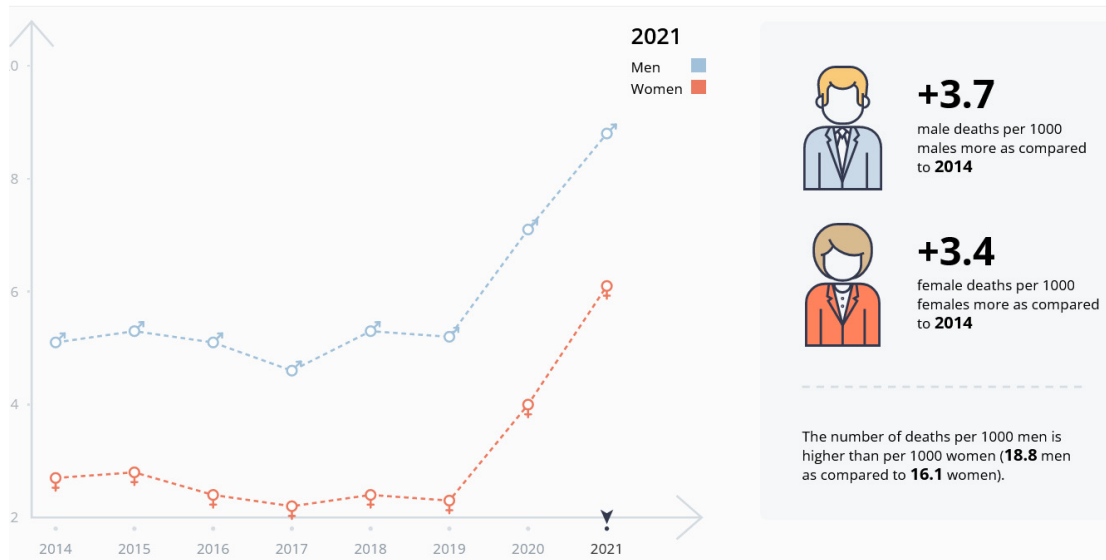
While there was a decrease in the number deaths per 1,000 people between 2014 and 2019, the death rate increased sharp between 2019 and 2021. The death rate in 2017 was 13.4 deaths per 1,000 inhabitants, down from 13.9 deaths in 2014, before rising to 17.5 deaths per 1,000 inhabitants in 2021. The gender differences in mortality rates are notable – while the mortality rate for men is 18.8 deaths per 1,000 persons, this rate is 16.1 for women.⁹³

⁹⁰ <https://tradingeconomics.com/moldova/logistics-performance-index-overall-1-low-to-5-high-wb-data.html>

⁹¹ <https://www.unops.org/news-and-stories/news/infrastructure-for-gender-equality-and-the-empowerment-of-women>

⁹² <https://tradingeconomics.com/moldova/life-expectancy-at-birth-male-years-wb-data.html>

⁹³ <https://genderpulse.md/en/health/mortality/general-mortality-rate>

Figure 6. Mortality rate, by sex (per 1,000 people)

Source: <https://genderpulse.md/en/health/mortality/general-mortality-rate>

The infant mortality rate in Moldova was 9.1 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2020, indicating a 1.5-year increase in average life expectancy at birth in 2020 compared to 2014. The gender gap in life expectancy is attributed to higher levels of premature mortality among men, a disparity that cuts across age groups. Women consistently have a longer average life span, with the most significant difference recorded from birth to the age of 45 (8.7–7.0 years).⁹⁴

In 2021, the average life expectancy for 60-year-old men was 15.0 more years, while for women of the same age, it was 19.2 more years. Average life expectancy is about 3.5 less in rural areas for both genders. Despite efforts to improve health outcomes, economic, social and health-related challenges persist. Women in rural areas have limited access to quality reproductive health services, exacerbating health issues. Alcohol abuse, a prominent risk factor, contributes significantly to the structure of mortality in general.⁹⁵

Health disparities between men and women extend to **disease prevalence**. Diseases of the circulatory system largely affect women, while men are more susceptible to respiratory diseases, especially tuberculosis. In 2021, 57% of all diseases were related to the circulatory system. Cardiovascular diseases present differently in women and men, impacting diagnosis, mortality and treatment.

Men suffer from under-diagnosis and under-treatment with respect to cardiovascular diseases. Visits to doctors reveal that women, particularly those in the 35- to 44-year-old age group, seek medical consultations more frequently than men. Mortality structures by the main causes remain consistent, with diseases of the circulatory system being the primary cause (59.1%).⁹⁶

⁹⁴ <https://genderpulse.md/en/demography/life-expectancy/life-expectancy-at-birth-new>

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

Certain causes of death – such as accidents, intoxication and trauma – lead to significantly higher rates of mortality among men. These are linked to occupational hazards and lifestyle differences. Limited intersectional data on gender- and location-based health differences highlights challenges in addressing new tuberculosis cases, especially among older individuals in rural areas. Alcohol consumption and heavy episodic drinking prevalence is higher in rural areas for both genders, while obesity is especially prevalent among rural women.⁹⁷

Addressing health challenges requires preventing accidents, promoting healthy lifestyles, identifying diseases early, and improving access to high-quality health services, particularly in rural communities. Reducing mortality rates among the able-bodied working population remains a key health objective.

While specific national data on **health insurance coverage** rates for rural and urban populations are unavailable, a strong association with income levels and wealth appears to exist. Rural residents face challenges to accessing health services due to financial constraints and a lack of health insurance. Individuals in the poorest quintile, the least insured, and those residing in rural areas primarily rely on general practitioners for medical services, and have limited access to specialist care.

As of 2018, only 40% of rural women have health insurance, and half of surveyed women without insurance cited financial constraints as the reason for their lack of coverage. Informal and unremunerated agricultural workers, particularly women, lack access to employment-based health insurance. The concentration of hospitals in urban areas, especially Chisinau, poses a significant barrier for rural residents, compelling them to travel for specialised treatment.⁹⁸

Women in rural communities, especially pensioners on the left bank of the Nistru river, face challenges to accessing local health care centres and family practitioners, and must travel to urban centres for treatment. Some women on the left bank prefer to take out health insurance and seek treatment on the right bank of the river, exacerbating the unmet demand for healthcare, particularly among minority groups such as people with disabilities and Roma individuals in rural areas.

Difficulties in accessing medical facilities, coupled with the costs of health insurance, contribute to infrequent visits to doctors among women, especially in rural areas. Nationally, women, more than men, tended to forgo healthcare, including both primary and inpatient treatment. Some 36% of women refuse hospitalisation due to family issues, compared to 25% of men, prompting the need for further analysis to understand the underlying factors behind these refusals, such as the high costs of treatment, competing family priorities, and women's sense of responsibility for household duties.⁹⁹

⁹⁷ <https://www.fao.org/3/cb9555en/cb9555en.pdf>

⁹⁸ <https://ipp.md/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Raport-IPP-eng.pdf>

⁹⁹ <https://www.fao.org/3/cb9555en/cb9555en.pdf>

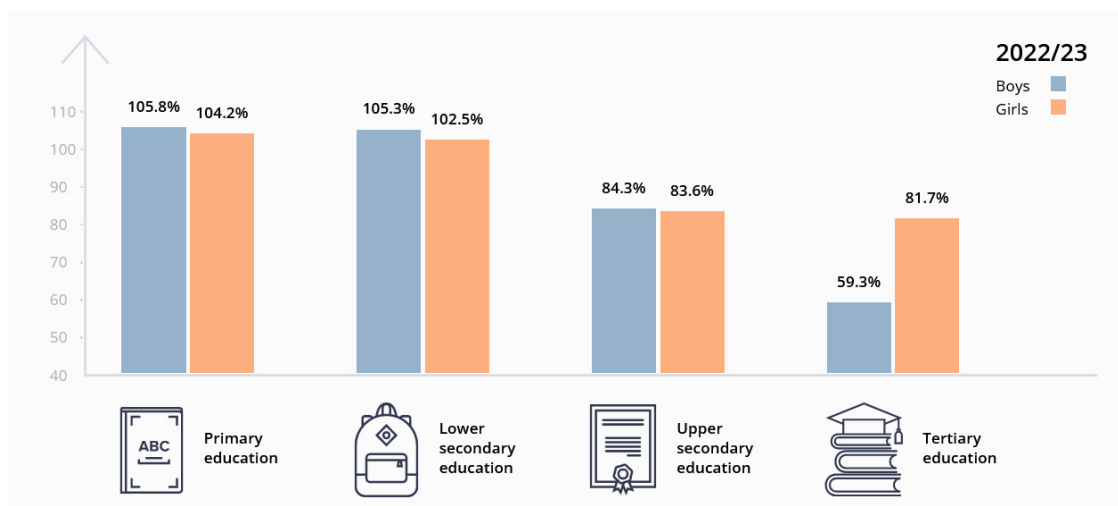
4.5. Gender and education

According to the Education Code of the Republic of Moldova No. 152 of 17.07.2014, all citizens have equal rights to education, and to initial and continuing professional training through the national education system. The state undertakes to finance the standard package of educational services for pre-school, primary, gymnasium and lyceum education, regardless of the ownership of educational institutions. Vocational and higher education is meant to be financed by the state budget within the limits of the admission plan approved annually by the Government.

Therefore, boys and girls have equal rights to education. Nevertheless, socio-economic factors affect the gender composition of education service users. Families with low incomes can only afford for their children to obtain primary and secondary education. Children in low income households tend to seek work or look after younger siblings while their parents are at work. Those living in rural areas also tend to help their parents with agricultural tasks.

The National Bureau of Statistics collects annual data on gender balance in **education enrolment** at different levels of education. In terms of primary and lower secondary education, differences between the number of boys and girls enrolled is insignificant. In the 2022/2023 academic year, 105.8% of boys and 104.2% of girls were enrolled in primary education, while 105.3% of boys and 102.5% of girls were enrolled in lower secondary education.¹⁰⁰ These percentages measure the share of Moldovan boys and girls enrolled in schools out of all Moldovan boys and girls registered in the country. The percentages exceed 100% because Ukrainian refugee boys and girls also attend Moldovan schools.

Figure 7. Enrolment rate by level of education and sex, 2022–2023



Source: <https://genderpulse.md/en/education/enrollment-in-education/enrollment-rate-by-level-of-education>

¹⁰⁰ <https://genderpulse.md/en/education/enrollment-in-education/enrollment-rate-by-level-of-education>

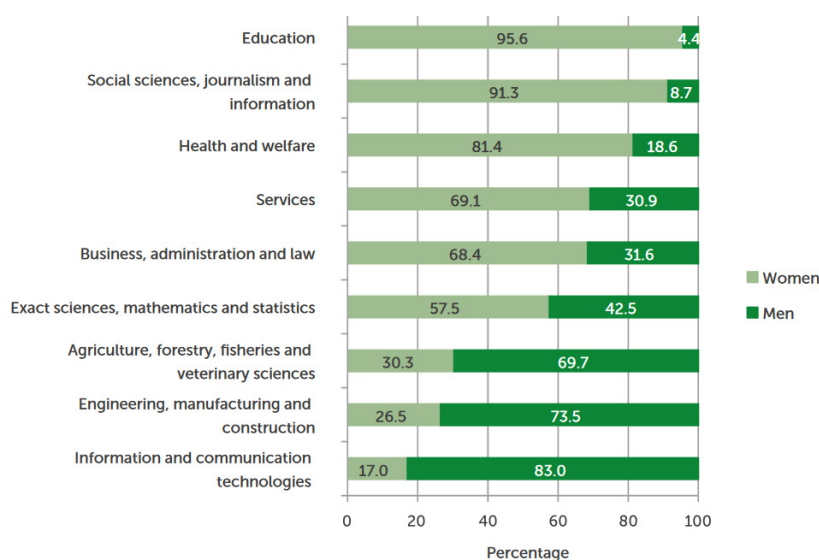
At the level of upper secondary education, boys (84.3%) outnumber girls (83.6%). After finishing primary and lower secondary education, most boys continue to lyceums, or some to professional schools, while girls tend to choose colleges. The number of girls enrolled in vocational education exceeds the number of boys by approximately 19%.¹⁰¹ This may be because some young men decide to serve in the military, or start working in unskilled jobs.

In terms of the literacy rate of young people aged 15–24, positive trends are afoot in Moldova both in terms of the overall literacy rate and the gender gap in literacy, as both 99.4% of girls and 99.4% of boys are literate as of 2022.¹⁰²

A significant gender gap exists in tertiary education. Among students enrolled at the tertiary level, 59.3% are boys/young men, while 81.7% are girls/young women as of the 2022/2023 academic year. This yields a gender parity index of 1.38 in tertiary education – that is, the enrolment rate for young women is 38% higher than that of young men. Boys leave the education system earlier than girls. In 2022, 25.4% of boys and 18.7% girls of the same age group left the education system and stopped attending any form of training.¹⁰³

This reflects the negative consequences of targeting women in the sphere of education. There is a need to promote higher education for both genders, and to allocate more fund and incentives (such as scholarships and grants) to the education sector. This would have both social and economic benefits.

Figure 8. Students in post-secondary education by fields of study and sex, 2021



Source: National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova, *Statistical Databank: Students in post-secondary education, by sex, by general field and field of training, academic year 2020–2021*.

¹⁰¹ <https://genderpulse.md/en/education/enrollment-in-education/enrollment-rate-by-level-of-education>

¹⁰² <https://genderpulse.md/en/education/level-of-education/literacy-rate-of-persons-aged-15-24-years-old>

¹⁰³ <https://genderpulse.md/en/education/enrollment-in-education/early-school-leaving-rate>

Another challenge in tertiary and vocational education is the **gender imbalance in terms of fields of study** and, therefore, in future professions. In education/pedagogy, a substantial 95.6% of students are girls and young women, as are 91.3% of students in the social sciences and journalism, and 81.4% of students studying health and welfare. Boys and young men predominate among students in other fields, such as ICT (83.5%), as well as engineering, manufacturing and construction (73.5%).¹⁰⁴ These disparities contribute significantly to the horizontal gender segregation discussed above (see section 4.2.1), which is largely driven by persistent gender stereotypes regarding suitable professions for women and men in Moldova.

These stereotypes, deeply embedded in societal perceptions, impact the choices made by both girls/women and boys/men in terms of their fields of study. Boys and young men tend to opt for fields of study that align with higher-paid and in-demand professions. The CEDAW Committee addresses this issue in its 2020 Concluding Observations, emphasising the limited educational choices for girls and women, and expressing particular concern about women's and girls' low levels of enrolment in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), as well as in ICT. The CEDAW Committee recommends decisive action to dismantle prevailing stereotypes that discourage women and girls from pursuing studies in these fields. Its recommendations emphasise the importance of encouraging women to choose non-traditional fields of study and career paths, with a view to fostering a more diverse and inclusive educational landscape.¹⁰⁵

In terms of the **staff composition of the education sector**, particularly of those providing educational services, sheds light on gender disparities among teachers. According to data from the National Bureau of Statistics, men's representation among teaching staff is consistently lower than that of women across all levels of education, with the most significant gap in primary and general secondary education. This data reflects the prevalence of women teachers across all education levels, with the highest proportion apparent in primary and secondary education, levels at which approximately 87% of all teachers were women during the 2022/2023 academic year. This pattern aligns with the stereotype of women's primarily with roles as educators and caregivers. Men who are primary and secondary education teachers are concentrated in professional schools, contributing to their lower representation at this level (13%).¹⁰⁶

To shed light on this phenomenon, it is necessary to consider the current educational preferences of boys, who tend to gravitate toward subjects like construction, engineering, transport and telecommunications. Consequently, in these domains, teaching personnel are predominantly male. This dynamic accounts for the increased presence of male teachers across various education levels in these fields. Thus, men account for 28.1% of vocational education professors and 43.8% of teaching personnel in higher education.

¹⁰⁴ National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova, *Statistical Databank: Students in post-secondary education, by sex, by general field and field of training, academic year 2020-2021*.

¹⁰⁵ <https://www.fao.org/3/cb9555en/cb9555en.pdf>

¹⁰⁶ <https://genderpulse.md/en/education/teaching-staff>

Although women make up the majority of the education sector's workforce, men hold prominent positions, including decision-making roles. For instance, 76.2% of university rectors are men, while just 23.8% of rectors are women. There has been a 3% increase in the percentage of women rectors between 2019 and 2022,¹⁰⁷ indicating a positive shift in gender representation in leadership roles.

Another challenge is that gender is not sufficiently mainstreamed in education policy at all levels, or in curricula. This contributes to the feminisation of employment in the field of education, the persistence of gender stereotypes, and discriminatory educational content at all levels. Gender-based discrimination persists in certain fields of study, such as labour training and defence. Other problems reported by the Ministry of Education include educators' low levels of gender-sensitivity, the lack of a comprehensive system of gender education, and the limited availability of special training/curricula for educators and policymakers in the field of education. Notably, textbooks and curricula do not stipulate studying topics such as gender equality, harassment, the prevention of gender-based violence, sexual orientation or gender identity in schools.

4.6. Women, peace and security

An examination of the legal landscape in Moldova reveals **gender-specific patterns in criminal activities**. The average age at which men engage in law-breaking is 38 years, compared to 44 years old for women. This difference hints at potential differences in the factors that influence criminal behaviour among women and men. Women, on average, are less involved in law-breaking and in Most women offenders tend to have an average level of professional training, pointing to the need for targeted support and educational initiatives.

Approximately 4% of persons involved in criminal activities are employed in the public sector, 22% in the private sector, and a significant 39% are not officially employed. This varied distribution of employment raises questions about the diverse circumstances that may drive individuals to engage in criminal behaviour.¹⁰⁸

Active corruption cases suggest a correlation with lower professional qualifications, with a substantial 52% of the accused holding only secondary or incomplete secondary education. This trend raises questions about the socio-economic factors contributing to this phenomenon and underscores the importance of educational interventions.

The average age of men involved in "passive corruption" cases is 45 years old, compared to 46 years old for women. Individuals engaging in corruption typically possess higher education at the time of their crimes. Their tendency to work in the public sphere and their reluctance to admit guilt add layers of complexity to understanding the dynamics of corruption.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ https://statistica.gov.md/en/crime-situation-in-the-republic-of-moldova-in-2022-9478_60321.html

An in-depth analysis based on 141 court judgments covering 259 qualified episodes sheds light on the broader context. The correlation between lower education levels among the male population and a higher crime rate is apparent. According to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, 92% of the 27,215 crimes registered in 2018 were committed by men, indicating a potential correlation between educational attainment and criminal behaviour.¹⁰⁹

Moldova has proactively initiated measures to promote the **Women, Peace and Security Agenda**. The National Implementation Programme (NAP) for UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (2018–2021) focuses on enhancing women's representation in the security and defence sectors.¹¹⁰

In August 2021, Moldova achieved a historic milestone with the appointment of a woman as Minister of Internal Affairs in a government led by a woman Prime Minister. Despite this progress, a significant gender disparity exists in Moldova's defence and security sectors. In January 2021, women accounted for 20.2% army personnel, up from 17% in 2015.¹¹¹

Although the inclusion of women candidates in the Military Academy began in 2012, women's representation in certain crucial areas remains low. While women participate in pre-deployment missions, their presence as peacekeepers is limited. In 2020, only 2% of National Army soldiers involved in international missions were women. The General Police Inspectorate (GPI) has observed a marginal rise in women's representation, and women accounted for 21.88% of its staff members in 2020. However, only 11% hold decision-making positions, highlighting persistent challenges in achieving gender parity.

Amidst ongoing negotiations between Chisinau and Tiraspol in the Transnistrian settlement process, two women from the Moldovan Government have taken the lead. Although women are represented in 40% of the 11 working groups established, discussions on gender equality issues are infrequent, and are primarily limited to domestic violence concerns.¹¹²

Despite changing societal dynamics, enduring gender stereotypes about women's roles in the security and defence sector deter their enrolment and career progression. A notable 20% of Moldovans still believe that men are better suited for security sector jobs, underscoring the need for continued efforts to challenge and reshape ingrained stereotypes. The persisting challenges in achieving gender balance highlight the need for comprehensive strategies to address recruitment, retention, and to challenge and change gender stereotypes in Moldova's security and defence sector.¹¹³

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ <http://1325naps.peacewomen.org/index.php/moldova>

¹¹¹ https://eca.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Field%20Office%20ECA/Attachments/Publications/2021/10/WPS_ENG_3008.pdf

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid.

Efforts to combat sexual harassment have been notable, including the development of regulations and capacity building initiatives. UN Women's collaboration with civil society organisations in 2019 resulted in regulations to prevent sexual harassment in the law enforcement and defence sectors. These regulations, approved in 2020, are a good practice shared for adoption by other institutions.

As noted above, an important development in 2023 is the adoption of the National Action Plan for the Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 for 2023–2027. The plan aims to foster cohesion among actors in the security and defence sector, reduce stereotypes, enhance women's representation, and improve mechanisms for preventing, reporting and investigating cases of violence. The plan also aims to increase women's participation in international peacekeeping missions and ensure equal conditions for women and men throughout the stages of conflict resolution.

While progress has been made to address gender inequality, especially in terms of women's representation in the security and defence sector, there remains a need for continued efforts and targeted interventions.

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

Gender-based violence (GBV) is a critical issue in Moldova, reflecting the complex interplay of societal norms, legal frameworks, and the lived experiences of the population. While progress has been made, multifaceted challenges posed by gender-based violence persist, particularly domestic violence, unequal representation and persistent gender stereotypes

In its pursuit of the objectives set forth in the National Action Plan for the Implementation of the Republic of Moldova–European Union Association Agreement, Moldova took a significant stride on 6 February 2017 by signing the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combatting Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (known as the Istanbul Convention). With this landmark decision, Moldova became the 44th signatory state to the treaty, reflecting its commitment to addressing gender-based violence. However, the journey to ratification faced initial resistance, primarily stemming from diverse societal views on elements such as the use of the term “gender” and concerns about its potential impact on traditional values and families.¹¹⁴

¹¹⁴ Dunja Mijatović, Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe, *Republic of Moldova Country Report*, 2020. <https://rm.coe.int/report-on-the-visit-to-moldova-from-9-to-13-march-2020-by-dunja-mijato/16809ed0e4>

Overcoming these challenges, Moldova **ratified the Istanbul Convention** on 14 October 2021, marking a pivotal moment in the country's international commitments on gender equality. The convention's ratification came into effect on 1 May 2022.¹¹⁵ While this development reflects progress, addressing domestic violence remains challenging.

Despite a noticeable uptick in complaints related to domestic violence, the number of criminal cases has declined. Domestic violence is about more than just physical violence, but other forms of domestic abuse are often overlooked. Just 7% of survivors of domestic violence have access to qualified legal assistance, highlighting a substantial gap in the legal support framework. Existing court infrastructure does not provide adequate protection against intimidation, and the protracted duration of case considerations, of over one year, exacerbates the challenges. The punishments applied, including unpaid work, suspended suspension and trial programmes, fail to effectively deter abusers.¹¹⁶

The **prevalence of domestic violence** in Moldova surpasses levels in the EU. Approximately 73% of women have experienced some form of abuse from their partners, with 71% enduring psychological abuse, far above the EU average of 43%. Additionally, 33% of women have suffered physical violence, compared to the EU average of 20.9%, and 25% have been victims of sexual violence, considerably more than the EU average of 7%.¹¹⁷

Moldova's ratification of the Istanbul Convention represents a **paradigm shift**, redefining violence against women and households from a personal issue to a societal concern. The state is now bound to implement a comprehensive and integrated policy to prevent abuse, protect survivors/victims and punish perpetrators. Importantly, survivors can now claim damages under the Istanbul Convention, a right that already exists under Law No. 137 on the rehabilitation of victims of torture, although challenges to implementation exist due to various factors, primarily a lack of funds.

To strengthen the response to gender-based and domestic violence, local public administration authorities have formed multidisciplinary teams, involving a systematic approach to protect and assist survivors of domestic violence. Various sector-specific instructions have been developed for the police, social assistance services and medical institutions, outlining effective interventions to address cases of domestic violence.

However, the 2019 OSCE-led Survey on Violence against Women reveals substantial shortcomings in Moldova's response to gender-based and domestic violence. These include:

- Social norms and attitudes contribute to inequality and a high prevalence of physical and psychological violence.
- Violence against women is under-reported to the police and other organisations, as there is a lack of trust in institutions that should provide support and services to survivors/victims.

¹¹⁵ Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection, *Monitoring report on the implementation of the action plan on the implementation of the Strategy for ensuring equality between women and men in the Republic of Moldova 2017-2021*.

¹¹⁶ Dunja Mijatović, *Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe, Republic of Moldova Country Report, 2020*.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

- Specialised services for women survivors of violence are lacking and need to be improved, including for disadvantaged groups of women.¹¹⁸

During the period of social isolation in the **COVID-19 pandemic**, the risks of domestic violence increased. Women were disproportionately affected, and about half (46%) lived in persistent fear of facing domestic violence.

Women displaced from Ukraine also face an elevated risk of gender-based violence in Moldova, highlighting the challenges facing refugees. Gaps persist in disseminating information on humanitarian protection and services for refugee women. Psychological support has become a priority, given the prevalence of depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder, requiring intensive mental health interventions. Moreover, evolving gender roles and expectations for refugee women – such as becoming heads of households and sole breadwinners – involve increased risks of gender-based violence, including sexual and labour-related exploitation.

Instances of domestic violence persist among refugee women in Romania, with husbands or partners in Ukraine exerting control remotely, creating an environment of manipulation and blackmail. Refugee women are often reluctant to complain to the authorities in Moldova, fearing the potential loss of humanitarian protection support.¹¹⁹

Overall, therefore, gender-based violence remains a pressing concern in Moldova. Addressing this challenge requires sustained efforts and a nuanced understanding of its various dimensions. The ratification of the Istanbul Convention signals progress, but persistent challenges require ongoing efforts. The experiences of women displaced from Ukraine highlight the need for a holistic approach to address gender-based violence – encompassing legal, societal and support system dimensions. Moldova's efforts to end gender-based violence reflect a broader global journey to create societies free from violence, in which the rights and well-being of all individuals are safeguarded.

4.8. Gender and the green transition, the environment and climate change

The intricate relationship between gender equality and environmental sustainability is pivotal for achieving the SDGs in Moldova. The impact that slow progress on environmental action has on gender equality, and vice versa, highlights the need for targeted and cohesive efforts. Despite the centrality of this relationship, the complementarities and trade-offs between gender equality and environmental sustainability are inadequately addressed within the SDG framework.

¹¹⁸ <https://www.osce.org/secretariat/413237?download=true>

¹¹⁹ <https://hias.org/news/high-risks-remain-ukrainian-women-moldova-and-romania>

The OECD report, “Gender and the Environment: Building Evidence and Policies to Achieve the SDGs”, underscores the disproportionate impact of environmental challenges, including climate change, on women worldwide.¹²⁰ With the added dimension of the COVID-19 pandemic, existing gender inequalities have been further exacerbated. The report advocates for gender-responsive measures in key areas like land, water, energy and transport management, noting that such strategies would foster sustainable and inclusive economic development, thereby enhancing the well-being of all.

Gender mainstreaming in agriculture and rural development: Moldova’s National Strategy on Agriculture and Rural Development 2014–2020 briefly acknowledges the commitment of the Ministry of Agriculture, Regional Development and the Environment to gender mainstreaming. However, a more in-depth analysis of gender gaps in agriculture is lacking, with generic indicators used to assess results. The strategy, when considered alongside the Gender Equality Strategy, reveals gender mainstreaming’s potential to increase the visibility of gender differences in agricultural employment and access to innovations. With the ongoing development of a new National Strategy on Agriculture and Rural Development for 2021–2030, there is an opportunity to enhance gender-sensitivity in sectoral strategies.¹²¹

Gender, climate change and the green transition: There is a gap in recognising the interconnected dimensions of gender equality and climate change or the green transition in Moldova. There is a lack of published documents on an integrated policy framework to address inclusive growth and environmental concerns. The National Bureau of Statistics lacks statistical data on gender and environmental aspects, highlighting the need for improved data and research initiatives involving civil society organisations and academia.

Policy gaps: Several policy-setting documents in Moldova do not include gender considerations. For instance, the Strategy for the Development of Rural Extension Services for 2012–2022 overlooks gender differences in access to rural advisory services, and it lacks indicators on closing gender gaps. Similarly, the Environmental Strategy 2014–2023 does not mention potential gender differences in environmentally-friendly agricultural practices. Past policies, including the Strategy for Adaptation to Climate Change and the National Programme for Transition to a Green Economy, lack gender analysis, resulting in an inconsistent approach. While long-term development strategies like Moldova 2030 fully incorporate gender considerations, targeted policies often miss these dimensions. Successful gender mainstreaming in climate change and green transition hinges on the early engagement of gender experts in policy formulation and ongoing oversight to ensure the effective incorporation of gender considerations in planning and implementation.¹²²

Addressing policy gaps in rural extension services, environmental strategy and adaptation to climate change in Moldova is crucial to ensuring consistent and effective gender mainstreaming.

¹²⁰ <https://www.oecd.org/env/gender-and-the-environment-3d32ca39-en.htm>

¹²¹ <https://www.fao.org/3/cb9555en/cb9555en.pdf>

¹²² Ibid.

The lack of published documents recognising the interconnected dimensions of gender equality and environmental issues highlights the need for integrated policy frameworks. Moreover, the absence of statistical data on the relationship between gender and the environment calls for urgent improvements and increased collaboration with civil society and academia. To bridge these gaps, ongoing efforts need to engage gender experts at the policy formulation stage and ensure continuous oversight. Ultimately, a more concerted and integrated approach is required to achieve sustainable and inclusive development that includes climate action, environmental stability and the green transition.

4.9. Gender and digital transformations

Information and communications technologies (ICTs) can be a catalyst for transformative change, transcending productivity gains to shape the very fabric of societal development. As Moldova forges ahead in its digital journey, it is important to scrutinise ICTs' impact on gender dynamics, particularly in terms of women's participation in the workforce.¹²³

Gender aspects of digital transformations: Women's representation in Moldova's ICT sector is suboptimal. Women account for 31% of ICT employees and just 19% of workers in digital professions.¹²⁴ There has been a gradual decline in gender disparities over time, but available data reveals persistent challenges, underscoring the need for nuanced interventions.

Women in ICT: Motivating women to pursue careers in the ICT sector is a complex undertaking. A survey in 2020, "Motivations and Barriers for Girls and Women in the STEM and ICT Domains" finds that only 6% of respondents expressed a strong interest in computer science classes in school. Gender stereotypes, coupled with a lack of parental support are significant barriers, with 15% of surveyed girls report a lack of encouragement by their parents. On a positive note, initiatives such as "Girls Go IT" have proven helped to influence educational and career choices among participants. One example of women's empowerment in ICT is UNDP Moldova's support for women's and girls' integration in the field of science and technology, particularly promoting STEM education. UNDP's initiatives are implemented with the direct involvement of academia, schools, civil society organisations, the media and parents to increase students' interest in STEM education. This has resulted in, for example, girls accounting for 50% of participants in the "Tekwill in Every School" programme.¹²⁵

Women in ICT education and careers: As noted above, there are gender gaps in the ICT labour force, as women hold just 19% of jobs associated with ICT specialties.¹²⁶

¹²³ <http://reports.weforum.org/global-information-technology-report-2015/preface-espen-barth-eide-world-economic-forum>

¹²⁴ <https://eufordigital.eu/moldova-report-identifies-major-gender-gap-in-ict-professions>

¹²⁵ <https://www.undp.org/moldova/digitaltransformation>

¹²⁶ https://statistica.gov.md/public/files/publicatii_electronice/Femei_barbati_TIC/Studiu_analitic_Femei_Barbati_TIC.pdf

This gender imbalance is particularly striking in professions such as IT and communications technicians, software programmers and system analysts. These disparities mirror the gender composition of students in STEM studies. In the 2020/2021 academic year, girls comprised 17% of students pursuing scientific and technical higher education, reflecting the need for targeted educational interventions.¹²⁷ Women's underrepresentation in the ICT sector contributes to the gender pay gap, as women are predominantly relegated to lower-skilled roles.

Business and gender-sensitivity of digital policy: The average gross monthly salary in the ICT sector was an impressive MDL 12,500 in 2017, making it the highest-paying sector in the country. However, a glaring gender pay gap exists. Women's earnings in the ICT sector are 33% lower than men's, which is significantly higher than the overall gender pay gap in the economy.¹²⁸ The gender pay gap is particularly pronounced in IT services, highlighting the need to address gender-based pay inequities within the sector.

In 2017–2020, the number of ICT businesses led by women has been growing faster (by 28%) than those led by men (24%), while gender gaps have been declining. Women-led companies pay the highest salaries in ICT and employment is greater in such companies. If this trend continues, gender gaps among ICT businesses will decrease.¹²⁹

Access to ICT and digital policy: The transformative potential of ICT notwithstanding, access remains uneven across demographic groups. The gap in computer ownership is striking, with rural areas lagging behind urban centres by 24.1%. Access to ICT is linked to socio-economic factors, indicating a direct correlation with well-being, educational levels and the robustness of ICT infrastructure. While 71.5% of affluent households own computers, this is true for only 35.7% of the poorest households in Moldova. Computer ownership is 90% for households headed by individuals with higher education, compared to 25% for households headed by individuals with primary education or no education.¹³⁰

This digital divide, influenced by factors like education and wealth, deepens over time, exacerbating existing gender disparities. As access to ICT becomes increasingly essential, addressing this gap becomes not just an ethical necessity but a strategic imperative, particularly given the pivotal role of the ICT sector in fostering economic prosperity.

Gender differences exist in ICT usage patterns between men and women. Men tend to download software with greater frequency, engage more in digital entertainment, and make digital payments for various services. Women predominantly use ICT to access information about health services, training, education and similar issues. Recognising these differences in usage patterns is important for tailoring inclusive policies that address the diverse needs and preferences of both genders.¹³¹

¹²⁷ National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova, *Statistical Databank: Students in post-secondary education, by sex, by general field and field of training, academic year 2020-2021*.

¹²⁸ <https://eufordigital.eu/moldova-report-identifies-major-gender-gap-in-ict-professions>

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Ibid.

As Moldova implements its Digital Transformation Strategy 2023–2030,¹³² the need to mainstream gender is clear. The nuanced challenges and gender disparities identified within the current digital landscape underscore the need for sustained and multifaceted efforts. Encouraging women and girls to pursue STEM education, dismantling discriminatory practices, and addressing gender pay gaps are required to create a more equitable, empowered and inclusive digital future. Strategic, evidence-based interventions are needed to ensure that the benefits of digital transformations leave no one behind.

4.10. Groups living in vulnerable conditions, and social inclusion

The interaction between gender and other identity markers – including ethnicity, age, disability, residence, socio-economic status and sexual orientation – is complex. It is important to recognise intersectional and multiple forms of discrimination. This refers to situations where women belonging to minority groups have even more limited rights and opportunities compared to both the population at large, and compared to men who are part of these minority groups.

In terms of policy development and programming, it is crucial to consider gender differences as well as to understand how inequalities intersect. The analysis should extend beyond gender to encompass other identity markers, to ensure a comprehensive approach that leaves no one behind.

Acknowledging the diverse challenges faced by specific groups of women, the Government's report on progress made on the Beijing Platform for Action notes that advancements have not been uniform. This lack of uniformity particularly affects Roma women, women in rural areas, women living with HIV, women in detention, migrant women, women with disabilities, and others.

In this Country Gender Profile, groups living in vulnerable conditions are taken to include women living in rural areas, Roma women and men, LGBTIQ individuals, persons with disabilities, and Ukrainian refugees (since 2022). Understanding and addressing the specific needs and challenges these groups face is essential for developing inclusive policies and fostering societal equality.

Rural women: Overall poverty rates in Moldova have declined, but poverty remains prevalent among rural households.¹³³ The rural population, including pensioners and persons who are self-employed in agriculture, have income levels significantly below the national average.

¹³² <https://dig.watch/updates/moldova-approves-digital-transformation-strategy-for-2023-2030>

¹³³ Maria Vremis, *Profile of Women from Rural Areas*, UNDP and UN Women, 2016. https://www2.unwomen.org/-/media/field%20office%20moldova/attachments/publications/2017/08/womens%20profiles%20-%20en/01%20women_rural_eng.pdf?la=en&vs=742

Women living in rural areas account for about 52% of Moldova's total population,¹³⁴ highlighting the critical need to address the unique challenges they face. Rural households are more dependent on social allowances and remittances from abroad, which exacerbates the economic vulnerability of rural communities. The absolute poverty rate is higher for women-headed households (29.3%), compared to households headed by men (25.6%). This gender disparity deepens when considering multidimensional poverty, which accounts for substandard living conditions, poor access to basic services, a lack of decent work, time poverty and disempowerment –all of which women in rural areas are more at risk of facing.¹³⁵

Access to healthcare and specialised services in rural areas is a pressing issue, and is particularly compromised for rural women, especially of pension-receiving age. Gender-based violence affects an estimated 73% of women in Moldova, with higher rates in rural areas. Specialised services for survivors of gender-based violence are insufficient and not easily accessible in rural regions.¹³⁶

In terms of the labour market, economic activity rates are lowest for women in rural areas, contributing to their increased vulnerability. Horizontal and vertical gender segregation in the labour market relegates women predominately to entry-level positions, especially in the agriculture sector. This segregation directly contributes to the gender pay gap, affecting rural women's economic empowerment.

Rural infrastructure deficiencies compound the challenges for women, as they bear a disproportionate burden due to traditional gender roles. Access to facilities, poor service quality, limited employment opportunities, and a lack of opportunities to apply knowledge and skills drive migration from rural areas, particularly for women. Around 70% of women involved in labour migration are from rural areas, highlighting the significant impact on this demographic.

Socio-demographic differences between rural and urban women are evident in life expectancy, birth rates and aging population. The patriarchal nature of Moldovan society, particularly pronounced in rural areas, perpetuates discriminatory attitudes towards women. Statistical indicators reveal shorter life expectancy, higher birth rates, and an aging population in rural areas, painting a concerning picture for women residing in these regions.¹³⁷

Addressing the plight of rural women in Moldova requires a nuanced approach that considers the intersectionality of gender, economic and social factors. Policies should focus on enhancing economic opportunities, improving access to healthcare and specialised services, and challenging gender norms to create a more equitable and inclusive environment for rural women.

¹³⁴ https://statbank.statistica.md/PxWeb/pxweb/en/20%20Populatia%20si%20procesele%20demografice/20%20Populatia%20si%20procesele%20demografice__POP__POP010/POP010100.px/?rxid=b2ff27d7-0b96-43c9-934b-42e1a2a9a774

¹³⁵ <https://www.fao.org/3/cb9555en/cb9555en.pdf>

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

Roma women: The Roma community accounts for a notable share of Moldova's population, but there are no exact statistics on the Roma population in 2023. The latest available data is from the 2014 Population and Housing Census. The census recognised seven distinct groups, with the Roma population comprising only 0.3% of the population at that time. However, these figures likely underestimate the actual number of Roma individuals due to issues of self-determination or a desire to conceal ethnicity. Estimates from Roma organisations suggest a much higher figure, with almost 52,000 Roma women in the country, accounting for approximately 1.5% of Moldova's total population.¹³⁸

Roma communities tend to live in concentrated settlements, often isolated from other groups, with around one-third residing in rural areas. Rural Roma households face substandard infrastructure, a lack of agricultural land, and poor integration into local labour markets. This leaves them vulnerable to informal working arrangements, poverty and food insecurity.

According to a 2019 survey conducted by the Roma Women Network, which involved 476 Roma women from 48 localities, significant challenges persist in various aspects of their lives. These include limited access to education, employment opportunities, healthcare services, and information about health and hygiene for Roma women. The survey reveals that only 36.6% of Roma women have attend some form of state education, with 57.8% reporting a lack of opportunities to continue their studies. Furthermore, 84.7% of respondents were not officially employed. The lack of accessible healthcare is a particular concern, with 28% of Roma women reporting that they had not visited a doctor in the last one to five years, and one in three women reporting discrimination by medical personnel. The survey highlights that 70% of Roma women lack access to information about health and hygiene. Additional obstacles to medical care include out-of-pocket and informal payments, as well as considerable distance to the nearest medical facilities.¹³⁹

The political landscape has seen some positive developments, with two Roma women elected to local councils in 2015. In the 2019 general local elections, 12 Roma community representatives, including six women, were elected as local councillors.

National policy initiatives do not fully address the challenges that Roma women and girls face. While the Gender Equality Strategy acknowledges the vulnerability of Roma women and girls to gender-based violence, the National Action Plan for Roma People 2016–2020 primarily focuses on improving educational opportunities for Roma girls, without addressing many other specific challenges that Roma women and girls face.¹⁴⁰ Roma women's organisations in Moldova have documented intersecting forms of discrimination, including in access to political office, education, medical services and decent work. Roma women in rural areas experience even greater marginalisation than other rural residents.¹⁴¹

¹³⁸ <https://www.fao.org/3/cb9555en/cb9555en.pdf>

¹³⁹ Dunja Mijatović, Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe, *Republic of Moldova Country Report*, 2020. <https://rm.coe.int/report-on-the-visit-to-moldova-from-9-to-13-march-2020-by-dunja-mijato/16809ed0e4>

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ https://www.academia.edu/42018915/Manifest_on_situation_of_Roma_women_and_girls_in_Moldova_ENG_

LGBTIQ: In Moldova, LGBTIQ persons face a complex landscape marked by legal and societal challenges, exposing them to discrimination. Households led by same-sex couples are not eligible for the benefits granted to couples of the opposite sex because same-sex unions are not recognised. The Constitution explicitly defines marriage as exclusively between a man and a woman, leaving same-sex couples with minimal legal protection. Although Moldova prohibits workplace discrimination based on sexual orientation, and homosexuality was decriminalised in 1995, the absence of recognition for same-sex unions poses a significant gap in terms of legal safeguards.

A 2017 survey by the Pew Research Center reveals that 92% of Moldovans believe homosexuality should not be accepted by society, a sentiment shared by 88% of respondents between 18 and 34 years old. A mere 5% of respondents express support for same-sex marriages.¹⁴² Societal attitudes towards LGBTIQ individuals have been slow to shift, reflecting deeply entrenched traditionalism prevalent in Moldovan society.

While Moldova ranks 36th of 49 countries in the Rainbow Europe rating in 2021 – an improvement from its ranking (41st) in 2019 – discrimination against the LGBTIQ community persists.¹⁴³ A study by the Council for Preventing and Eliminating Discrimination and Ensuring Equality in 2019 reveals a reduction in “social distance” from LGBTIQ individuals, from 5.2 in 2015 to 4.4 in 2018. However, the LGBTIQ community remains the least accepted minority in Moldova, evident in the social distance coefficients compared to other marginalised groups. Roma, Gagauz people, Bulgarians, people with disabilities, refugees, non-Orthodox Christians, and agnostics/atheists demonstrated are accepted to varying degrees, but 40% of survey respondents perceive LGBTIQ individuals as “abnormal”.¹⁴⁴

According to a national survey on attitudes towards equality in June 2022, 64% of respondents express a desire to “exclude” LGBTIQ people from Moldova, underscoring the persistent challenges the community faces.¹⁴⁵ Amendments to the 2012 Law on Equal Opportunities in 2022 provide more explicit protections for LGBTIQ individuals. These changes, part of the Government’s initiative, also introduce measures against hate crimes and hate speech, contributing to an improved ranking by the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association’s (ILGA-Europe) ratings. However, societal attitudes expressed in recent surveys indicate that despite legal advancements, further efforts are needed to foster genuine inclusivity and acceptance of the LGBTIQ community within Moldovan society.

People with disabilities: Various international instruments ratified by Moldova offer protection for persons with disabilities, most notably the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). This commitment has prompted initiatives for the social inclusion of persons with disabilities.

¹⁴² <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2017/05/10/social-views-and-morality>

¹⁴³ Mai toleranți, dar tot printre ultimii. Moldova ocupă locul 36 în clasamentul Rainbow Europe. <https://agora.md/stiri/88198/mai-toleranti-dar-tot-printre-ultimii-moldova-ocupa-locul-36-in-clasamentul-rainbow-europe>

¹⁴⁴ Report on the situation of LGBT people’s rights in the Republic of Moldova, 2019. https://gdm.md/files/untitled_folder/Annual_Report_GENDERDOC-M_2019_English.pdf

¹⁴⁵ <https://www.rferl.org/a/moldova-gains-lgbt-rights/32411055.html>

The convention's implementation began with the approval of the Strategy on the Social Inclusion of People with Disabilities 2010–2013 (Law No. 166 of 09.06.2010), signalling a commitment to policy reforms aligned with the convention.

The legal framework, specifically Law No. 60 of 30.03.2012 on the Social Inclusion of People with Disabilities, ensures the equal treatment and equal rights of people with disabilities. These cover social security, medical care, rehabilitation, education, employment, public life, the physical environment, transport and ICT.¹⁴⁶

Official statistics indicate that there are approximately 184,200 people with disabilities in Moldova as of 2022, including 13,400 children (7.3%). This means that people with disabilities comprise 7% of the country's total population.¹⁴⁷ Women and girls account for 48% of persons with disabilities. There has been an overall increase of 10% from 2005 to 2014 in the number of people with disabilities, including a 5% increase of women and girls with disabilities. There is a higher risk of disabilities among men due to factors such as morbidity, accidents, crimes, violence, occupational injuries and substance use. The prevalence of disabilities is lower among women – there are 477 women and girls with disabilities for every 10,000 women and girls, compared to 566 men and boys with disabilities among every 10,000 men and boys in Moldova.¹⁴⁸

Disaggregated data from the National Bureau of Statistics over 2017–2022 indicates an average ratio of around 162 men to 100 women among people with disabilities aged 18 and over. Women with disabilities are a diverse group, influenced by factors like the type and severity of disabilities, whether disabilities are congenital or acquired, and their roles as mothers, among others.

Aging is a key factor influencing disability trends, with a higher risk of disability correlated with older age. Women aged 50 and over account for the majority (57%) of women with disabilities, followed by women in the 40–49-year-old age group.¹⁴⁹ Living environments shape the profile of women with disabilities, with rural areas facing more challenges. In 2022, 61.6% of women with disabilities lived in rural areas, highlighting a greater likelihood of disability in rural settings compared to urban areas, irrespective of age.¹⁵⁰ This underscores the importance of considering the intersectionality of factors such as gender, age and living environment in addressing the needs of women with disabilities in Moldova.

Ukrainian refugees: Since Russia invaded Ukraine on 24 February 2022, a substantial number of Ukrainians have sought refuge in Moldova. As of 12 November 2023, although many refugees have returned to Ukraine or moved to other countries, 113,132 Ukrainian refugees continue to reside in Moldova.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁶ https://statistica.gov.md/en/situation-of-persons-with-disabilities-9460_2375.html

¹⁴⁷ https://statbank.statistica.md/PxWeb/pxweb/en/30%20Statistica%20sociala/30%20Statistica%20sociala__08%20SAN__SAN050/?rxid=b2ff27d7-0b96-43c9-

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ <https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine/location/10784>

Ukrainian refugees in Moldova face challenges related to food and non-food items, education (including the need for laptops for remote learning), and job access. Those who have stayed in Moldova for over 18 months are increasingly focusing on social and economic integration due to the protracted conflict in Ukraine, as discussed above.

Demographically, Ukrainian refugees in Moldova include a large number of women, children and older persons due to Ukrainian legislation preventing conscription-eligible men from leaving the country. This demographic mix shapes traditional gender roles and household dynamics among the refugee population, with various groups – including older individuals, people with disabilities, Roma individuals, single women, children, and single women-headed households with multiple children – facing intersecting forms of discrimination and heightened protection risks in the context of conflict and displacement.

Displacement has altered gender roles, with refugee women assuming increased caregiving responsibilities, single women with children taking on non-traditional roles, and adult male refugees experiencing a shift from traditional roles as providers. While refugees generally feel safe in Moldova and report positive relations with host communities, most express an intention to permanently return to Ukraine when the situation allows, contributing to uncertainty affecting livelihoods, education and social integration.¹⁵²

Challenges persist in employment, particularly for single women-headed households, Roma women, older persons and people with disabilities.

Refugee men face inadvertent marginalisation, especially in livelihood opportunities and mental health and psychosocial support programmes. Discrimination against Roma refugees, influenced by ethnicity, particularly impacts Roma women, affecting access to housing and livelihoods. Concerns about sexual exploitation and abuse persist, especially among single refugee women with children, who rely more on assistance and shelter, along with challenges to accessing mental health services.

The recent approval of Government Decision No. 21 on granting temporary protection to displaced persons from Ukraine of 18.01.2023 is expected to enhance protection and support policies for Ukrainian refugees. However, there is a need for an effective mechanism to identify and register refugees, including people with disabilities, to improve community-level services.

Refugees' primarily rely on accommodation in relatives' homes or rented housing units, with Temporary Placement Centres for Refugees (RAC) housing the most vulnerable individuals. These centres face challenges related to physical accessibility, limited shower access, and difficulties in terms of using public transport.¹⁵³

¹⁵² <https://reliefweb.int/report/moldova/republic-moldova-needs-assessment-ukrainian-refugees-disabilities-january-2023>

¹⁵³ Ibid.

Income for refugees, particularly those with disabilities, largely comes from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees' (UNHCR) Cash Assistance Programme. This covers basic needs but falls short of addressing disability-related expenses. Employment support services are crucial for integrating refugees with disabilities into the workforce. Access to medical services and medicines is a significant concern for refugees with disabilities and the elderly. The current mechanism for compensating healthcare providers does not adequately cover refugees' needs. Despite the right to work in Moldova, only 1% of Ukrainian citizens are officially employed, highlighting the need for employment support services.

The educational integration of children with disabilities remains a challenge, as many refugee families prefer home-based or online education from Ukrainian schools. The assistance system for Ukrainian refugees needs adaptation to address the evolving needs of those staying for an extended period, particularly refugees with disabilities. There is a need to prioritise critical support services – including accessible transportation, assistive and mobility equipment, orthopaedic footwear and social assistance – to ensure the well-being and inclusion of refugees in Moldova.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.



5. KEY CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS ON GENDER MAINSTREAMING

5.1. Key conclusions

Moldova has made international and national commitments to promote gender equality and women's empowerment (see section 3.1), including its most recent commitments to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Istanbul Convention, as well as national legislation such as the Law on Ensuring Equal Opportunities between Women and Men enacted in February 2006.

In recent years, Moldova has intensified efforts to bolster the legal and institutional framework for gender equality. Noteworthy developments include the approval of the Programme for the Promotion and Ensuring Equal Opportunities between Women and Men, and the National Programme on Preventing and Combatting Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, both for the 2023–2027 period. These programmes are aligned with Moldova's international commitments and aim to enhance gender equality across sectors such as health, education, labour, entrepreneurship, social protection and local development.

Another crucial initiative in 2023 was the adoption of the National Action Plan for the Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. The plan focuses on promoting gender balance in the security and defence sector, reducing stereotypes, enhancing the efficiency of mechanisms for preventing and investigating violence, and increasing women's participation in international peacekeeping missions.

To support women's economic empowerment, Moldova launched a roadmap in May 2022, targeting five key objectives, including eliminating barriers to access to resources and promoting women's entrepreneurship.

In the legal framework, significant amendments have been introduced in the labour and childcare sectors in 2022–2023. These include provisions for employers to provide childcare services, the principle of equal remuneration for equal work or work of equal value, and enhanced measures against gender-based salary differences.

Other improvements involve flexible work arrangements, paid paternity leave, and strengthened measures against workplace sexual harassment.

The institutional framework involves various authorities such as Parliament, the Government, the Government Commission on Gender Equality, and specialised bodies within ministries. Notably, the Council for the Prevention and Elimination of Discrimination and Ensuring Equality has been renamed the Equality Council, and the regulation of its activities was extensively revised in 2023 to enhance its effectiveness. A new National Agency for the Prevention and Combatting of Violence against Women and Domestic Violence was established in line with the Istanbul Convention, focusing on coordination, monitoring, evaluation and reporting.

These recent developments reflect Moldova's commitment to advancing gender equality by strengthening legal frameworks, implementing targeted programmes and enhancing institutional mechanisms.

At the same time, the legal, policy and institutional framework in other thematic areas – such as energy, digital transformation, infrastructure, transport and climate change – largely remain gender-neutral.

This Country Gender Profile's gender analysis by sector identifies the following gender imbalances and challenges that should be addressed to promote gender equality and women's empowerment in Moldova.

Women in decision-making and leadership

- Women's representation in parliament (38.6%) has improved, but falls short of gender parity.
- Women's representation in the Cabinet of Ministers varies. At present, there only three of 16 ministers are women, highlighting challenges in achieving consistent gender balance in high-level political decision-making.
- Despite positive strides in local governance, with women's participation reaching 22%, challenges persist. These include women's low levels of representation as mayors (21.8%) and concerns about the implementation of gender quotas at the local level.
- Women in politics face multifaceted challenges, including non-transparent recruitment practices, legislative loopholes enabling quota circumvention, and gender stereotypes, which hinder their active participation in political decision-making.

Gender and employment

- Gendered disparities in economic activity persist. Women's economic activity rate (37.8%) is considerably lower than the rate for men (46.3%), indicating an enduring gender gap in workforce participation.
- Sectoral gender segregation and imbalances exist. Sectors that are particularly dominated by men include construction (in which 87.9% of workers are men, and 12.1% are women), transport and storage (71.7% and 28.3%, respectively), and agriculture (73.7% and 26.3%, respectively), reflecting ongoing occupational segregation.
- Unemployment disparities are especially evident in times of economic shocks.

- Although the gap in unemployment rates for men (3.5%) and women (2.6%) has decreased, economic shocks tend to widen this gap, reflecting the increased vulnerability of both genders in challenging economic times.
- There is a persistent gender pay gap across sectors. The gender pay gap in Moldova is 13.6% in formal jobs, overall, with notable variations across sectors – reaching 41.4% in finance and insurance and 39.2% in information and communications. This underscores the need to address entrenched gender-based salary differences.

Women's entrepreneurship

- There are gender disparities in entrepreneurship. Women own or manage nearly 34% of businesses in Moldova, indicating underutilised growth potential. Women-led enterprises tend to be smaller, on average, than those led by men.
- Educational disparities also persist. Despite having university degrees, men with higher education are more engaged in entrepreneurial activities, highlighting gender imbalances in the entrepreneurial landscape.
- Women entrepreneurs often face challenges, particularly in terms of access to financial resources. Women entrepreneurs rely more on loans – especially on borrowing from friends and relatives – than men, and face unequal treatment by banks and public authorities, including more stringent collateral requirements and tax scrutiny, particularly in retail trade.
- Women entrepreneurs receive less support from entrepreneurship programmes than men, with only 23.8% benefitting from such programmes, lagging behind the overall representation of women's entrepreneurship at the national level (33.9%).
- While Moldova prioritises women's entrepreneurship in policy frameworks and investments, challenges persist. These include a lack of sex-disaggregated data which limits gender-responsive policy design. This highlights the need for more nuanced policies and targeted interventions.

Gender and care work

- Women bear a disproportionate burden of unpaid care work in Moldova. They perform 66% of total unpaid work, exceeding gender imbalances in OECD countries.
- There are disparities in care work activities performed by women and men. On average, women engage more in cooking, poultry rearing, caring for livestock care and dish-washing than men, reflecting gendered roles.
- There is a rural-urban divide in care work. People in rural areas spend more time on care work (4.9 hours) than urban residents (3.8 hours), reflecting traditional roles and economic disparities.
- The COVID-19 pandemic has had an impact on care work, such as increasing gender inequalities in caregiving. During the pandemic, women spent over 50% of their time, on average, on helping their children with lessons.
- The unequal care distribution of care work takes a psychological toll. For example, it led to increased anxiety and isolation for women during the COVID-19 pandemic and in the context of the humanitarian crisis caused by Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the influx of refugees from Ukraine to Moldova, posing risks to mental health and well-being.

Gender, infrastructure and public transport

- There are gender disparities in the use of public transport. Women rely more on public transport (76.5% of travel time) than men, reflecting their specific transportation needs.
- Urban-rural disparities also exist. Rural populations dedicate twice as much time to using public transport than urban residents due to limited alternatives and poor road quality.
- Underdeveloped and gender-neutral infrastructure has a particular impact on women, limiting their access to basic services. This can contribute to life-threatening consequences during crises.

Gender and health

- There is a gender gap in life expectancy in Moldova, disfavours men. The life expectancy gender gap increased from 7.8 years in 2019 to 9 years in 2021, with women living longer (73.5 years) than men (64.5 years).
- The overall mortality rate rose from 13.9 deaths per 1,000 inhabitants in 2014 to 17.5 deaths per 1,000 people in 2021, with a higher rate for men (18.8 deaths) than women (16.1 deaths).
- In terms of gendered health-seeking behaviours, women tend to seek medical consultations more frequently than men. This contributes to the under-diagnosis and under-treatment of illnesses, particularly cardiovascular diseases, among men.
- Disparities exist in access to health services. Women in rural areas face particular challenges to accessing quality reproductive health services, contributing to health issues. Limited health insurance coverage, financial constraints and the concentration of hospitals in urban areas pose barriers to healthcare access for rural residents, particularly women.

Gender and education

- Socio-economic factors impact access to education in Moldova. In general, low-income families can only afford for their children to attend primary and secondary education due to financial constraints, affecting their academic paths. This is especially true in Roma families, and disproportionately affects girls.
- Gender disparities exist in tertiary education. While boys and girls are almost equally enrolled in primary and secondary education, a significant gender gap exists in tertiary education – with far more girls (81.7%) than boys (59.3%) enrolled. Overall, girls leave the education system later than boys.
- Gender imbalances also exist in the selection of fields of study at the post-secondary level. Most education/pedagogy and social sciences students are girls and young women, while boys and young men predominate among ICT and engineering students, reflecting persistent gender stereotypes.
- Gender disparities are apparent among teaching staff and in leadership roles in education. Women account for most primary and secondary education workers (87%), while men dominate leadership roles, such as university rectors (76.2% of whom are men).
- Challenges to gender mainstreaming in education persist. Gender is insufficiently mainstreamed in education policy and curricula, contributing to the feminisation of employment in the sector and the persistence of gender stereotypes.

- Challenges include low levels of gender-sensitivity, limited gender education for educators, and the absence of topics like gender equality in textbooks and curricula.

Women, peace and security

- Women are underrepresented in the armed forces. Despite progress, only 20.2% of National Army personnel were women in January 2021, and women account for just 2% of National Army soldiers involved in international missions. This highlights a significant gender disparity in peacekeeping.
- Gender disparities persist at decision-making levels in the police force. While there has been a slight increase in women's representation at the General Police Inspectorate, only 11% hold decision-making positions, indicating persistent challenges in achieving gender parity in leadership roles.
- Enduring gender stereotypes limit progress on the women, peace and security agenda – particularly hampering women's enrolment and career progression in the security and defence sector. Some 20% of Moldovans still believe that men are better suited to security sector jobs than women.
- There is an ongoing need to challenge harassment and stereotypes. Efforts to combat sexual harassment are notable, but the existence of enduring stereotypes reflects the need for continued efforts to challenge and reshape ingrained perceptions that hamper gender equality in the security and defence sector.

Gender-based violence

- The prevalence of domestic violence in Moldova is high. Approximately 73% of women have experienced some form of abuse from their partners, significantly more than the average rate in EU Member States.
- Despite an increase in domestic violence complaints, the number of criminal cases has declined, revealing challenges in terms of legal responses to gender-based violence.
- Legal assistance for survivors of gender-based violence is limited. Only 7% of domestic violence survivors have access to qualified legal assistance, indicating a significant gap in the legal support framework.
- Societal norms contribute to the under-reporting of domestic violence, as does a lack of trust in institutions, posing a critical challenge to addressing gender-based violence.
- Women displaced from Ukraine face elevated risks of gender-based violence, highlighting the need for targeted support and services. Remote control and manipulation by partners are significant concerns.

Gender and the green transition

- There is a lack of statistical data on the relationship between gender and environmental issues in Moldova, which holds back informed policy and decision-making.
- Gender mainstreaming vis-à-vis the green transition is limited. Existing policies, including the Strategy for Rural Extension Services and the Environmental Strategy, overlook gender differences. This points to the need for enhanced gender mainstreaming.
- Moldova lacks integrated policy frameworks that recognise the interconnectedness of gender equality and environmental sustainability, which affects the effectiveness of green transition strategies.

Gender and digital transformations

- Women are underrepresented in the ICT sector, where they account for 31% of total employment and just 19% hold roles in digital professions, reflecting persistent gender disparities.
- Only 17% of students pursuing scientific and technical higher education in STEM fields are girls, contributing to gender imbalances in ICT careers and perpetuating pay gaps.
- Despite the ICT sector being the highest-paying sector in Moldova, women's earnings are 33% lower than men's, on average. This underscores the urgent need to address and rectify gender-based pay inequities in the ICT sector.
- A significant digital divide exists, with rural areas lagging behind urban centres by 24.1%. This gap deepens over time and exacerbates existing gender disparities. Addressing this gap both an ethical imperative as well as a strategic imperative.

Groups living in vulnerable conditions

- Women in rural areas, who account for 52% of Moldova's population, face stark economic vulnerabilities. Women-headed rural households have higher absolute poverty rates (29.3%) than households headed by men (25.6%).
- Roma women (approximately 52,000 women) face particular challenges. Roma women respondents in one survey report barriers to education (36.6%), high levels of unemployment (84.7%), discrimination in healthcare (33%), and poor integration into local labour markets.
- Moldova's societal attitudes show a lack of acceptance toward the LGBTIQ community, with 92% opposing homosexuality. A 2022 survey indicates that 64% of respondents want to exclude LGBTIQ individuals from the country, pointing to the entrenched discrimination that LGBTIQ persons face.
- Women with disabilities in Moldova face intersectional challenges. In 2022, 61.6% of women with disabilities lived in rural areas, and 57% of women with disabilities were aged 50 and over.
- Ukrainian refugees in Moldova – who are predominantly women, children and older individuals – face challenges to accessing food, education, medical services and jobs, as well as language barriers. Displacement is also altering traditional gender roles. Recent government decisions aim to enhance protection, but effective mechanisms for identification, registration and community-level services are still needed.

5.2. Recommendations for the EU Delegation on CLIP development

When updating the GAP III Country Level Implementation Plan, the focus should be on the following objectives.

1. **Promote gender balance in leadership and politics:**
 - Support initiatives to enhance women's representation in political decision-making.
 - Advocate for transparent recruitment practices and for addressing legislative loopholes that hold back gender parity.
2. **Combat gender-based violence:**
 - Support the national efforts to prevent and respond to domestic violence, and to ensure that legal frameworks are effectively implemented.
 - Build capacity of support systems for survivors, with a focus on legal assistance and community awareness.
3. **Support women in STEM and ICT:**
 - Implement programmes to increase women's participation in STEM education and careers.
 - Support the efforts to address gender disparities in the ICT sector, including efforts to close the gender pay gap.
4. **Empower women economically:**
 - Support women-led businesses through targeted programmes and investments.
 - Support the Government in addressing the financial challenges that women entrepreneurs face, including unequal access to resources and support programmes.
5. **Support initiatives to address the gender pay gap:**
 - Support the Government in implementing measures to eliminate gender-based salary differences.
 - Advocate for transparent remuneration policies in all sectors.
6. **Address the urban-rural divide:**
 - Support the development and implementation of strategies to decrease disparities in infrastructure and public services between urban and rural areas.
 - Support initiatives that address economic vulnerabilities in rural communities, particularly for women.
7. **Support groups living in vulnerable conditions:**
 - Support the Government in tailoring policies and programmes to the specific needs of groups living in vulnerable conditions, including rural women, Roma women, LGBTIQ individuals, persons with disabilities and Ukrainian refugees.
 - Back the Government in ensuring inclusivity and accessibility in social and economic support systems.

8. **Support efforts to close the digital gender gap and promote a gender-sensitive green transition:**
 - Implement measures to address the digital gender divide, focusing on digital literacy and access in both urban and rural areas.
 - Support the Government in integrating gender considerations into green transition policies, recognising the interconnected dimensions of gender equality and environmental sustainability.
9. **Promote gender-responsive budgeting:**
 - Advocate for the integration of gender-responsive budgeting in national policies and programmes.
 - Support training and capacity building for institutions to enable them to effectively implement gender-responsive budgeting.

5.3. Recommendations for the EU Delegation on supporting the Government

In the long-term, a detailed gender analysis of different sectors is required to identify how to optimally use public resources and mainstream gender, so as to advance economic growth and prosperity. In this context, and based on this Country Gender Profile's findings, the EU Delegation's support for the Government of Moldova should focus on the following aims.

1. **Extend and enhance the gender equality policy framework:**
 - Support the extension, enhancement and implementation of the policy framework on gender equality, including three recent gender policies adopted in 2023, in line with evolving needs and challenges.
 - Emphasise the importance of a comprehensive, long-term approach to gender mainstreaming.
2. **Improve the legislative framework:**
 - Support legislative enhancements to increase women's participation in decision-making and political life.
 - Advocate for reforms that address existing loopholes and promote transparent practices.
3. **Continue strengthening the institutional gender mechanism:**
 - Support the bodies of Moldova's institutional gender mechanism with capacity building, training and expertise.
 - Work towards strengthening the institutional gender mechanism's effectiveness in terms of advancing gender equality initiatives.

4. **Enhance gender-disaggregated statistical data:**
 - Provide assistance for the collection of high-quality gender-disaggregated statistical data, especially in key sectors of the national economy.
 - Address gaps in data availability to ensure a robust foundation for gender analysis and informed decision-making.
5. **Promote women's participation in key economic sectors:**
 - Support assessments of key economic sectors to identify barriers to women's participation.
 - Encourage policies and incentives to increase women's participation, thereby fostering economic growth and empowerment.
6. **Reinforce healthcare system support:**
 - Provide support for the healthcare system to address gender-specific health needs.
 - Allocate funds to ensure equal access to quality medical services, with a focus on services for survivors of domestic and gender-based violence.
7. **Improve girls' and boys' access to education, especially in fields where they are underrepresented:**
 - Support initiatives to improve boys' access to secondary and tertiary education.
 - Promote girls' increased participation in STEM education, addressing gender imbalances in STEM and ICT fields.
8. **Continue to support the implementation of gender-responsive budgeting:**
 - Advocate for the introduction of gender-responsive budgeting as a fundamental dimension of gender mainstreaming across the public sector.
 - Support training and capacity building for institutions to effectively implement gender-responsive budgeting.
9. **Promote gender-sensitive SME development:**
 - Support the development of small and medium-sized enterprises with a focus on gender-sensitivity, recognising their role in socio-economic development.
 - Encourage incentives for individuals, employers and institutions to foster women's greater participation in economic activities.
10. **Support initiatives to prevent and combat gender-based violence:**
 - Strengthen support for initiatives to combat gender-based violence in the wake of Moldova's ratification of the Istanbul Convention.
 - Advocate for comprehensive measures, including legal frameworks, support services for survivors, and awareness raising campaigns to address the high prevalence of gender-based violence.
11. **Support initiatives to address gender-based violence against refugees:**
 - Extend targeted support to Ukrainian refugees, including women, children and older persons.
 - Collaborate with local and international partners to address challenges related to food, education, employment, language barriers and access to medical services for Ukrainian refugees in Moldova.

5.4. Recommendations for the EU Delegation on supporting civil society

Civil society organisations involved in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in Moldova have a pivotal role to play in increasing the resilience of both women and men, particularly given the current political situation. They have been key players in addressing the COVID-19 pandemic, and their participation is essential to further sustainable development.

The EU Delegation's support should focus on funding specific projects to be implemented by civil society organisations to monitor government policies in the field and address the recommendations outlined above on the Country Level Implementation Plan's development. These projects should be linked to the following areas:

1. **Support civil society initiatives:**

- Allocate funding for CSOs to implement projects focused on monitoring government policies related to gender equality and women's empowerment.
- Support CSOs' involvement in addressing stereotypes, cultural barriers and promoting shifts in attitudes through targeted initiatives.

2. **Support advocacy and awareness raising:**

- Encourage CSOs to conduct advocacy and lobbying activities for women's rights, addressing women's fears and fostering women's leadership.
- Engage CSOs in educational activities targeting young people to raise awareness of gender equality and enhance the culture of women's participation in political life.

3. **Mobilise women in politics:**

- Promote the mobilisation of women in politics through collaborative initiatives between women politicians and civil society.
- Support community-based projects, including partnerships with local authorities, focusing on gender-related issues and expanding support for shelters for survivors of domestic and gender-based violence.

4. **Support capacity building and training:**

- Facilitate training, workshops and studies led by CSOs that address gender disparities in key sectors, such as education, health, defence, transport and telecommunications.
- Support initiatives to improve household infrastructure, electricity, water supply and cooking technologies to reduce domestic work-related time demands on women and girls.

5. **Empower women in agriculture:**

- Ensure a continued focus on agriculture, and other sectors in which women workers predominate, through policies and programmes, including enhanced training for women farmers.
- Advocate for the elimination of gender-based inequalities in laws, taxation, finance and property ownership rights, emphasising equal rights for women.

6. **Enhance justice and security:**

- Improve the administration of justice, and law and order, in order to reduce violence against girls and women.
- Address gender-based challenges, particularly in sectors like agriculture, ensuring a comprehensive approach to women's safety and empowerment.

7. **Support Ukrainian refugees:**

- Support civil society to provide humanitarian assistance to Ukrainian refugees and address their specific humanitarian needs.
- Collaborate with CSOs and development partners to enhance protection mechanisms and community-level services for Ukrainian refugees in Moldova.

ANNEX

CSOs working on gender equality issues in Moldova

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