Social Institutions and Gender Index

SIGI 2021 Regional Report for Africa



AFRICA

OECD DEVELOPMENT CENTRE

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Please cite this publication as:
OECD (2021), *SIGI 2021 Regional Report for Africa*, Social Institutions and Gender Index, OECD Publishing, Paris, *https://doi.org/10.1787/a6d95d90-en*.

ISBN 978-92-64-53202-1 (print)
ISBN 978-92-64-43148-5 (pdf)

Social Institutions and Gender Index
ISSN 2663-4716 (print)
ISSN 2663-4724 (online)

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Foreword

Since 2009, the OECD Development Centre 's Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) has shed light on structural and multiple barriers affecting women's and girls' lives in developing and developed countries. The SIGI measures discrimination against women in social institutions across 180 countries. The Index evaluates the impacts of laws, social norms and practices, in order to capture the underlying drivers of gender inequality, with the aim of promoting transformative policies built on data and evidence. The SIGI is also one of the official data sources for monitoring Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) indicator 5.1.1.

The *SIGI 2021 Regional Report for Africa* provides an evidence-based analysis of setbacks and progress towards gender equality across the region since 2014. It assesses the ways in which discriminatory social institutions – including formal and informal laws, social norms and practices – continue to constrain women's empowerment and restrict their access to opportunities and rights. The report's analysis includes the results of a series of policy workshops and high-level dialogues conducted in 2021 in three African sub-regions: West, Southern and East Africa. These dialogues were organised by the OECD Development Centre in partnership with the OECD's Sahel and West Africa Club Secretariat (SWAC), the African Development Bank (AfDB) and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), and in collaboration with the Austrian Development Agency (ADA). These policy fora led to the creation of sub-regional roadmaps with concrete policy actions. In particular, the report considers the impact of discriminatory social institutions on three key dimensions of women's empowerment: health, economic situation, and political voice, leadership and agency. The report also provides policy recommendations that aim to reshape gender norms, promote women's empowerment and build a truly inclusive society, especially in the current context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

This edition of the *SIGI 2021 Regional Report for Africa* contains five chapters. The first of these presents the results of the SIGI at the continental and sub-regional levels, summarising main areas of progress and challenges facing African countries in terms of social institutions, and providing a set of tailored policy recommendations to help African governments deliver on their gender equality commitments. The second chapter looks more closely at legal frameworks governing six SIGI indicators, highlighting relevant legal reforms and the current landscape. The last three chapters explore the links between sex-based discriminations in health, economic and political voice outcomes, and the underlying and deeply entrenched discriminatory social institutions that explain them.

Acknowledgements

The *SIGI 2021 Regional Report for Africa* was prepared by the OECD Development Centre under the guidance of Ragnheiður Elín Árnadóttir, Director of the OECD Development Centre and Bathylle Missika, Head of the Network, Partnerships and Gender Division. The Gender team was led by Hyeshin Park, Economist and Gender Programme Co-ordinator, and the report was drafted by Pierre de Boisséson, Estelle Loiseau, Alejandra Meneses and Gabrielle Naumann-Woleske; Carolin Beck and Giacomo Gattorno provided statistical support. The production of the report was co-ordinated by Alejandra Meneses, Policy Analyst with the Gender Programme. The report was edited by David McDonald. Thanks are owed to the OECD Development Centre's Publication and Communications team: Aida Buendia, Delphine Grandrieux, Elizabeth Nash, Laura Parry-Davies, Irit Perry and Henri-Bernard Solignac-Lecomte.

The OECD Development Centre is grateful for the strong and long-standing support of the Austrian Development Agency (ADA) and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). This publication benefited from the financial support of the Austrian Development Agency (ADA) to the OECD.

Under the umbrella of the SIGI Africa Project, nine workshops and high-level policy dialogues were organised in West, Southern and East Africa, with the support of the Austria Development Cooperation and in partnership with the African Development Bank Group and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa. For West Africa, workshops and high-level policy dialogues were also organised in co-operation with the OECD's Sahel and West Africa Club Secretariat. The inputs and comments from numerous policy makers, development practitioners and representatives of regional organisations, civil society groups, research organisations, think thanks, gender experts, advocates and foundations were extremely valuable.

The report also benefited from the insights and comments of colleagues from the OECD Development Centre and other OECD Directorates. In particular, we would like to highlight the support of Laurent Bossard, Charlotte Goemans, Alessandro Goglio, Pinar Guven, Elizabeth Holbourne, Tarani Meeta, Arthur Minsat, Bathylle Missika, Lorenzo Pavone and Ayumi Yuasa.

The OECD Development Centre would like to extend its gratitude to the members of the SIGI Technical Group: Fareda Banda, Shailaja Chandra, Jacques Charmes, Andrea Den Boer, Geske Dijkstra, Caroline Harper, Stefan Klasen, Inaki Permanyer and Amber Peterman. Particular thanks go to Professor Eduardo Zambrano of California Polytechnic State University for revising the methodological framework in partnership with the OECD Development Centre's Gender Team.

Finally, the OECD Development Centre would like to thank colleagues within and outside the OECD who provided comments on the revised conceptual and methodological frameworks and the SIGI country notes. The Centre also thanks the country profile authors and validators, as well as the SIGI National Focal Points. The full list of these individuals and institutions can be found at www.genderindex.org.

Editorial

The COVID-19 pandemic and ensuing economic recession have challenged gains made towards women's empowerment and gender equality, both in Africa and worldwide. In response, the OECD Development Centre in partnership with the African Development Bank Group and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, invited nearly 1 000 experts to participate in nine policy dialogues during the first half of 2021. This diverse group of stakeholders, including experts, activists, policy makers and donors, with expertise and first-hand knowledge spanning women's health, economic empowerment and political voice, discussed obstacles to progress and evaluated the remaining challenges towards women's empowerment and gender equality in the region. The participants reaffirmed political commitments and stressed the need to accelerate and deepen efforts on gender while assuring progress achieved to date. The dialogues and a series of workshops under the title "From Data to Policy Action: Tackling gender-based discrimination in social institutions" underscored the need for action, even as available data fail to capture the full impact of COVID-19 on women's empowerment in the region.

The OECD Development Centre has been working for over a decade to promote a more robust understanding of the barriers to women's empowerment. Through its flagship Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI), the Centre has produced and mobilised data on the root causes of gender inequality – discrimination in formal and informal laws, social norms and practices – and has supported its member and non-member countries in designing policies to promote women's empowerment by addressing these discriminatory social institutions. In all areas of life, and throughout the entire lifetimes of women in Africa, these institutions create persistent barriers. For example, discriminatory social norms threaten women's health by promoting gender-based violence against women and girls, while formal and informal laws governing land ownership and administration hinder women's economic empowerment, and common practices promoting unequal decision-making power marginalise women's political voice. These are only a few of the many interrelated root causes of gender inequality in the region explored throughout this report.

The OECD Development Centre remains committed to supporting the social transformation required to achieve Agenda 2030 and Agenda 2063. Though the collection and dissemination of data on discriminatory social institutions and evidence-based policy recommendations designed to address these as the root causes of gender inequality, we will continue supporting national and regional efforts to promote women's empowerment in the face of challenges brought by the COVID-19 crisis.



Ms. Ragnheiður Elín Árnadóttir

Director, OECD Development Centre

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Reader's guide

The Social Institutions and Gender Index 2019 conceptual framework

The OECD Development Centre's Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) is a unique cross-country measure of discriminatory social institutions, encompassing formal and informal laws, social norms and practices that restrict women's and girls' rights, access to empowerment opportunities and resources. The SIGI consists of four components that provide policy makers with facts and evidence to enhance governments' efforts to deliver on gender equality commitments (Box I).

Box I. The four SIGI components

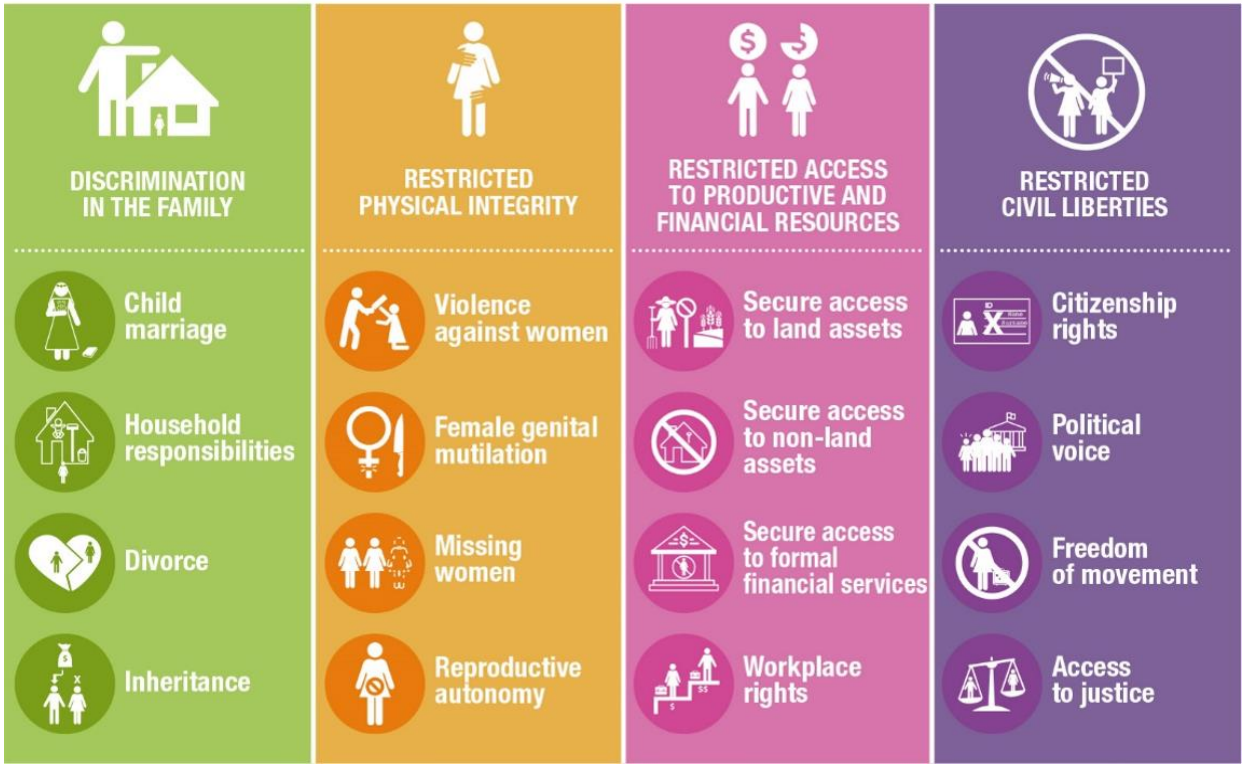
- Country profiles contain comprehensive, qualitative information on legal frameworks and action plans to protect women's rights and promote gender equality (for 180 countries).
- The Gender, Institutions and Development Database (GID-DB) comprises variables measuring the level of discrimination in laws (categorical variable), social norms (attitudinal data) and practices (prevalence rates) for 180 countries
- A cross-country ranking classifies 120 countries according to their level of discrimination in social institutions.
- A policy simulator allows policy makers to scope out reform options and assess their likely effects on gender equality in social institutions.

The SIGI focuses on gaps that legislation, attitudes and practices create between women's and men's rights and opportunities. The Index covers **four dimensions** spanning major socio-economic areas that affect women's and girls' entire lifetimes (Figure I):

- "Discrimination in the family" captures social institutions that limit women's decision-making power and undervalue their status in the household and the family.
- "Restricted physical integrity" captures social institutions that increase women's and girls' vulnerability to multiple forms of violence and limit their control over their bodies and reproductive autonomy.
- "Restricted access to productive and financial resources" captures women's restricted access to and control over critical productive and economic resources and assets.

  "Restricted civil liberties" captures discriminatory laws and practices restricting women's access to and participation and voice in the public and social spheres.

Figure I. Composition of the SIGI 2019



Source: (OECD, n.d.[1]), Social Institutions and Gender Index, www.genderindex.org.

Each dimension builds on four indicators combining qualitative and quantitative information. In theory, each indicator builds on a combination of three variables:

- **Laws** are discrete variables that are used to measure the level of discrimination in formal and informal laws.
- **Attitudes** and **practices** are continuous variables that are used to measure the level of discrimination in social norms.

In practice, the variables used as proxies for each indicator depend on data availability, reliability and country coverage. For example, some variables are not available at all (e.g. information on inheritance practices), while others are available only for a few countries (e.g. time spent on unpaid care work). Consequently, discrepancies exist between the theoretical framework and the variables included in the SIGI 2019. Overall, the SIGI framework builds on 27 core variables.

The SIGI 2019 is the fourth edition of the SIGI. For this edition, the conceptual framework was entirely revised, which renders comparison over time impossible at the aggregate level (index, dimensions and indicators). Nevertheless, some comparison over time is possible at the variable level for attitudes and practices. For more details on the SIGI methodology, refer to Annex B.

Geographical coverage

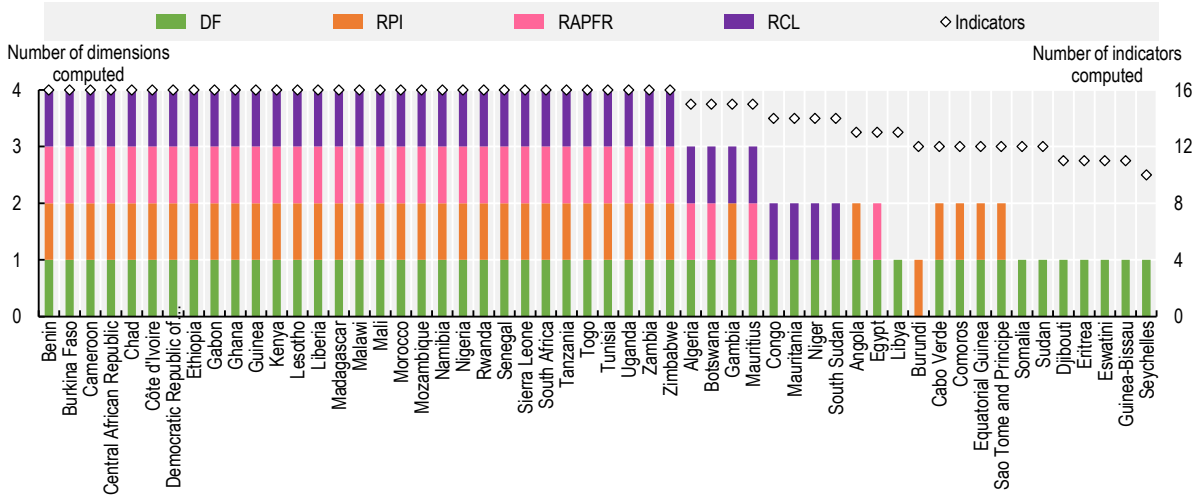
The data collection process for the fourth edition of the SIGI in 2019 covered 54 countries in Africa classified into five sub-regions (Table I).

Table I. Countries included in the SIGI analysis, by sub-regions

Central Africa	East Africa	North Africa	Southern Africa	West Africa
Burundi	Comoros	Algeria	Angola	Benin
Cameroon	Djibouti	Egypt	Botswana	Burkina Faso
Central African Republic	Eritrea	Libya	Eswatini	Cabo Verde
Chad	Ethiopia	Mauritania	Lesotho	Côte d'Ivoire
Democratic Republic of the Congo	Kenya	Morocco	Malawi	Gambia
Equatorial Guinea	Madagascar	Tunisia	Mozambique	Ghana
Gabon	Mauritius		Namibia	Guinea
Congo	Rwanda		South Africa	Guinea-Bissau
Sao Tome and Principe	Seychelles		Zambia	Liberia
	Somalia		Zimbabwe	Mali
	South Sudan			Niger
	Sudan			Nigeria
	Uganda			Senegal
	Tanzania			Sierra Leone
				Togo

Only 31 African countries were given a SIGI score in 2019, due to data limitations and the fact that an overall SIGI score can be computed only for countries with data points in every single indicator and variable comprising the index (Figure II).

Figure II. Number of SIGI dimensions and indicators computed, by country



Note: The SIGI framework comprises a total of 4 dimensions and 16 indicators.
Source: (OECD, 2019[2]), Social Institutions and Gender Index, https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/f0c48e52-en.

StatLink https://doi.org/10.1787/888934287110

Conversely, 23 African countries lack sufficient data to compute scores across all 16 SIGI indicators (Table II). The most problematic variables from a data point of view are:

- The practice variable of the "Violence against women" indicator, which measures the share of women who have suffered intimate partner physical and/or sexual violence during their lifetime. Data for this variable are missing for 16 African countries.

- The practice variable of the "Access to financial services" indicator, which measures the share of women within the total population aged 15 years and over who have an account at a financial institution. Data for this variable are missing for 10 African countries.
- The attitude variable of the "Workplace rights" indicator, which measures the share of the population that disagrees with the statement: "It is perfectly acceptable for any woman in your family to have a paid job outside the home if she wants to". Data for this variable are missing for 12 African countries.
- The practice variable of the "Workplace rights" indicator, which measures the share of women within the total population employed in management. Data for this variable are missing for 14 African countries.
- The practice variable of the "Freedom of movement" indicator, which measures the share of women within the total population who declare not feeling safe walking alone at night in the city or area where they live. Data for this variable are missing for 14 African countries.
- The practice variable of the "Access to justice" indicator, which measures the share of women within the total population who declare not having confidence in the judicial system and courts of their country. Data for this variable are missing for 15 African countries.

Table II. Number of SIGI variables available, by country

	Child marriage		Household responsibilities	Divorce	Inheritance	Violence against women			Female genital mutilation		Missing women	Reproductive autonomy		Land assets	Non-land assets	Financial services		Workplace rights			Citizenship rights	Political voice		Freedom of movement		Access to justice		Number of variables available	Number of variables missing
	L	P	L	L	L	L	A	P	A	P	P	L	P	L	L	L	P	L	A	P	L	L	P	L	P	L	P		
Benin	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	27	-
Burkina Faso	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	27	-
Cameroon	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	27	-
Central African Republic	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	27	-
Chad	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	27	-
Côte d'Ivoire	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	27	-
Democratic Republic of the Congo	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	27	-
Ethiopia	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	27	-
Gabon	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	27	-
Ghana	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	27	-
Guinea	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	27	-
Kenya	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	27	-
Lesotho	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	27	-
Liberia	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	27	-
Madagascar	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	27	-
Malawi	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	27	-
Mali	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	27	-
Morocco	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	27	-
Mozambique	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	27	-
Namibia	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	27	-

Nigeria	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	27	-
Rwanda	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	27	-
Senegal	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	27	-
Sierra Leone	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	27	-
South Africa	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	27	-
Tanzania	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	27	-
Togo	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	27	-
Tunisia	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	27	-
Uganda	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	27	-
Zambia	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	27	-
Zimbabwe	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	27	-
Algeria	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	26	1
Gambia	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	26	1
Botswana	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	25	2
Congo	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	25	2
Mauritania	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	25	2
Mauritius	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	25	2
Niger	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	25	2
South Sudan	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	25	2
Angola	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	-	+	-	24	3
Egypt	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	-	24	3
Libya	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	+	-	24	3
Burundi	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	-	+	-	23	4
Sao Tome and Principe	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	-	+	+	+	+	-	+	-	23	4
Somalia	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	-	+	-	23	4
Cabo Verde	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	-	-	+	+	+	-	+	-	22	5
Comoros	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	-	-	+	+	+	-	+	-	22	5
Equatorial Guinea	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	-	-	+	+	+	-	+	-	22	5
Sudan	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	+	+	+	-	+	-	22	5
Eritrea	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	-	-	+	+	+	-	+	-	21	6
Eswatini	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	-	-	+	+	+	-	+	-	21	6
Guinea-Bissau	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	-	-	+	+	+	-	+	-	21	6
Djibouti	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	-	-	+	+	+	-	+	-	20	7
Seychelles	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	-	+	-	+	+	+	+	-	+	-	20	7

Note: Law variables are labelled L, attitude variables are labelled A and practice variables are labelled P. Countries are ordered by the number of variables available.

Source: (OECD Development Centre/OECD, 2019[3]), Gender, Institutions and Development Database, https://doi.org/10.1787/ba5dbd30-en.

StatLink https://doi.org/10.1787/888934287129

Timing and data sources

Qualitative data

The qualitative information for the 54 African country profiles was developed through a multiple-stage internal drafting and reviewing process. First, legal consultants responded to a questionnaire comprising 312 questions on social institutions and fully referenced country profiles, which followed a standardised structure to ensure comparability across countries/territories. Second, gender experts and/or government representatives with knowledge of the national policy and legal landscape for gender equality and women's rights validated the responses. The cut-off date for the qualitative information was 30 June 2017.

Publishing qualitative data (i.e. legal variables) across 180 countries is a multistage and complex process (data collection, process, management, validation and dissemination) that takes more than one year. This explains the delay between the collection cut-off date and the publication of the SIGI global data. All country profiles can be retrieved from the website www.genderindex.org.

A coding manual was created to quantify the level of legal discrimination based on the qualitative legal information collected. The coding manual ensures consistency across variables, guarantees objectivity in the selection criteria for scoring, and allows for comparability across countries as well as over time (see Annex B). Of the 312 questions, 144 were used to assign a discrete value to each of the 14 legal variables. The coding manual is based on all applicable legal frameworks, including civil, as well as customary, religious or traditional practices or laws. When information is missing or insufficient, variables do not receive a value. A five-level scale (0, 25, 50, 75 and 100) serves as the basis for encoding the categorical variables and reflects the level of discrimination in formal and informal laws (Table III).

Table III. Scoring methodology for legal variables

	Score
The legal framework provides women with the same rights as men, with no exceptions, and applies to all groups of women. There are no customary, religious or traditional practices or laws that discriminate against women.	0
The legal framework provides women with the same rights as men, with no exceptions, and applies to all groups of women. However, some customary, religious or traditional practices or laws do discriminate against women.	25
The legal framework provides women with the same rights as men. However, it foresees exceptions or does not apply to all groups of women.	50
The legal framework restricts some women's rights.	75
The legal framework fully discriminates against women's rights.	1

Source: (OECD, n.d.[1]), Social Institutions and Gender Index, www.genderindex.org.

StatLink https://doi.org/10.1787/888934287148

Quantitative data

Quantitative information, such as attitudinal and prevalence data, was collected from various secondary data sources according to the country and variable. The OECD Development Centre's Gender Team used international data sources – such as Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS), the World Values Survey (WVS) and the National Household Survey (NHS) – and then proceeded to harmonise the data in order to ensure comparability across countries. The cut-off date for the quantitative information was 31 December 2017.

SIGI scores and classification

The SIGI is a composite index. The scores for the overall index, the dimensions and the indicators range from 0 to 100, with 0 indicating no discrimination and 100 indicating absolute discrimination against women. In order to facilitate the analysis and presentation of results, countries are classified into five categories at the index level, as well as at the dimension and indicator levels. Table IV summarises the categories and the cut-off points of the different categories based on the SIGI and the dimension and indicator scores.

Table IV. Classification of countries based on SIGI scores and dimension/indicator scores

Level of discrimination	SIGI scores	Dimension/indicator scores
Very low	[0-20]	[0-10]
Low	[20-30]	[10-25]
Medium	[30-40]	[25-50]
High	[40-50]	[50-75]
Very high	[50-100]	[75-100]

Note: Both SIGI scores and dimension/indicator scores range from 0 to 100, with 0 indicating no discrimination and 100 indicating absolute discrimination.
Source: (OECD, n.d.[1]), Social Institutions and Gender Index, www.genderindex.org.

StatLink https://doi.org/10.1787/888934287167

Glossary and definition of terms

Term	Definition	Reference
Child marriage	Any formal marriage or informal union between a child under the age of 18 years and an adult or another child	(UNICEF, n.d.[4])
Customary, religious or traditional practices or laws	Customs, religions and traditional practices observed among a specific community	(OECD, n.d.[1])
Discrimination against women	Any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex that has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women	(United Nations, 1979[5])
Domestic violence	Violence that occurs within the private sphere, generally between individuals who are related through blood, intimacy or law	(CEDAW, 2017[6])
Equal access	Equal opportunities to have access to resources, assets, services, training and education opportunities, markets, sources of income and decent employment opportunities	(FAO, 2016[7])
Equal opportunity	Equality in employment regardless of race, skin colour, sex, religion and so forth; non-discriminatory practices in hiring employees	(United Nations, n.d.[8])
Female genital mutilation	All procedures involving partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or other injuries to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons	(United Nations, 2008[9])
Femicide	Intentional killing of females (women or girls) because they are females	
Forced marriage	A marriage that takes place without the free or valid consent of one or both of the partners and involves either physical or emotional duress	(OHCHR, n.d.[10])
Gender-based violence	Any harmful act directed against individuals or groups of individuals on the basis of their gender or sex	(United Nations, 1993[11]) (UN Women, n.d.[12])
Gender gap	Disproportionate difference between men and women and boys and girls, particularly as reflected in attainment of development goals, access to resources and levels of participation	(UN Women, n.d.[12])
Gender norms	Ideas about how men and women should be and act. Most such rules are learned and internalised early in life, which creates an inter-generational cycle of gender socialisation and stereotyping.	(UN Women, n.d.[12])
Gender-responsiveness	Creation of an environment that reflects an understanding of girls' and women's realities and needs, and that addresses them by paying attention to the unique needs of females; valuing their perspectives; respecting their experiences; understanding developmental differences between girls and boys, women and men; and ultimately empowering girls and women	(UNICEF, 2017[13])
Missing women	The shortfall in the number of girls aged 0-4 years, relative to their expected survival rate in the absence of sex-selective abortions and female infanticide, and with similar levels of health and nutrition to boys, correcting for natural biological and physiological differences. Amartya Sen, who introduced the concept, hypothesised that more than 100 million women were missing due to the excess mortality of women from inequality and neglect.	(Sen, 1990[14])
Sexual and reproductive health and rights	Right for all to make choices regarding their own sexuality and reproduction, providing they respect the rights of others to bodily integrity. This definition also includes the right to access information and services needed to support these choices and optimise health.	(UN Women, n.d.[12])
Sexual harassment	Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favours, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature	(United Nations, 2018[15])

	Unwelcome behaviours, advances and practices of a sexual nature that may include, but are not limited to sexual suggestions or demands; requests for sexual favours; and sexual, verbal or physical conduct or gestures that are or might reasonably be perceived as offensive or humiliating	
Unmet need for family planning	Gap between women's reproductive intentions and their contraceptive behaviour, defined as the proportion of currently married or in-union women of reproductive age (15-49 years) who want to cease or delay childbearing but are not using any method of contraception	(United Nations, 2014[16])
Violence against women	Any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life	(United Nations, 1993[11])

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Abbreviations and acronyms

BPfA	Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CSO	Civil society organisation
EAC	Eastern African Community
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
FGM	Female genital mutilation
GDP	Gross domestic product
GID-DB	Gender, Institutions and Development Database
ICT	Information and communication technology
ILO	International Labour Organization
MP	Member of parliament
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NHS	National Household Survey
NSOs	National Statistical Offices
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PPP	Purchasing power parity
PR	Proportional representation
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SIGI	Social Institutions and Gender Index
STEM	Science, technology, engineering and mathematics
UN	United Nations
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WHO	World Health Organization
WVS	World Values Survey

Executive summary

Women's empowerment and gender equality is not a recent development priority for the African continent. National governments have signed and ratified international, regional and sub-regional agreements and instruments that aim to promote women's empowerment and gender equality. All African countries have ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and 42 African countries have ratified the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (the "Maputo Protocol"). Furthermore, many countries have enacted legislative reforms in support of women's empowerment by addressing gender-based violence against women, supporting women's land rights and access to finances, as well as promoting women's political representation. Nevertheless, progress in achieving gender equality has been uneven and slow across African countries.

African women currently face the highest level of discrimination in laws, social norms and practices compared to women in other regions of the world. Whereas wide variation exists across African countries, the region displays high levels of discrimination in terms of intra-household dynamics and caregiving roles, and the working environment, as well as pervasive and harmful practices including domestic violence and female genital mutilation. In 2019, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the cost of discriminatory social institutions accounted for 7.5% of Africa's gross domestic product (GDP). The COVID-19 crisis has considerably exacerbated the cost of discriminatory social institutions across African countries. The Africa region, which is easily affected by external shocks, experienced its first recession in 25 years. Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic has widened pre-existing gender gaps and reinforced gender inequalities. In this context, the *SIGI 2021 Regional Report for Africa* explores how discriminatory social institutions hinder women's empowerment and gender equality across three crucial dimensions: physical integrity, economic situation, and political voice, leadership and agency.

Women's political voice and leadership have made significant advances across the continent

Since 2000, women's representation in politics has increased both globally and in Africa specifically. Temporary special measures such as quotas have played a pivotal role in promoting women's representation on the continent. In African countries with quotas of any kind, women's representation in parliaments is 10 percentage points higher than in those that have no quotas at all. However, progress towards gender equal representation has slowed due to the challenges presented by discriminatory norms and practices. In Africa, 28% of the population believe that men make better political leaders and should be elected rather than women. Furthermore, gender-based violence in the political sphere is a persistent practice that hinders women's full public and political engagement. Political violence and the fear of such acts intimidates women and girls from pursuing leadership roles and exercising their voices in the public domain.

Despite progress in addressing gender-based violence in Africa, discriminatory social institutions increase women's and girls' vulnerability to multiple forms of violence during their lifetime

At the regional level, rates and acceptance of domestic violence have decreased slightly in the last ten years. Since the second edition of the SIGI in 2012, the percentage of ever-partnered African women who suffered violence from an intimate partner at least once in their lifetime has decreased from 41% in 2012 to 33% in 2018. Thanks to increased efforts to raise awareness of domestic violence and to encourage people to take action to promote social change, social norms are shifting and attitudes that tolerate or justify this practice are waning. For instance, between 2012 and 2018, the share of African women who considered domestic violence to be sometimes justified dropped by approximately 10 percentage points. These results vary across countries indicating the need to expand such efforts, both in scope and scale. At its root, gender-based violence stems from norms of restrictive masculinities that perpetuate male dominance in the private sphere and the acceptance and entitlement to perpetrate physical, sexual, psychological and economic violence. Discriminatory social norms also contribute to condoning or tolerating harmful practices such as child marriage and female genital mutilation (FGM). For instance, in 2018, on average, 16% of African women aged 15-49 years considered that FGM should continue.

Discriminatory social institutions continue to hold back women's economic empowerment and entrepreneurship

In 2020, the labour force participation rate was 20 percentage points lower for women than for men across African countries. Discriminatory social norms that confine women to reproductive and care roles are among the leading causes of this difference. In 2018, women spent, on average, four times more than men on unpaid care and domestic work, including raising children, caring for sick or elderly family members, and managing household tasks. In addition, biased perceptions of women's abilities and discriminatory educational norms tend to prevent women from accessing decent work and confine them to specific sectors of the economy. At the same time, biases related to boys' and girls' abilities shape educational choices when accessing secondary and tertiary education – in particular regarding science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields – and thus accentuate gender-based segregation in the labour force. For instance, men account for more than 80% of workers in sectors such as construction, mining and quarrying or transport, storage and communication. Moreover, men's traditional status and roles, household decision-making practices, and discriminatory inheritance laws and practices limit women's ownership of agricultural land and constrain their economic independence. In some African countries, according to the law the husband is deemed the head of the family and the manager, administrator and owner of any assets and properties, including agricultural plots and land. Furthermore, discriminatory social norms and biases related to women's access to markets, finance, training and networks also hamper women's entrepreneurship in Africa. Strong social norms that view men as better business managers than women – and their internalisation by women themselves – also constrain women's entrepreneurship.

A path towards gender equality: Key policy recommendations

Addressing discriminatory social institutions in a holistic manner is paramount to reinforcing and achieving the ambitious 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 in African countries over the next nine years. The following section outlines the main policy recommendations and develops them across five potential pathways to fully integrate gender equality into the region's broader development strategies. African governments should take into consideration the following five paths:

Key policy actions to accelerate gender equality in Africa

- Update and eliminate legal provisions that are discriminatory and close legislative gaps as per international and regional conventions.
- Integrate a gender perspective across all government ministries and sectors, including gender-responsive budgeting.
- Support gender-transformative interventions to raise awareness and support positive behaviour change, including by involving men and boys, as well as influential community leaders.
- Strengthen peace and security efforts with a gender lens through effective implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325.
- Invest more in sex-disaggregated and intersectionality data to identify gender data gaps and gain a better understanding of how social norms evolve in order to develop more effective policies and programmes.

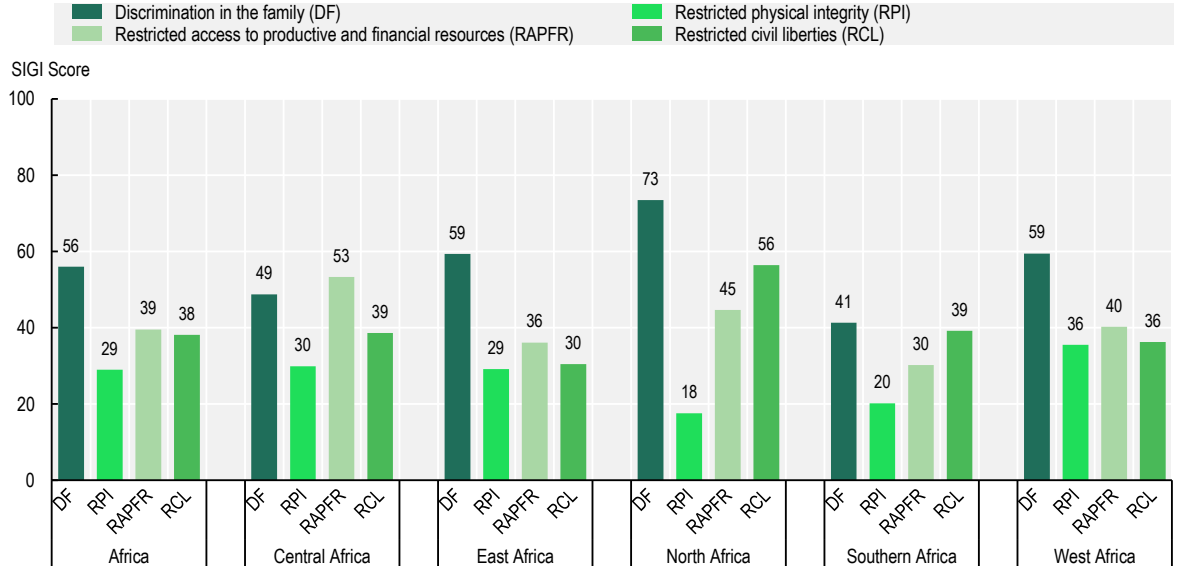
Assessment and recommendations

Africa has a high level of discriminatory social institutions

The *SIGI 2021 Regional Report for Africa* reaffirms that African women currently face the highest level of discrimination in laws, social norms and practices compared to women in other regions of the world (OECD, 2019[1]). The region obtains a SIGI score of 40 – the highest among the world's regions – indicating a significant level of discrimination in social institutions as well as a need for political engagement and investment to strengthen progress towards gender equality and women's empowerment. Notwithstanding wide variations among African countries, levels of discrimination in social institutions at the sub-regional level range from medium to high. Southern Africa fares the best with a medium level of discrimination and an overall score of 32 compared to the other African sub-regions: North Africa (49), Central Africa (44), West Africa (44) and East Africa (39).

Figure 1. Discrimination in the family remains the most challenging dimension in Africa

SIGI scores in the dimensions of the SIGI in Africa and its sub-regions



Note: Scores range from 0 to 100, with 0 indicating no discrimination and 100 indicating absolute discrimination.
Source: (OECD, 2019[2]), Social Institutions and Gender Index, https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/f0c48e52-en.

StatLink https://doi.org/10.1787/888934287186

Discrimination in the family remains the most challenging dimension in Africa

In Africa, the highest levels of discrimination in social institutions are found in the family sphere, highlighting the persistence of deep-rooted unequal power relations between women and men within the household. The level of the "Discrimination in the family" dimension of the SIGI ranges from very high in North Africa to high in West and East Africa and to medium in Central and Southern Africa. These high levels of discrimination reflect in large part legal frameworks that fail to ban girl child marriage, that reinforce the disproportionate share of unpaid care and domestic work performed by women, and permit the co-existence and application of customary and informal laws – which are not aligned with civil law – that limit women's rights to divorce and to claim their inheritance rights.

Since 2009, child marriage rates have decreased in many African countries, but progress has been uneven across the continent. Many African countries maintain discriminatory and inadequate legal frameworks that allow girls to enter into marriage before the age of 18 years with parental and/or judicial consent. Recent legal reforms supporting the alignment of domestic legal frameworks with international conventions could pave the way towards the elimination of child marriage. Although the prevalence of girl child marriage declined by 7 percentage points in Africa between 2009 and 2018, more efforts are required. Today, 23% of African women aged between 15 and 19 years are married, divorced or widowed, compared to 16% globally. Girl child marriage is still a dominant problem in Central and West Africa, and advances to eradicate the practice remain very slow compared to progress globally (UNICEF, 2018[3]).

Discriminatory social institutions also perpetuate women's subordinate status and limit their ability to take decisions within the household. Intra-household dynamics are often characterised by asymmetries in terms of decision-making power. In 2019, 16% of African women considered their spouse to be the main and sole individual responsible for decisions regarding the use of money which they have earned from a job, a business, selling things or other activities (Afrobarometer, 2019[4]). In addition, persistent discriminatory stereotypes and biases regarding women's and men's roles result in the unequal division of household tasks (OECD Development Centre, 2019[5]). In 2017, on average, African women spent four times more time on unpaid care and domestic work than their male counterparts. Moreover, in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, demand for care work in households and families has increased in a context where such work is undertaken predominately by women and girls.

Weak legal protections and high prevalence rates make eradicating violence against women an urgent challenge for Africa

The SIGI dimension measuring women's restricted physical integrity in Africa found that social institutions exhibit a medium level of discrimination. Levels of discrimination range from low in North and Southern Africa, to medium in East, Central and West Africa. However, violence against women remains a critical issue in the region, with one in three ever-partnered African women having been the victim of violence from an intimate partner at least once in their lifetime. No African country has a comprehensive legal framework that protects women from all forms of violence – including, but not limited to, rape, domestic violence and sexual harassment.

At the same time, social acceptance of intimate-partner violence remains very high, which fuels this harmful practice. Nearly half of African women and girls believe that a husband may be justified in hitting or beating his wife under certain circumstances, namely if she burns food, argues with him, goes out without telling him, neglects the children or refuses to have sexual relations. However, increased efforts to raise awareness of domestic violence are provoking a shift in social norms, and attitudes that tolerate or justify the practice are waning, although more efforts are required, especially in the wake of the COVID-19 crisis. Much evidence suggests that the psychological, social and economic effects of the pandemic have led to an increase in domestic violence cases, rape and sexual abuse (UN Women and UNFPA, 2021[6]).

African women face challenges in gaining ownership of and control over economic assets

Africa exhibits a medium level of discrimination for the dimension measuring women's access to productive and financial resources, albeit much higher than the global average. Levels of discrimination are particularly high in Central Africa. Many African countries have made great strides in improving women's access to financial services. Indeed, the vast majority of African countries guarantee the same rights to women and men to open a bank account in a formal financial institution without the signature and authority of their spouses or guardians. Similarly, legal frameworks provide women with the same rights as men to obtain credit. Among other factors, digitalisation and the rapid development of mobile banking have been instrumental in increasing women's financial inclusion across the region.

Nevertheless, laws and customs continue to curtail women's rights to own and control critical assets such as land. In a context where agriculture accounts for about 15% of the continent's GDP and 51% of working women are employed in agriculture, women represent only 12% of the owners of agricultural land. They are also disproportionately underrepresented among homeowners. These low levels of ownership, which often stem from collective and traditional biases related to inheritance and the symbolic value of land, have long-lasting consequences for women's empowerment, particularly their ability to produce required collateral to mobilise capital and obtain loans.

African women also continue to face gender-based discrimination in the work environment. Legal barriers prevent women from entering certain professions deemed arduous and/or hazardous, including jobs in mining, energy, agriculture and other sectors. At the same time, attitudinal data show that 18% of respondents believe that women should not participate in paid work, a view that further perpetuates the gender gap in labour force participation across African countries.

African countries have taken steps to expand women's civil liberties

Africa exhibits a medium level of discrimination for the SIGI dimension measuring women's restricted civil liberties. Discrimination is more acute in North Africa stemming primarily from restrictive legal frameworks that limit women's rights to acquire, change or retain their nationality (OECD/ILO/CAWTAR, 2020[7]). The other sub-regions exhibit a medium level of discrimination in social institutions related to women's civil liberties.

Quotas and special measures have enhanced women's political participation but discriminatory attitudes still restrict women's political voice. In African countries with quotas of any kind, women's representation in parliaments is 10 percentage points higher than in those that have no quotas at all; however, the effect of quotas depends on their design, the character of electoral systems and political will. Negative attitudes towards women in public life and discriminatory social norms also hamper women's ability to fully participate in the public sphere. In 2021, African women accounted for 25% of representatives in lower or single houses, but wide variations exist across countries (IPU Parline, 2021[8]). Although laws guarantee women the same rights as men to vote and to hold public and political office, negative attitudes towards women's leadership linked with restrictive masculinities are still prevalent in some countries. On average, 63% of the population believes that men make better political leaders than women.

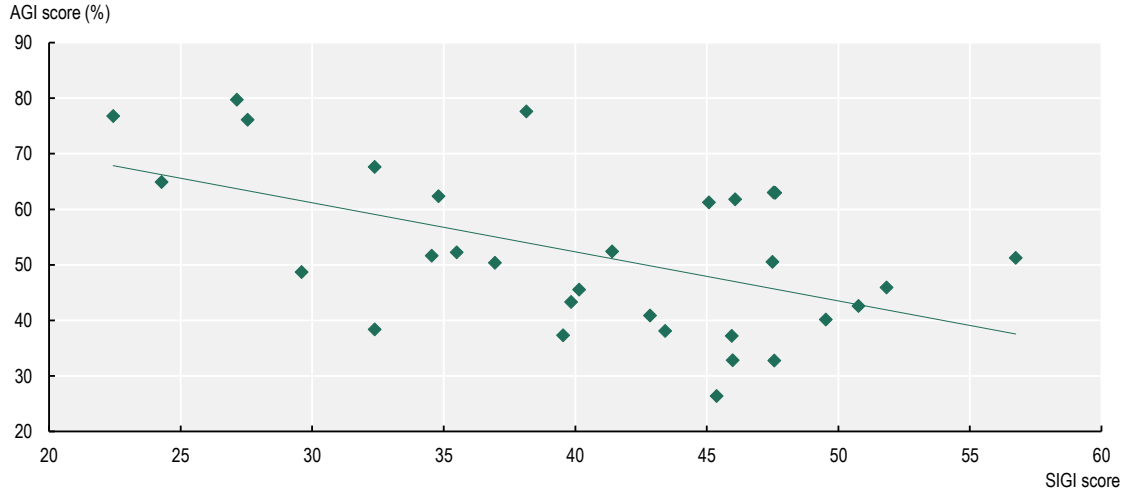
Discriminatory social institutions have a profound impact on women's empowerment

Despite significant economic and social progress in recent decades, women still do not enjoy the same legal, economic and social rights as men in a majority of countries. Gender-based discrimination in rights, opportunities and outcomes interconnect and overlap resulting in a reinforcement of women's and girls'

marginalisation. In Africa, women's outcomes are lower than those of men as measured by the Africa Gender Index. These results stem primarily from restrictions on women's employment, access to education and health (AfDB, UNECA, 2020[9]). Underpinning these unequal outcomes are discriminatory social institutions which establish the acceptability or unacceptability of decisions, choices and behaviours for women in society and define their role. In this regard, discriminatory social institutions, as measured by the SIGI, constitute the hidden side of gender inequality and largely explain the persistence of unequal outcomes in areas such as employment, entrepreneurship, health and political representation (OECD, 2019[1]). African countries with higher levels of discrimination in social institutions are further from achieving gender parity (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Higher levels of discrimination in social institutions are associated with lower levels of parity in outcomes

Correlation between SIGI scores (social institutions) and AGI scores (outcomes)



Note: The figure presents the estimated level of gender inequality in outcomes, as measured by the AGI and the level of gender-based discrimination in social institutions, as measured by the SIGI. Higher SIGI scores indicate higher inequality; SIGI scores range from 0 to 100, with 0 indicating no discrimination and 100 indicating absolute discrimination. Higher AGI scores indicate higher equality. An AGI score of 100% represents parity between women and men. An AGI score between 0% and 100% indicates gender inequality in favour of males, while a score above 100% means that women are faring better than men.
Source: (OECD, 2019[2]), Social Institutions and Gender Index, https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/f0c48e52-en; (AfDB, UNECA, 2020[9]), Africa Gender Index.

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Discriminatory social norms and gendered power imbalances hamper women's health and restrict their physical integrity throughout their lifecycle

Deep-rooted discriminatory social norms result in unequal power relations within the private sphere, which may produce poor health outcomes for women. Prevailing cultural beliefs, traditions and customs determine gender roles, including restrictive masculinities, which establish the conditions under which women can exercise autonomy in making decisions regarding their own health care (Woldemicael and Tenkorang, 2009[10]; OECD, 2021[11]). In at least half of the 40 countries for which data are available for 2002-18, the husband was the main decision maker regarding women's health care. In contrast, men are more likely to have decision-making authority over their own health care than their female counterparts (IFC, 2015[12]). With regard to sexual and reproductive healthcare, women in Africa are more likely to base

decisions on their partner's fertility preferences and attitudes towards family planning (World Bank, n.d.[13]). The consequences women face due to diminished decision-making power over their own health may be severe, as men may not have adequate knowledge to make reliable and legitimate choices regarding women's health or might refuse women's access to health care and treatment if they disagree with certain practices derived from social norms – including examinations or medical treatment by male doctors and nurses (OECD, 2021[11]).

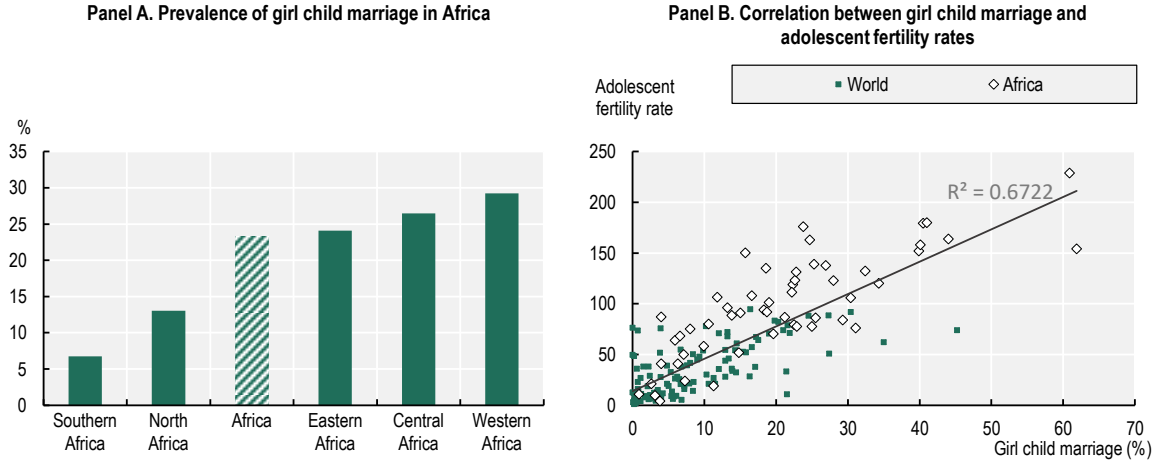
The high rates of gender-based violence in African countries is deeply rooted in discriminatory social norms and attitudes that consider violence a private matter. At the root of violence are restrictive norms of masculinities that perpetuate male dominance in the private sphere as well as acceptance and entitlement to perpetrate physical, sexual, psychological and economic violence (OECD, 2021[11]). In accordance with these restrictive norms, women are expected to be "obedient, silent and good" and should accept the violence inflicted by men and in some cases by other women. Similarly, FGM, a particular form of violence against young girls and adolescents, persists in several African countries as a result of customary, religious or traditional practices or laws that allow and encourage this harmful practice. Data on this practice are subject to considerable gaps. Tracking information for SDG indicator 5.3.2, which measures the "proportion of girls and women aged 15-49 years who have undergone female genital mutilation", is currently available for only 26 African countries (OECD, 2019[1]). In addition, the absence of legislative frameworks aimed at eliminating and banning FGM allows the practice to persist. In 2018, on average, 16% of African women aged 15-49 years believed that FGM should continue (OECD Development Centre/OECD, 2019[14]).

The practice of girl child marriage is also rooted in social norms and customary practices. A staggering 23% of African girls marry before their 18th birthday compared to just 3% of boys. A growing body of evidence shows that young girls are more likely than adult women to be married to substantially older men. The apparent age gap between child brides and their adult husbands results in limited agency, autonomy and low decision-making power within the household. This imbalance of power in child marriages precludes a substantial number of girls from negotiating contraceptive methods with their partners, which in turn results in early pregnancies. The resulting impacts on girls' and women's physical and psychological health and well-being are severe. SIGI data show that rates of girl child marriage are positively correlated with rates of adolescent pregnancy (Figure 3).

Important factors contributing to the prevalence of this practice include compliance with elders' customs and beliefs, the dominant role of marriage in the development of girls' lives, and norms, beliefs and ideologies related to girls' transition from childhood to adulthood. Finally, the customary practice of bride price may generate a strong incentive for parents living in poor households to marry their daughters in exchange for the payments. This practice in turn results in high rates of child marriage and adolescent pregnancies (Lowes and Nunn, 2018[15]). In circumstances of extreme poverty or during severe economic shocks, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, girls may be considered a potential source of wealth due to this custom. In areas where bride price is a common practice, loss of household earnings increases the likelihood of marriage by 3% (Voena and Corno, 2016[16]).

Figure 3. Adolescent pregnancies stem from discriminatory social institutions such as child marriage among girls

Share of women aged 15-19 years who have been or are still married, divorced, widowed or in an informal union, 2018; and correlation between child marriage among girls and adolescent fertility rates



Note: Girl child marriage is calculated as the share of women aged 15-19 years who have been or are still married, divorced, widowed or in an informal union. The adolescent fertility rate is calculated as the number of births per 1 000 women aged 15-19 years. (SDG indicator 3.7.2)
Source: (OECD Development Centre/OECD, 2019[14]), Gender, Institutions and Development Database, https://doi.org/10.1787/ba5dbd30-en; and (United Nations Population Division, n.d.[17]), United Nations Population Division https://population.un.org/wpp/Download/Standard/Fertility.

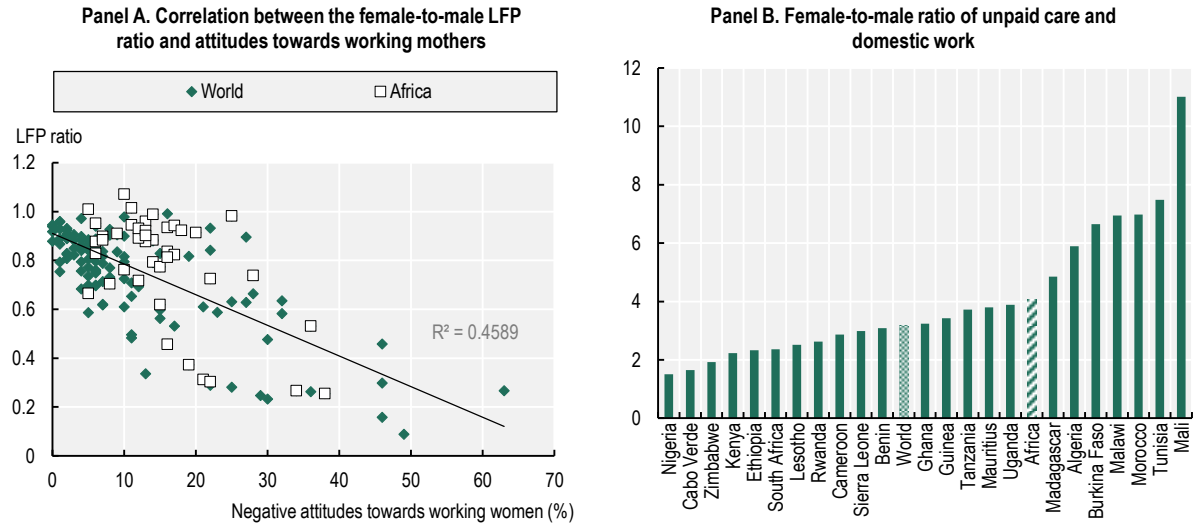
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Discriminatory social institutions limit women's access to the labour market and key economic assets, while hampering women's entrepreneurship

Discriminatory legal frameworks governing workplace rights in Africa jeopardise women's inclusion in the labour market and their economic empowerment. In particular, discriminatory laws across the continent continue to prevent women from entering the labour market and hinder their advancement. These laws also impede the recognition and redistribution of care responsibilities among men and women and contribute to the persistent gender pay gap.

Discriminatory social norms and biases, and notably discriminatory gender roles within the household, curtail women's access to the labour market. Women continue to assume the bulk of unpaid care and domestic work (Figure 4, Panel B). At the same time, in a context of widespread informality and high unemployment rates in certain countries – particularly for youth and women – the region is characterised by a high level of discriminatory attitudes that often discourage women from choosing to have a paid job outside the household (Figure 4, Panel A). These two factors help explain in part the large gaps in labour force participation observed across the continent as well as women's lower job status. In 2020, the labour force participation gap stood at nearly 20 percentage points, with 54% of African women contributing to the labour force compared to 73% of men. In addition, the proportion of employed women working in the informal sector is slightly higher than for men (90% and 83%, respectively) (ILO, 2018[18]). The characteristics of women's employment – low participation, high informality and vulnerable employment – are also direct consequences of women's dual role in many African countries as the primary caretaker of the household and a necessary contributor to the household's income.

Figure 4. Traditional gender roles within the household and discriminatory attitudes hamper women's labour force participation



Note: Panel A: Negative attitudes towards working women are defined as the share of the population that disagrees with the statement: "It is perfectly acceptable for any woman in your family to have a paid job outside the home if she wants to." The female-to-male labour force participation ratio is calculated as the women's labour force participation rate divided by the men's labour force participation rate. The labour force participation rate is calculated as the labour force divided by the total working-age population. The working-age population refers to people aged 15-64 years. Attitudinal data cover 147 countries; data are missing for ten African countries: Angola, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Comoros, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Guinea-Bissau, Sao Tome and Principe, and Sudan. R^2 is 0.4589.
Panel B: The female-to-male ratio of unpaid care and domestic work is calculated as the average number of hours dedicated by women to unpaid care work and domestic tasks divided by the average number of hours dedicated by men to the same tasks. Data are only available for 23 African countries. Global and regional averages are calculated based only on the available data.
Source: (OECD Development Centre/OECD, 2019[14]), Gender, Institutions and Development Database, https://doi.org/10.1787/ba5dbd30-en; (OECD, 2020[19]), Labour Force Statistics, https://oe.cd/ds/2Sp; and (ILO, n.d.[20]), ILOSTAT, https://ilostat.ilo.org/data.

StatLink https://doi.org/10.1787/888934287243

Men's traditional status and roles, household decision-making practices, and discriminatory inheritance laws and practices limit women's ownership of agricultural land and constrain their economic independence. Women's limited ownership of agricultural land in Africa stems primarily from traditions and customs that consider men to be the rightful owners of the land. For the most part, customary laws are the primary determinant of who owns, manages, inherits and accesses land. Social practices granting the administration of large household assets to husbands in marriage as well as inheritance practices that favour men also curtail women's land ownership. In the context of Africa where agriculture remains a major source of employment and income, these barriers to women's agricultural land ownership have a large impact on women's capacity to have an income of their own and to provide collateral to apply for loans.

Discriminatory social norms and biases related to women's access to markets, finance, training and networks also hamper women's entrepreneurship in Africa. African women are more likely to be entrepreneurs than men but evidence suggests that, on average, women-led companies have monthly profits that are 34% lower than those run by men (World Bank Group, 2019[21]). This gap is partly explained by horizontal segregation, which stems from underlying social norms and biases, as sectors dominated by men are more profitable than those in which women-led businesses are concentrated. Other deeply entrenched barriers to women's entrepreneurship include social norms viewing men as better business managers than women, and their internalisation by women themselves, as well as reduced access to

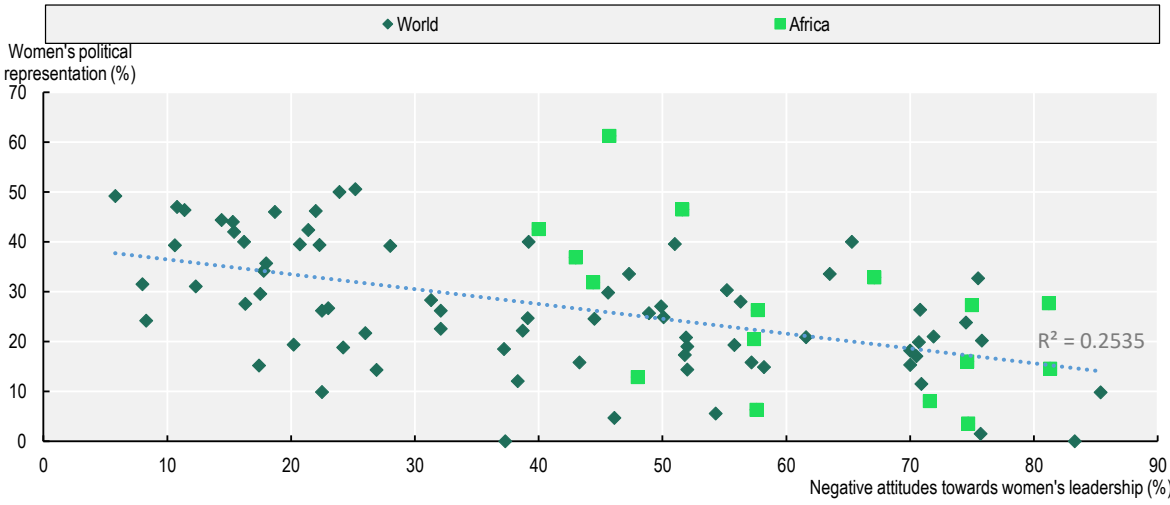
financing. The latter stems in particular from women's lack of collateral, which is itself the product of women's lower ownership of valuable assets and lower-income.

Women's underrepresentation in political processes is rooted in discriminatory attitudes towards women's leadership, gendered power imbalances and gender-based violence

Discriminatory social institutions are a root cause of women's underrepresentation within the political sphere. Social norms uphold the belief that public and political leadership is the domain of men and place greater value on masculine leadership styles. Such norms help maintain the views that men make better political leaders than women and should be elected rather than women. These discriminatory views are held by more than a quarter (28%) of the population in Africa (Afrobarometer, 2019[4]), and at the population level are negatively correlated with women's political representation in parliaments (Figure 5). Discriminatory social norms not only prevent women from stepping forward as candidates and political leaders, they also prevent them from gaining such positions whether through election or appointment.

Figure 5. Discriminatory attitudes towards women's political leadership are linked to underrepresentation of women

Correlation between negative attitudes towards women's political representation and women's representation in single/lower houses of parliaments



Note: Negative attitudes towards women's political representation are defined as the share of the population which declares that men make better political leaders than women. Data are included for 16 African countries: Algeria, Burkina Faso, Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, Libya, Mali, Morocco, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa, Tanzania, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.
Source: (IPU Parline, 2021[8]), Monthly ranking of women in national parliaments, https://data.ipu.org/women-ranking?month=1&year=2021; (OECD Development Centre/OECD, 2019[14]), Gender, Institutions and Development Database, https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/ba5dbd30-en; (Haerpfer et al., 2020[22]), World Values Survey: Round Seven – Country-Pooled Datafile, www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSDocumentationWV7.jsp.

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Discriminatory social institutions also impede women's access to the tools and resources necessary to pursue political leadership. While household decision making is a complex process, the unequal influence that men and women have over decisions in this sphere contributes to underlying inequalities in both private and public life. A lack of decision-making power over resources and their use and women's own

time and movement can seriously impede women's ability to participate in community governance, political processes, civil society organisations and more.

Political violence and sexist discourse actively discourage women's greater participation in politics in Africa. Discriminatory social norms and the associated sexist discourse represent an important barrier to women's participation in politics. Sexist discourse focuses on gender stereotypes that portray women negatively and argue for their exclusion from the political arena. It shares much in common with views that restrict women's role to the private sphere where their primary responsibility is care of the family and the home. Such discourse can promote political violence which at its core aims to deter women's participation in political and decision-making processes. Politically motivated gender-based violence takes the form of physical, sexual as well as verbal and psychological violence, and aims to amplify women's insecurity in the public space, diminishing their self-esteem, and deterring them from pursuing public and political leadership roles (Krook, 2017[23]).

Policy recommendations to address gender inequalities and accelerate women's empowerment

Despite important progress made across various fronts in the majority of African countries, gender equality is still far from being achieved. In order to address current gender gaps and inequalities, policy makers in co-ordination with all stakeholders need to reinforce efforts to harness the potential of women and girls across three thematic areas: women's physical integrity, economic empowerment, and political voice, leadership and agency.

Women's physical integrity

Improve women's access to family planning

- Allow married teenage girls to access family planning services without mandatory authorisations from their husbands or parents in accordance with Article 14 of the Maputo Protocol.
- Strengthen the supply chain of contraceptive methods through the adoption of innovative logistic models.
- Carry out awareness-raising campaigns and activities in schools, universities and youth groups on family planning and contraception methods.
- Expand information on family planning and HIV prevention by sharing key family planning messages via motorised caravans and radio spots.

Reduce maternal mortality rates

- Train more midwives to provide skilled birth attendance for women (poor women, women living in rural areas, migrant women) and comprehensive family planning counselling.
- Employ new technologies to deliver important information on maternal, new-born and child health.
- Offer conditional cash transfers to improve maternal health and birth indicators.

Prevent and eliminate child marriage

- Establish 18 years as the minimum legal age for marriage for girls and boys, without any legal exceptions, in compliance with international and regional legal frameworks aimed at eliminating the harmful practice of child marriage, and Article 6 (c) of the Maputo Protocol.

- Remove bans prohibiting pregnant and married adolescent girls from returning to school and sitting exams.
- Set up programmes aimed at providing mentoring and support networks to adolescent girls.

Eradicate violence against women and protect them from all forms of gender-based violence

- Provide all women with legal protection from all forms of gender-based violence including the home, at work and in public places and educational institutions.
- Establish one-stop-service centres for victims and survivors of gender-based violence.
- Improve adequate and affordable access to legal and psychosocial services for victims and survivors of gender-based violence, including women in detention, domestic workers and survivors of sexual exploitation.

End the harmful practice of female genital mutilation

- Criminalise the practice of FGM and establish penalties for all perpetrators, including parents and medical practitioners. Add an extraterritorial jurisdiction clause extending penalties to citizens who commit the crime outside of the country.
- Ensure the effective enforcement of the law by prosecuting perpetrators and providing guidance on prevention, protection, support and follow-up assistance services for survivors.
- Involve customary chiefs and religious and local leaders in the formulation and adoption of national programmes, policies and strategies aimed at eradicating harmful practices and discriminatory attitudes towards women's health and physical integrity.
- Mobilise public opinion against the practice through tailored awareness-raising interventions within local communities on the short- and long-term negative consequences of FGM on women's and girls' physical and mental well-being.
- Include FGM modules in national surveys on a systematic basis to monitor its appearance.

Women's economic empowerment

Improve women's access to the labour market and quality jobs

- Improve women's and girls' education by providing the necessary skills to access better jobs, putting in place retention measures for girls dropping out of school, establishing sensitisation campaigns against girl child marriage inside and outside of schools, and creating programmes to provide girls with access to secondary school facilities, particularly in rural and remote areas.
- Address gender norms and structural biases that contribute to horizontal segregation and prevent women from entering certain sectors, by establishing academic orientation sessions and individualised coaching at school to encourage girls and women to join STEM fields, reforming school material to eliminate gender stereotypes and developing vocational training programmes.
- Measure and recognise women's share of unpaid care and domestic work by developing the capacities of National Statistical Offices, providing training on the design and deployment of time-use surveys, and systematically embedding them in nationally representative surveys carried out by NSOs.
- Leverage infrastructure development projects to provide communities with enhanced access to basic services, in order to reduce women's and girls' share of unpaid care and domestic work, and ensure that a gender perspective is integrated into infrastructure projects from the outset.

Improve access to assets and promote entrepreneurship for women

- Strengthen women's capacities and position in the agricultural sector by establishing trade collaboration schemes for women in agriculture and designing training programmes for women farmers that explain how to capitalise on intra-regional trade.
- Improve women's financial literacy through dedicated training programmes and workshops targeted at schools and women entrepreneurs, and by integrating compulsory financial education modules into school curricula.
- Stimulate entrepreneurship among women early on by establishing career guidance sessions in schools and identifying mentors and champions.
- Support women entrepreneurs by setting aside public procurement contracts for women-led businesses, establishing training programmes aimed at overcoming women's unconscious self-defeating biases, and developing mentorship programmes and peer-support groups to develop valuable business networks.
- Improve women's access to finance by introducing women-specific solutions for credit access, for example through public credit guarantee schemes or lower collateral requirements for women-owned SMEs.
- Address traditional norms of restrictive masculinities that constrain women's economic empowerment and transform them into gender-equitable ones through communication campaigns and training programmes to inform and sensitise community leader as well as boys and men of the benefits of women's economic empowerment for the whole community.

Women's political voice, leadership and agency

Support women's political representation at all levels

- Consider the enactment of quotas and/or temporary special measures with enforcement mechanisms to increase women's representation in politics at the local and national levels.
- Enact legislation that creates financial incentives and support mechanisms for gender balance on party lists.
- Provide information, networking, mentoring and training for aspiring women leaders on electoral and political processes, candidacy procedures, access to media, campaign finance and building a strong network of supporters, in order to bolster their confidence and capacity to run for elected office.
- Strengthen accountability and oversight mechanisms for policies and strategies to promote gender equality in decision making in line with the 2015 OECD Recommendation of the Council on Gender Equality in Public Life (OECD, 2016[24]).
- Develop and implement programmes aimed at addressing gendered divisions of unpaid care and domestic work, and support the development of infrastructure that can reduce the time required for care and domestic work-related tasks.
- Develop and circulate rosters of women qualified for appointed positions in order to facilitate the identification and promotion of women leaders.
- Work with the media and other key stakeholders – including men and boys – to eliminate sexist discourse, unfair practices and gender-based political violence, by enacting and upholding gender-sensitive broadcasting standards. This work should strive to improve awareness of the importance of gender-balanced political participation through the promotion of positive examples of women leaders and campaigns.

Promote women's full and equal political participation

- Strengthen legislation by defining and prohibiting online harassment, and adapting laws on gender-based violence and violence against women to include political violence. In order to support the implementation of laws in this area, develop inter-ministerial policies that create a context for co-ordination among the police and other relevant authorities.
- Work with ICT providers to improve access for women and girls to ICTs, especially given their importance for accessing governance-related information and services.
- Develop programmes promoting digital literacy that specifically target women and girls from a young age, with a view to narrowing the digital divide.
- Create awareness-raising and public education campaigns on gender-equal roles in the household that relate specifically to joint decision making, the allocation of household tasks, and masculinities supportive of women's engagement in the public and political sphere.
- Invest in gender-disaggregated data on mobile and Internet access and use, including during the COVID-19 pandemic, with a view to informing policy measures to address digital gaps hindering women's equal access to information and participation in political processes.
- Strengthen gender- and age-disaggregated data collection efforts on political participation and representation.

Improve the meaningful participation of women in peace and security processes

- Enhance collaborations with various actors to address the main drivers of inequalities and fragility in line with the 2019 OECD DAC Recommendation on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus (OECD, 2021[25]).
- Support the development and enhancement of conflict prevention efforts and survivor/victim-centred responses and support mechanisms in alignment with the OECD DAC Recommendations on Ending Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment (SEAH) (OECD, 2019[26]).
- Promote and enforce women's leadership in peace and security through the development and adoption of National Action Plans to implement UNSCR 1325.
- Ensure the comprehensiveness of National Action Plans by integrating specific and measurable targets, a long-term vision that is gender-transformative, clear structures of responsibility and accountability (with greater implementation power granted to civil society organisations) and budgetary commitments to implement UNSCR 1325.
- Ensure that sufficient funding is allocated to the promotion of women's roles in peacebuilding.
- Consider signing the Women, Peace & Security and Humanitarian Action (WPS-HA) Compact, which calls on governments and other signatories to take voluntary actions to promote women's meaningful participation in peace processes, among other aims (UN Women, 2021[27]).

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1 The Social Institutions and Gender Index in the African region

This chapter presents an overview of the results of the Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) for the African region based on four dimensions: “Discrimination in the family”, “Restricted physical integrity”, “Restricted access to productive and financial resources”, and “Restricted civil liberties”. It summarises the main areas of progress and challenges regarding formal and informal laws, social norms and practices related to gender equality in 54 African countries. It also assesses the impacts of discriminatory social institutions on three key dimensions of women’s empowerment: physical integrity, economic situation, and political voice, leadership and agency. Building on evidence uncovered by the SIGI and as a result of consultations with key stakeholders, this chapter provides tailored policy recommendations to enhance efforts by African governments to deliver on gender equality commitments and to make progress towards achieving SDG 5 of Agenda 2030 and Aspiration 6 of the African Union’s Agenda 2063.

Social Institutions and Gender Index overview

Since its first edition in 2009, the OECD's Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) has been defining, measuring and highlighting deeply rooted discrimination and obstacles faced by women and girls in different regions of the world. Social institutions include laws, social norms and practices that delineate legally and socially acceptable ways to think, do, express or act in relation to gender. When these social institutions discriminate against women and girls, they establish multiple structural barriers which span and affect the life course of women and girls. In this regard, discriminatory social institutions influence an individual's set of rights and opportunities depending on their gender.

The SIGI looks at the gaps that legislation, attitudes and practices create between women and men in terms of rights and opportunities. It covers **four dimensions** spanning major socio-economic areas that affect the entire lifetimes of women and girls:

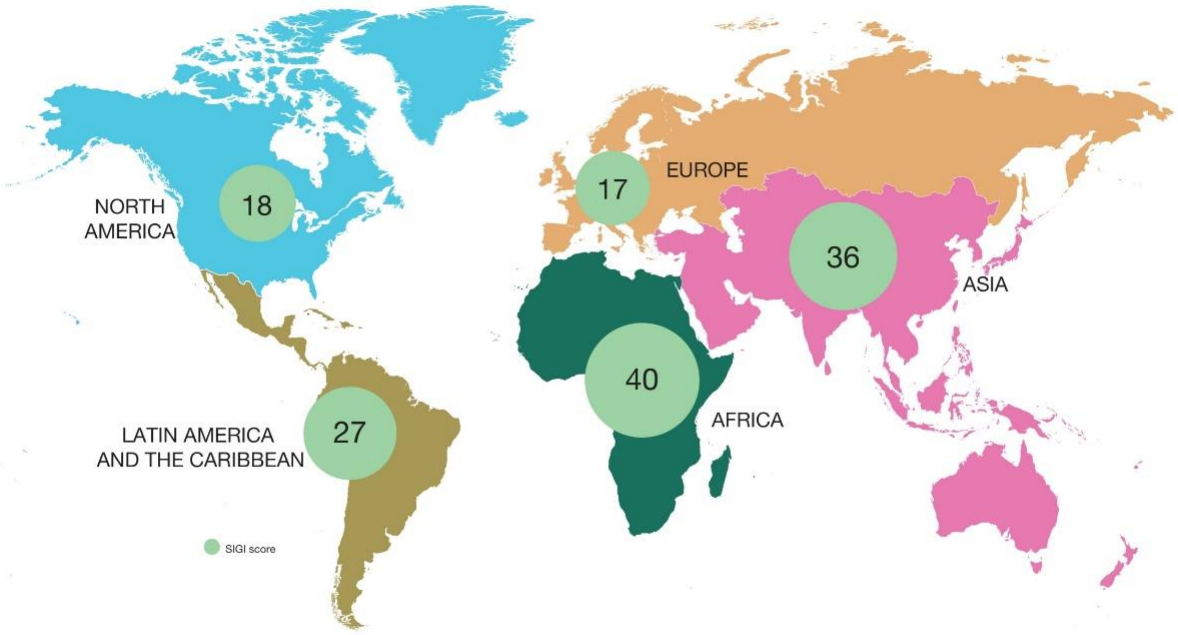
- "Discrimination in the family" (DF) captures social institutions that limit women's decision-making power and undervalues their status in the household and the family.
- "Restricted physical integrity" (RPI) captures social institutions that increase women's and girls' vulnerability to a range of forms of violence and limit women's control over their bodies and reproductive autonomy.
- "Restricted access to productive and financial resources" (RAPFR) captures women's restricted access to and control over critical productive and economic resources and assets.
- "Restricted civil liberties" (RCL) captures discriminatory laws and practices restricting women's access, participation and voice in the public and social spheres.

SIGI results at the regional level

As the results from the *SIGI 2021 Regional Report for Africa* show, African women face the highest level of discrimination in terms of laws, social norms and practices compared to women in other regions of the world (OECD, 2019[1]). The SIGI results and scores provide an overview of ongoing progress and persistent obstacles in the region since 2014 across the above four dimensions. The region overall scored 40 on the SIGI, indicating a high level of discrimination in social institutions as well as a need for political engagement and investments to strengthen progress towards gender equality and women's empowerment. Africa is closely followed by Asia with a score of 36, while Latin America and the Caribbean achieve a score of 27 and North America and Europe respectively attain a score of 18 and 17 (Figure 1.1).

Figure 1.1. African women face the highest level of discrimination in social institutions compared with their peers in the rest of the world

SIGI scores in Africa and selected regions of the world, 2019



Note: Scores range from 0 to 100, with 0 indicating no discrimination and 100 indicating absolute discrimination.
Source: (OECD, 2019[2]), Social Institutions and Gender Index, https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/f0c48e52-en.

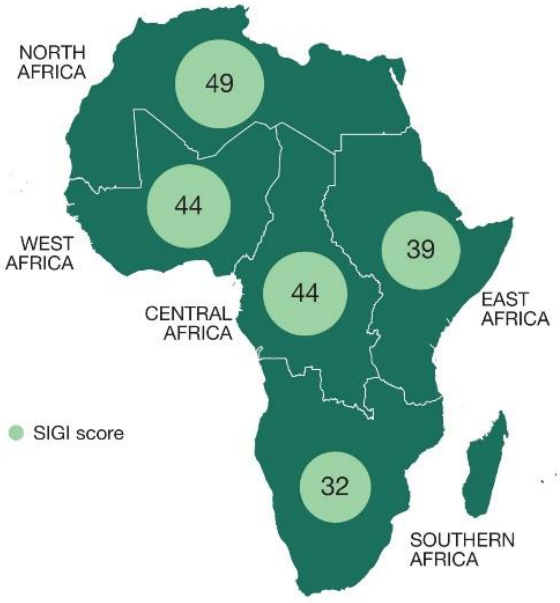
South Africa is the continent's top performer, with a low level of discrimination and an overall SIGI score of 22. Yet, at the global level, the country ranks 48th out of 120 countries, underscoring the need for African countries to intensify their efforts to eliminate the discriminatory social institutions faced by women and girls. South Africa is closely followed by Mozambique (24) and Namibia (27), which also exhibit low levels of discrimination. South Africa's relatively good performance stems primarily from strong legislative frameworks regarding inheritance, household responsibilities, violence against women, including legislation on domestic violence, harassment and workplace rights. However, discriminatory social norms, attitudes and practices still prevail and continue to hold women back. One issue for concern is that on average, 61% of South African women and girls still hold attitudes justifying the use of domestic violence compared to 47% at the regional level. Moreover, South Africans maintain negative views on women's paid employment outside of the home, and 54% of the population believes that children will suffer when mothers work. The burden of unpaid care and domestic work represents an obstacle to women's full inclusion in the labour market. In 2017, South African women spent, on average, nearly three times more time than men did on unpaid care and domestic work.

SIGI results at the sub-regional level

Notwithstanding wide variations among African countries, the level of discrimination in social institutions at the sub-regional level ranges from medium to high. Southern Africa fares the best, with a medium level of discrimination and an overall score of 32 compared to the other African sub-regions: North Africa (49), Central Africa (44), West Africa (44) and East Africa (39) (Figure 1.2).

Figure 1.2. Sub-regions in Africa display medium to high levels of discrimination in social institutions

SIGI scores in African sub-regions

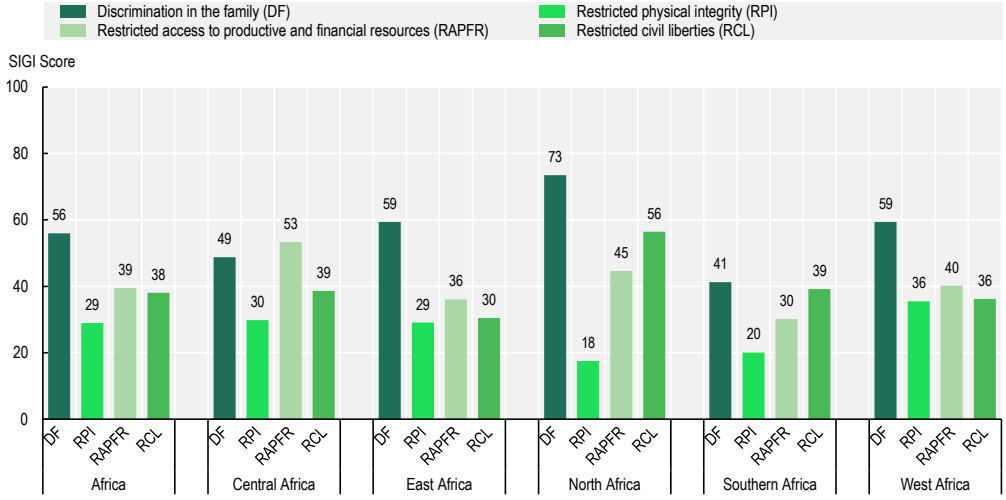


Note: Scores range from 0 to 100, with 0 indicating no discrimination and 100 indicating absolute discrimination.
Source: (OECD, 2019[2]), Social Institutions and Gender Index, https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/f0c48e52-en.

Southern Africa's relatively good performance stems largely from a low level of discrimination in the "Restricted physical integrity" dimension and a medium level of discrimination in the "Restricted access to productive and financial resources dimension" (Figure 1.3).

Figure 1.3. Discrimination in the family remains the most challenging dimension in Africa

SIGI scores in the dimensions of the SIGI in Africa and its sub-regions



Note: Scores range from 0 to 100, with 0 indicating no discrimination and 100 indicating absolute discrimination.
Source: (OECD, 2019[2]), Social Institutions and Gender Index, https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/f0c48e52-en.

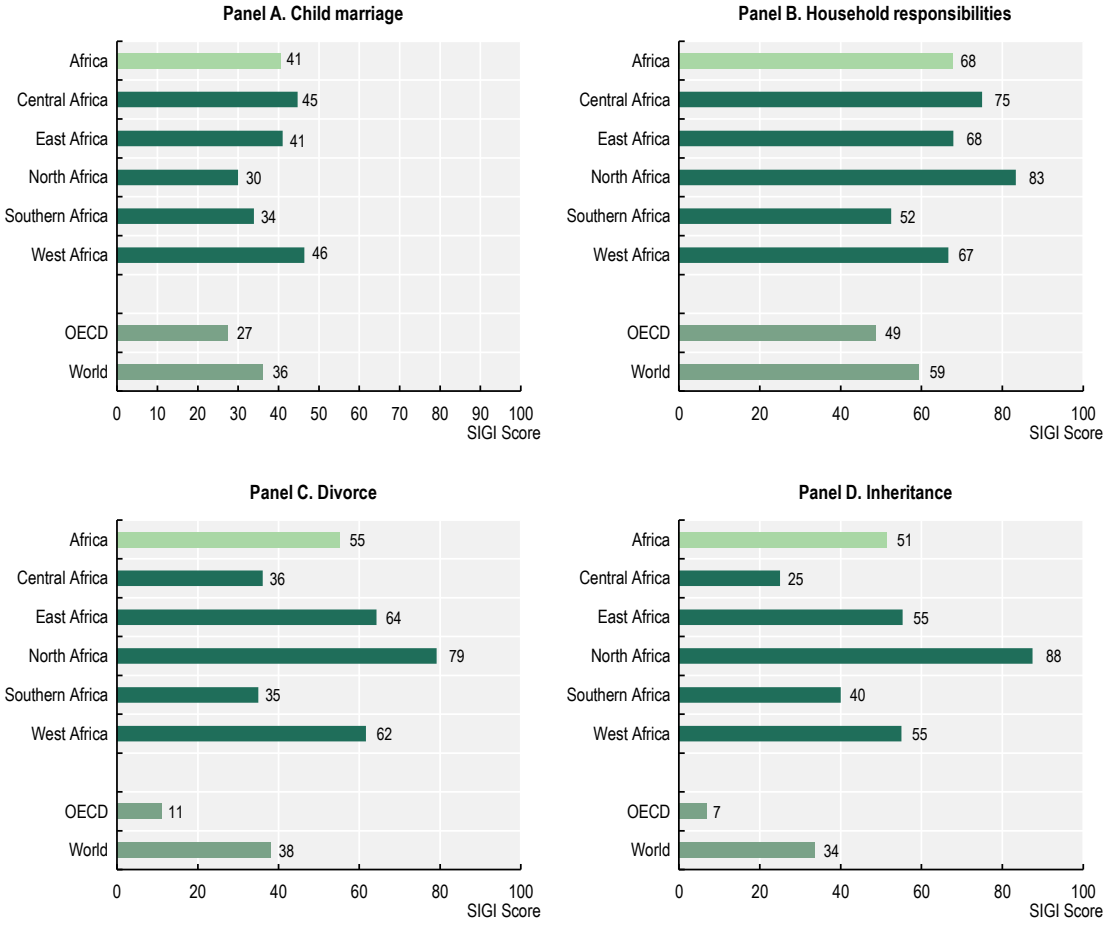
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Discrimination in the family remains the most challenging dimension in Africa

In Africa, the highest levels of discrimination in social institutions are found in the family sphere, a finding that reflects the persistence of deep-rooted unequal power relations between women and men within the household. The continent presents a high level of discrimination in the dimension "Discrimination in the family", which covers child marriage, household responsibilities, inheritance and divorce, with a score of 56, exceeding the global average of 44 and trailing behind Asia (53) and Latin America and the Caribbean (31). Discrimination in this dimension varies widely across the African continent. North Africa has the highest score (73) followed by West Africa and East Africa (59) denoting high levels of discrimination in social institutions governing intra-household dynamics in these three sub-regions (Figure 1.3 and Figure 1.4). These high scores reflect discriminatory and inadequate legal frameworks, which fail to legally protect girls from marriage before the age of 18 years, as well as the co-existence and application of customary and informal laws – which are not aligned with civil law – limiting women's rights to divorce and to claim inherited property and assets. Moreover, women continue to undertake the bulk of unpaid care and domestic work. In 2017, in the 23 countries[1] with available data, on average, African women spent four times more time on unpaid care and domestic work than their male counterparts compared to three times as much time on unpaid care and domestic work at the global level (OECD, 2019[3]). The COVID-19 pandemic has increased the demand for care work in families where the workload already falls on women's and girls' shoulders. This increased burden of unpaid care and domestic work significantly limits women's ability to participate in productive activities, run businesses, study and rest, with consequent effects on their mental and physical health (UN Women and UNFPA, 2021[4])

Figure 1.4. High levels of discrimination in the family obstruct gender equality in Africa

SIGI scores for the indicators of the "Discrimination in the family" dimension



Note: Scores range from 0 to 100, with 0 indicating no discrimination and 100 indicating absolute discrimination.
Source: (OECD, 2019[2]), Social Institutions and Gender Index, https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/f0c48e52-en.

StatLink https://doi.org/10.1787/888934287281

There are also considerable variations in the level of discrimination for this dimension across the 53 countries that were[2] SIGI values range from low to very high levels of discrimination in the family sphere. On the positive side, Sao Tome and Principe is the region's top performer for this dimension with a score of 16, followed by Côte d'Ivoire (30), Mozambique (32) and Namibia (33), which exhibit medium levels of discrimination. Sao Tome and Principe has a strong legal framework that allows women to take decisions within the household, provides them with the same legal basis as men to initiate divorce proceedings, and establishes equal inheritance rights for widows and daughters.

Since 2009, child marriage rates have decreased in many African countries, but progress has been uneven across the continent

Child marriage is the indicator with the lowest level of discrimination in the "Discrimination in the family" dimension. Africa overall presents medium levels of discrimination in the "Child marriage" indicator, with a score of 41, which is five points above the global average. Scores range from 30 in North Africa to 46 in

West Africa, highlighting the fact that, in 2017, 39 African countries had legal loopholes which allowed girls to be married before the age of 18 years with parental and or judicial consent. However, recent legal reforms supporting the alignment of domestic legal frameworks with international conventions could pave the way towards the elimination of child marriage. For example, in 2019 Côte d'Ivoire passed a law setting the minimum legal age of marriage at 18 years for women and men (see Chapter 2 for more details).

Since the last decade, the prevalence of child marriage has gradually decreased around the world and across African countries. From 2009 to 2018, the prevalence of child marriage declined by seven percentage points in Africa compared to five percentage points in Asia[3] (OECD, 2019[3]). In sub-Saharan Africa, it decreased from 32% to 25% over the same period. However, in Central and West Africa, the sub-regions with the highest child marriage rates, advances to eradicate this harmful practice has been among the slowest at the global level (UNICEF, 2018[5]). On average, 23% of African women between the ages of 15 and 19 years are married, divorced or widowed, compared with 16% globally. Despite these efforts, child marriage remains a dominant problem in some sub-regions in Africa. While child marriage rates remain relatively low in North Africa (11%), it remains a concern in Central (26%) and West Africa (29%). Reported child marriage rates range from around 1% in Libya to 62% in Niger, the highest level in the world, together with the Central African Republic (61%) and Mali (44%).

In some African countries, discriminatory social institutions still perpetuate women's subordinate status and limit their ability to take decisions within the household

Women's restricted rights over household headship and parental authority highlight the persistence of discriminatory gender stereotypes within the family sphere. The African region scores 68 for the "Household responsibilities" indicator, indicating a high level of discrimination in social institutions. This value is aligned with the global (59) and other regional averages for this indicator. Cabo Verde, Sao Tome and Principe, and Rwanda all display low levels of discrimination for the "Household responsibilities" indicator, implying that women have an equal right to be heads of household and possess the same legal decision-making abilities as men with regard to children during marriage. However, in these countries, customary, religious and traditional laws or practices discriminate against this formal equality. In Cabo Verde, discriminatory stereotypes relating to the roles and responsibilities of women and men in the family and society persist in many communities, particularly in rural areas. In these communities, household responsibilities are clearly distinguished by gender, with women often solely responsible for domestic and care work. (OECD Development Centre, 2019[6])

The national legal frameworks of 21 countries[4] do not grant women the right to be recognised as the head of their household and do not establish equal parental authority over their children. In the remaining ten countries,[5] women cannot legally become the head of a household and the law does not grant equal parental authority to married women over their children. Data from the Afro barometer survey reveal that men still take the most important decisions affecting household members. For instance, 16% of female African respondents consider their spouses to be the main and sole decision maker regarding the use of money they have earned from a job, a business, selling things or other activities (Afrobarometer, 2019[7]).

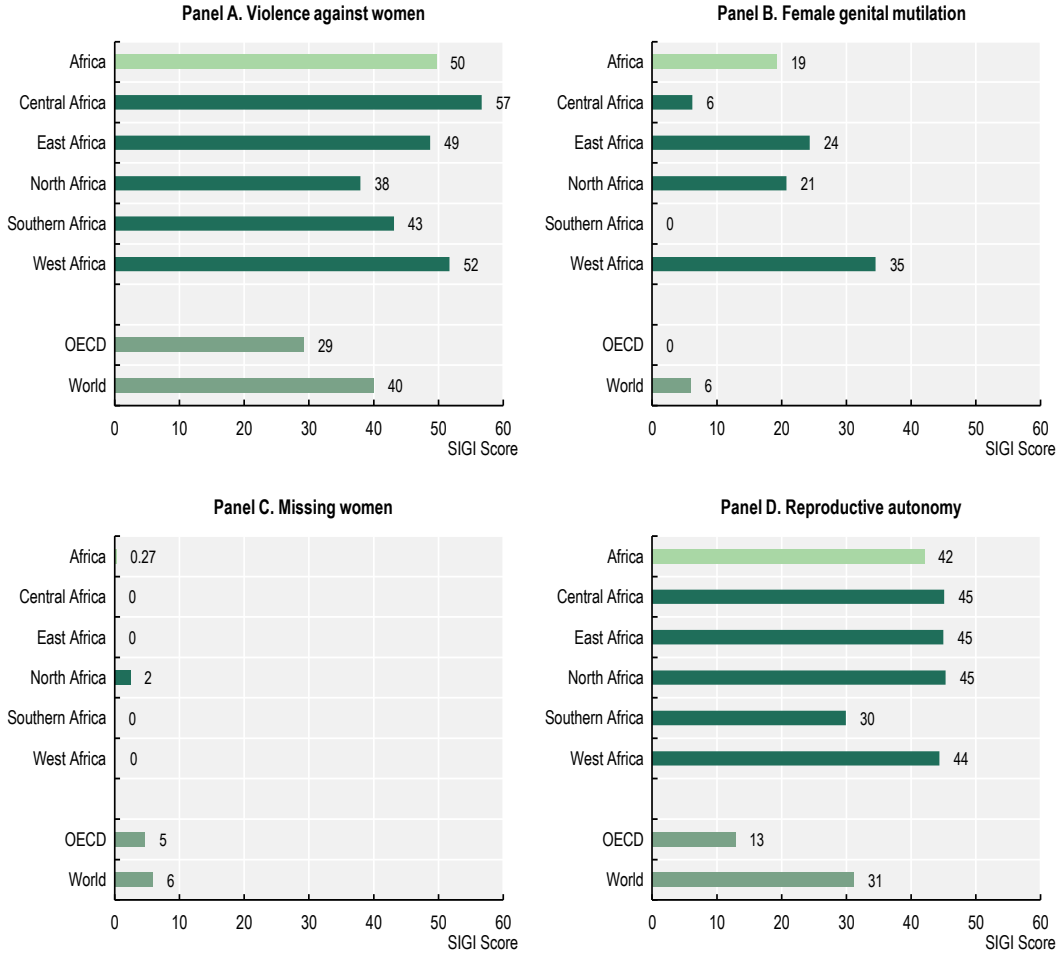
The second area of concern is the unequal distribution of unpaid care and domestic work among women and men. As noted above, in Africa, on average, women spend four times more time on unpaid care work than men; however, this proportion varies greatly between the 23 countries with available data, ranging from two times more in Nigeria to 11 times more in Mali (see Chapter 4 for more details). Due to the lack of adequate infrastructure, such as roads and electrification, household members spend more time collecting water and fuel for cooking, caring for children and elders, and transport. This unequal division of household tasks is reinforced by persistent discriminatory attitudes against women within the family sphere as well as stereotypes and biases regarding women's and men's roles. For instance, more than one-half of Africa's population considers that children will suffer if a mother participates in paid employment (OECD, 2019[3]).

Restricted physical integrity accounts for the lowest levels of discrimination in social institutions

Overall, Africa displays a medium level of discrimination in the "Restricted physical integrity" dimension, with a score of 29, exceeding the global average of 22 and lagging behind other regions such as Latin America and the Caribbean (22) and Asia (25). The "Restricted physical integrity" dimension comprises violence against women, female genital mutilation (FGM),[6] missing women and reproductive autonomy. At the sub-regional level, average scores range from 18 in North Africa and 20 in Southern Africa, both of which are classified as displaying low levels of discrimination in social institutions, to 29 in East Africa, 30 in Central Africa and 36 in West Africa, which present medium levels of discrimination (Figure 1.5).

Figure 1.5. Limited reproductive autonomy and violence against women largely restrict women's physical integrity

SIGI scores for the indicators of the "Restricted physical integrity" dimension



Note: Scores range from 0 to 100, with 0 indicating no discrimination and 100 indicating absolute discrimination.
Source: (OECD, 2019[2]), Social Institutions and Gender Index, https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/f0c48e52-en.

StatLink https://doi.org/10.1787/888934287300

North Africa's relatively good performance in this dimension is linked to lower values in the "Violence against women" indicator (38) compared to the other sub-regions. Similarly, Southern Africa fares well due to the lack of comparable data on the practice of FGM and the absence of a systematic undervaluation of girls at birth. SIGI scores for the "Restricted physical integrity" dimension are available only for 38 countries out of 54 countries due to limited available data on the prevalence of domestic violence (see Reader's guide). Of the 38 countries classified under this dimension, 13[7] present low levels of discrimination and 24 display medium levels of discrimination.

Scores in the "Restricted physical integrity" dimension range from 9 in Tunisia to 57 in Guinea, which lacks specific legislation on intimate partner violence, rape and sexual harassment combined with a high acceptance of harmful practices such as domestic violence and FGM. Tunisia is the region's best performer in this dimension due to recent changes in the country's legal framework which now protects women from violence including intimate partner violence, rape and sexual harassment (OECD, ILO, CAWTAR, 2020[8]). In July 2017, the Tunisian parliament passed the Organic Law Related to the Elimination of Violence against Women (see Chapter 2). Furthermore, 19% of women (aged 15-49 years) agree that a husband is justified in hitting or beating his wife under certain circumstances compared with 47% of women at the global level. Some 20% of Tunisian women have experienced domestic violence in their lifetime compared to 33% of women worldwide. Concerning the "Missing Women" and "Reproductive Autonomy" indicators, the country has a natural sex ratio at birth, meaning that is natural that for every 100 girls born, there would be 105 boys born and, on average, only 7% of Tunisian women report having an unmet need for family planning.

The vast majority of "missing women" in Africa fall within the reproductive age group

The concept of "missing women", adopted by Amartya Sen in 1990, refers to the low ratio of girls to boys in some developing countries – specifically the deficit of women and girls who have died prematurely in comparison with a benchmark population distribution (UNDP, 2016[9]). Depending on the different life stages of women and girls, women may be "missing" for various reasons. Girls missing at birth can be explained by a combination of different factors including a strong preference for sons, a decrease in fertility rates and the expansion of technologies that allow parents to know the sex of their unborn child. Girls missing during infancy and early childhood can be linked to the persistence of entrenched discrimination at the household level – in the form of poorer nutrition and unequal distribution of food – as well as lack of adequate water and sanitation services. Finally, women missing with the reproductive age cohort have two major determinants: high rates of maternal deaths and the spread of the HIV/AIDS epidemic across African countries (World Bank, 2011[10]).

At the global level, on average, boys exceed girls at birth, but this asymmetry starts to adjust itself shortly thereafter. The combined effect is a roughly balanced male to female ratio in the population as a whole (Anderson and Ray, 2010[11]). The majority of African countries exhibit a natural sex ratio at birth of 105 – meaning that for every 100 girls born there would be 105 boys. A ratio exceeding 105 implies the existence of more boys between the ages of 0 and 4 years than one would expect, indicating a potential phenomenon of son preference resulting in the systemic elimination of new-born girls. In Africa, the natural sex ratio among children aged 0-4 years is around 104 boys per 100 girls (OECD, 2019[3]). Nevertheless, birth registration has remained an acute issue for a long time across the continent. West and Central Africa have the lowest level of birth registration at the global level, with nearly 55% of children under five years old without a birth certificate (UNICEF, n.d.[12]). Girls are less likely to have their birth registered than boys in many African countries, including, Namibia, Niger and Sudan. This discrimination at birth denies their fundamental rights to access to education, public services and social protection schemes, reinforcing unequal power relationships and harmful practices (UNICEF, 2020[13]).

Effective legal and policy measures and shifting social norms have led to a decline in the missing women phenomenon at birth. In the majority of countries[8] with evidence of discrimination, there has been a slight

to moderate decrease in the sex ratio for ages 0-4 years, indicating a decrease in the number of missing women at birth (World Bank, 2011[10]); (OECD, 2019[1]). However, Africa is the only region in the world where the absolute number of "missing" women has substantially risen as a consequence of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, and the high prevalence of maternal mortality coupled with inadequate access to water, sanitation and health services (World Bank, 2011[10]). For instance, between 1990 and 2008, the total number of missing girls at birth and the excess of female mortality did not change considerably in sub-Saharan African countries. Reductions in infant and childhood mortality were counterbalanced by significant increases in the number of women within the reproductive age cohort as a major consequence of rapid Africa's population growth (UNDP, 2016[9]); (World Bank, 2011[10]). In Africa, the excess of female mortality is due partly to malaria, maternal mortality, HIV/AIDS and cardiovascular diseases (Anderson and Ray, 2010[11]). For instance, unbalanced sex ratios among women of reproductive age (15-49 years) are a problematic issue in Southern and West Africa. The high prevalence of female mortality is linked to high rates of maternal mortality in West Africa and HIV/AIDS infection among women in Southern Africa. In West African countries, nearly 715 maternal deaths occur per 100 000 live births compared to 481 maternal deaths per 100 000 at the regional level (World Bank, n.d.[14]). Southern Africa is the most affected sub-region worldwide by the HIV global epidemic with an estimated 13% of adults aged 15-49 years living with HIV in 2019, compared to 0.7% at the global level (World Bank, n.d.[14]) (see Chapter 3 for more details).

Eradicating violence against women is an urgent challenge for Africa given its weak legal protection and high prevalence rates

Violence against women is the most acute form of discrimination in the "Restricted physical integrity" dimension for the region. Africa scores 50 for the "Violence against women" indicator, compared to an average score of 40 at the global level. This represents the highest regional score across the four indicators that comprise the "Restricted physical integrity" dimension. This poor performance stems from the fact that no African country has a comprehensive legal framework in place that protects women from all forms of violence – including rape, domestic violence and sexual harassment – and from high levels of discriminatory attitudes towards domestic violence and practices. For instance, on average, 33% of African women have suffered physical and/or sexual violence from an intimate partner at least once in their lifetime in the 38 countries where such data are available (see Chapter 3 for more details). The prevalence of domestic violence is in line with the global average (31%) and varies across countries, ranging from 6% of women in Comoros to 80% in Guinea.

At the regional level, rates of domestic violence and acceptance of such violence have decreased slightly in recent years. Since the second edition of the SIGI in 2012, the percentage of ever-partnered women who suffered violence from an intimate partner at least once in their lifetime decreased from 41% in 2012 to 33% in 2018. Across the 32 African countries with available data, 47% of women and girls believe that a husband can be justified in hitting or beating his wife under certain circumstances, namely if she burns food, argues with him, goes out without telling him, neglects the children or refuses to have sexual relations. Increased efforts dedicated to raising awareness about domestic violence and encouraging people to take action to promote social change, have led to a steady shift in social norms and a waning of attitudes that tolerate or justify this practice. For instance, between 2012 and 2018, the share of African women who consider domestic violence to be sometimes justified dropped by approximately 10 percentage points. Attitudes towards domestic violence vary across countries: while Guinean women seem particularly likely to tolerate domestic violence (92%), only 16% of women in Malawi hold such discriminatory attitudes. Across African countries, the socio-economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have led to an increase in domestic violence cases, rape and sexual abuse. For instance, during the lockdown period in 2020, Tunisia experienced a nine-fold increment in violence against women and girls. Algeria observed an increase in femicide, with one femicide taking place every three or four days. Within the first confinement

in April 2020, the South African police department registered a 37% increase in gender-based violence cases (UN Women and UNFPA, 2021[4]) (Chapter 3).

African women still face obstacles to gaining ownership of and control over economic assets

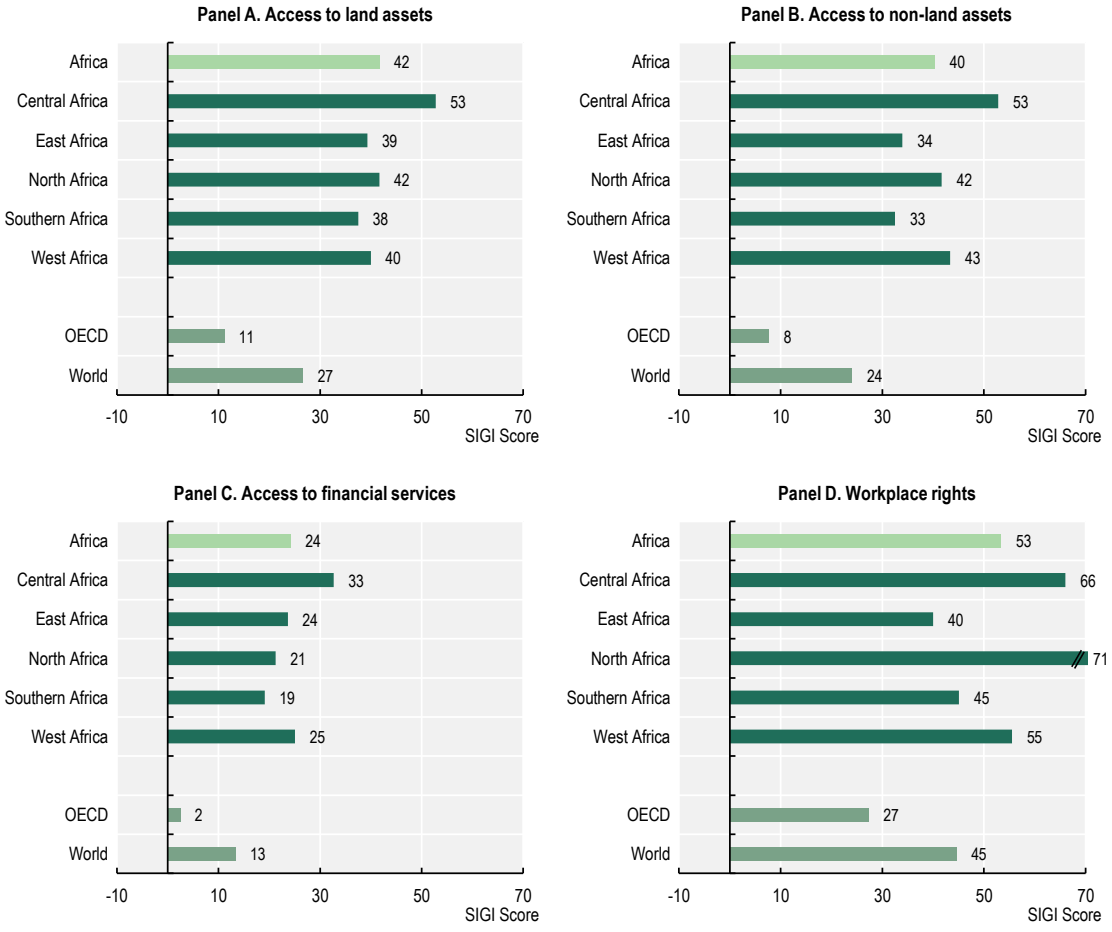
Across the region, obstacles remain in securing women's right to access productive and financial resources, as well as guaranteeing their protection in the workplace. The "Restricted access to productive and financial resources" dimension encompasses four indicators, namely: "Access to land", "Access to non-land assets", "Access to financial services" and "Workplace rights". The region presents a medium level of discrimination, with a score of 39 in the "Restricted access to productive and financial resources" dimension – higher than the global average of 27. At the sub-regional level, Central Africa exhibits a high level of discrimination for the dimension with a score of 53, while Southern, East, West and North Africa present medium levels of discrimination (Figure 1.6).

Southern Africa's relatively good performance stems primarily from strong legal frameworks guaranteeing women's rights to open a bank account and to obtain credit from formal bank institutions (see Chapter 2 for more details). In addition, in this region women have the same legal rights and secure access to own, make decisions and use non-land assets as collateral. In Southern Africa, 42% of all bank account holders are women compared to only 26% of women at the continental level. At the sub-regional level, women's rate of bank account ownership ranges from 18% in Malawi (29% for men) to 78% in Namibia (77% for men) (Chapter 4).

The 35 African countries scored in this dimension display very diverse scores. Nineteen countries lack a score for the "Restricted access to productive and financial resources" dimension due to missing variables (see the Reader's guide). Scores in the "Restricted access to productive and financial resources" dimension range from 14 in Mozambique, the region's top performer (displaying a low level of discrimination), to 78 in Cameroon, denoting a high level of discrimination. Mozambique's relatively good performance is the result of a strong legal framework that grants women's equal access to productive and financial resources, and guarantees women's rights in the workplace environment. Furthermore, only 14% of the Mozambique population agreed with the statement that it is not acceptable for any woman in the family to have a paid job outside the home if she wants to.

Figure 1.6. Women's access to productive and financial resources and equal workplace rights remains a challenge

SIGI scores for the indicators of the "Restricted access to productive and financial resources" dimension



Note: Scores range from 0 to 100, with 0 indicating no discrimination and 100 indicating absolute discrimination.
Source: (OECD, 2019[2]), Social Institutions and Gender Index, https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/f0c48e52-en.

StatLink https://doi.org/10.1787/888934287319

African countries have made gains in strengthening and securing women's access to financial services

African countries have undertaken important legal reforms guaranteeing women's equal rights to open bank accounts and seek credit. Overall, the region scores 24 in the "Access to financial services" indicator denoting a low level of discrimination in social institutions governing women's access to financial services. These low scores reflect the fact that the majority of African countries guarantee the same rights to open a bank account in a formal financial institution to both women and men without the signature and authority of their spouses or guardians (see Chapter 2 for more details). Similarly, legal frameworks provide women with the same rights as men to obtain credit. Nevertheless, discriminatory social norms, collective gender biases and traditional practices weaken the extent of such progress. Women are disproportionately underrepresented among the owners of land and houses, which in turn limits their ability to obtain the collateral required to mobilise capital and to obtain loans from formal bank institutions (see Chapter 4 for

more details). In Africa, based on the data available for 32 countries, women account for 33% of homeowners, ranging from 5% in Egypt to 98% in Cameroon (OECD, 2019[3]).

African women continue to face gender-based discrimination in the working environment

In the "Restricted access to productive and financial" dimension, "Workplace rights" constitute the most persistent form of discrimination. In this particular indicator, Africa scores 53 overall, compared with a global average score of 45. High scores reflect poor legislative frameworks concerning the working environment as well as persistent gender stereotypes in the workplace. Legal barriers continue to prevent women from entering certain professions. For instance, in 2021, 28 African countries have laws prohibiting women from entering certain professions deemed arduous and/or hazardous, including jobs in sectors such as mining, energy, agriculture and other industries (see Chapter 2). In addition, attitudinal data reveal that 18% of respondents believe that women should not participate in paid work, further perpetuating the gender gap in labour force participation across African countries. In 2020, the labour force participation gap stood at nearly 20 percentage points, with 54% of African women in the labour force compared to 73% of men (ILO, 2020[15]) (see Chapter 4). In the vast majority of African countries, men also continue to be overrepresented in managerial positions compared to women. In the 40 African countries with available data, the proportion of female managers was 23% at the regional level, nearly 1 percentage point above the global average (OECD, 2019[3]).

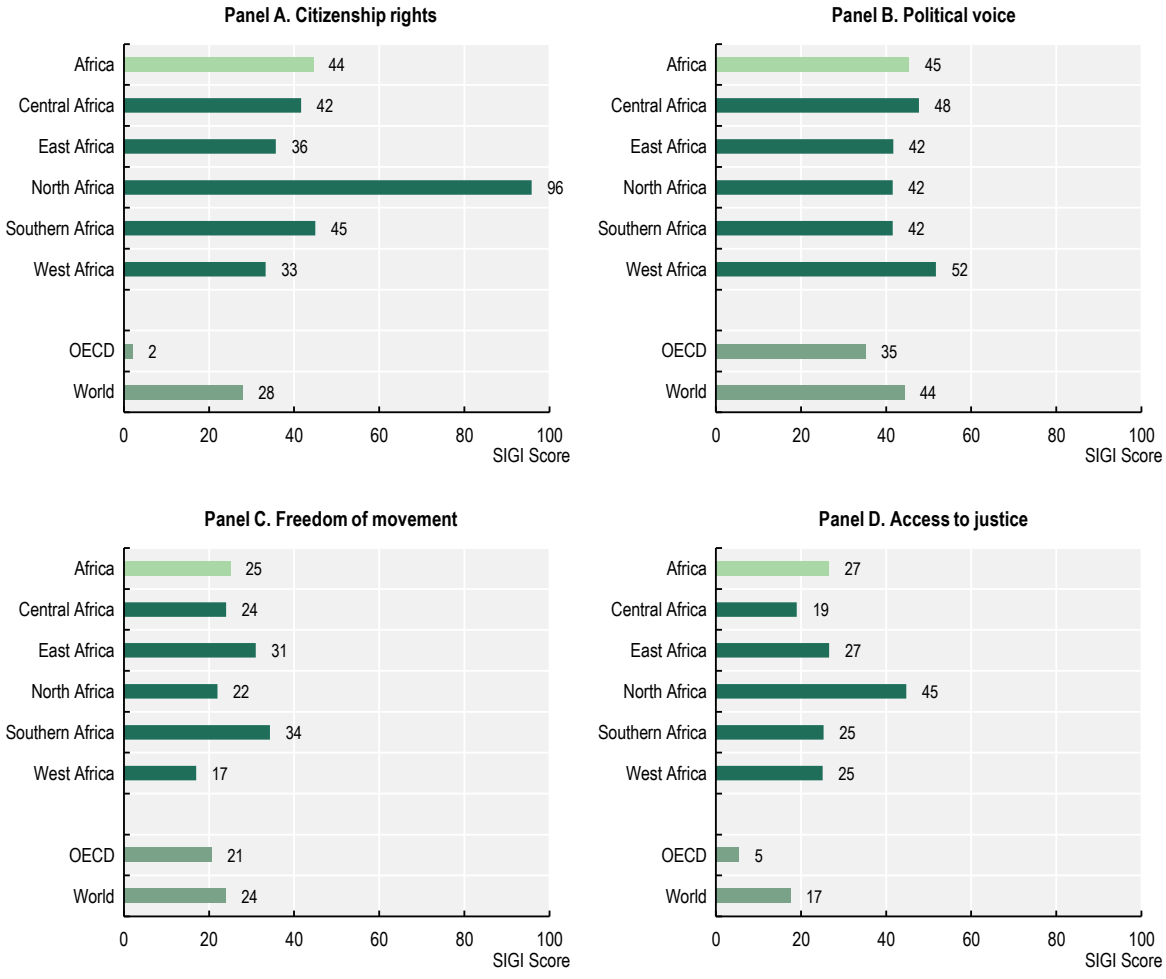
Actions to expand women's civil liberties are reflected in recent gains

Africa displays a medium level of discrimination in the "Restricted civil liberties" dimension with a score of 38, 9 percentage points above the global average. The "Restricted civil liberties" dimension of the SIGI encompasses four indicators: "Citizenship rights", "Political voice", "Freedom of movement" and "Access to justice". At the sub-regional level, average scores vary from 30 in East Africa to 36 in West Africa, 39 in both Central and Southern Africa, and 56 in North Africa (Figure 1.7). East Africa's relatively good performance in this dimension derives from strong legal frameworks that grant women equal rights to vote and to hold public and political office in the legislature and executive powers. In addition, these countries have temporary special measures in place that promote women's political representation at the national and sub-national levels. East Africa is the sub-region with the second-highest share of women in its single/lower houses (31%) (IPU Parline, 2021[16]). North Africa's poor performance stems primarily from restrictive legal frameworks that limit women's legal rights to acquire, change or retain their nationality (OECD, ILO, CAWTAR, 2020[8]).

Women's political voice has steadily strengthened even if legal quotas, special measures or incentives are not adequately implemented and stereotypes related to women's leadership continue to curb their civil liberties. Among the 39 African countries with SIGI scores for this dimension, there is wide variation with scores ranging from 4 in Senegal – denoting a very low level of discrimination against women – to 62 in Togo, indicating a high level of discrimination. Senegal's success in this dimension is due partly to the fact that its laws ensure women's equal rights to vote and hold public office and grant women and men with the same citizenship rights and ability to exercise these rights. In 2010, Senegal introduced a ground-breaking law instituting gender parity in all fully or partially elected bodies. Furthermore, in 2013, the country amended its Nationality Code to remove all existing discriminatory provisions. Act No. 03/2013, Art. 7 and 5 now allow women to give their nationality to their children and spouses. In addition, women have the same capacity as men to sue, and their testimony carries the same evidentiary weight as a man's in civil, criminal and family courts. With regard to access to justice, on average, 38% of women do not trust the judicial system compared to 35% at the regional level (Gallup, 2017[17]).

Figure 1.7. Despite recent progress, African women still do not enjoy the same liberties as men

SIGI scores for the indicators of the "Restricted civil liberties" dimension



Note: Scores range from 0 to 100, with 0 indicating no discrimination and 100 indicating absolute discrimination.
Source: (OECD, 2019[2]), Social Institutions and Gender Index, https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/f0c48e52-en.

StatLink https://doi.org/10.1787/888934287338

Women's freedom of movement is protected by strong legal frameworks in Africa

Most African countries guarantee women equal access to identity documents and passports as well as the ability to travel outside the country. Africa scores 25 in the "Freedom of movement" indicator, compared to a global average of 24, denoting a relatively low level of discrimination. The legal frameworks of 31 countries grant women freedom of movement, indicating that women's access to identity documents and passports, and their ability to travel outside the country, are protected on an equal footing with men regardless of civil status. However, discriminatory practices exist for women wishing to access public spaces, which stem from a high perception of insecurity. Across the 40 African countries with available data, women account for 55% of people declaring that they feel unsafe walking alone at night in the city or the area where they live, compared to 65% of people in Asian countries and 69% in the Americas – including both Latin America and the Caribbean and North America. Large variations exist across

countries: in Côte d'Ivoire, women account for 32% of the respondents who report feeling unsafe, while the proportion reaches 77% in Rwanda[9] (Gallup, 2017[17]).

Despite progress, negative attitudes towards women in public life and discriminatory social norms hamper women's ability to fully participate in the public sphere

Political voice is the most acute form of discrimination across the indicators in the "Restricted civil liberties" dimension. The region scores 45 overall, in line with the global average (44). At the regional level, this score indicates that women and men have the same rights to vote and to hold public and political office, but legal quotas or special measures supporting the promotion of women's political participation have produced mixed results. In 2021, African women accounted for 25% of representatives in lower or single houses (IPU Parline, 2021[16]), although this average hides important variations between countries. In 2021, women's representation as members of parliament (MPs) in single or lower houses ranges from 61% in Rwanda and 46% in South Africa to 6% in Nigeria and Burkina Faso (IPU Parline, 2021[16]). Furthermore, negative attitudes towards women's leadership are still prevalent in some countries. At the regional level, on average and in the 16 countries with available data, 63% of the population agrees with the statement: "On the whole, men make better political leaders than women do" compared to 53% of the population in Asia and 24% in the Americas (see Chapter 5 for more details).

Discriminatory social institutions are often overlooked as a factor explaining gender-based discrimination in African countries

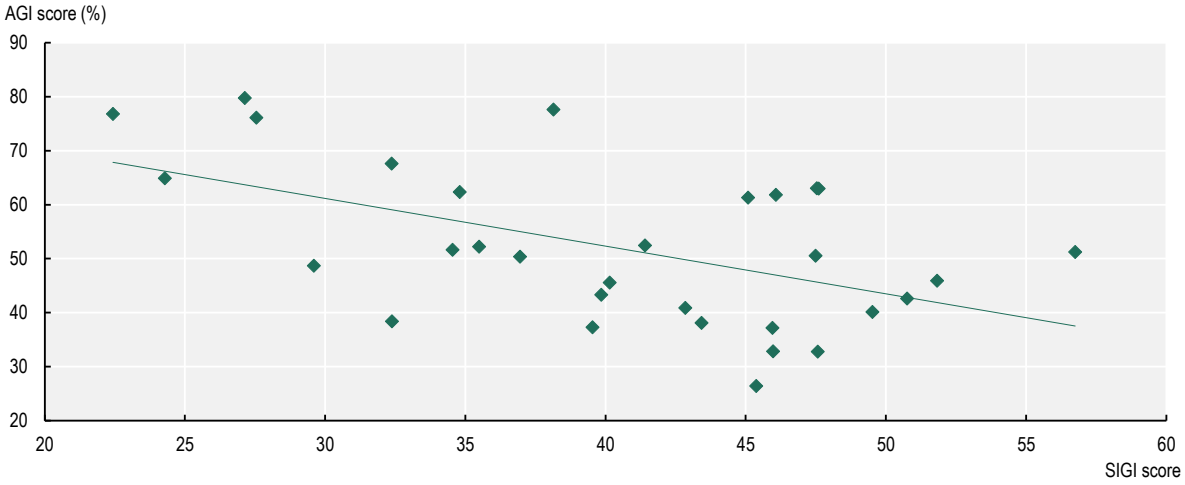
Discriminatory social institutions prevent women from achieving equal outcomes

Despite important economic and social progress over recent decades, nowhere in the world do women enjoy the same legal, economic and social rights as men. Legal discrimination and inheritance loopholes, social expectations regarding gender roles that stigmatise working mothers and women in politics, and restrictions on women's physical integrity such as FGM, largely explain the persistence of unequal outcomes in areas such as employment, entrepreneurship, health and political representation (OECD, 2019[1]). In Africa, these outcomes are lower for women than for men, as reflected in scores on the Africa Gender Index, which range from 24 in Comoros to 80 in Namibia, and are linked to restrictions on women's employment (the economic dimension) and access to education and health (AfDB, UNECA, 2020[18]). Discrimination in social institutions constitutes an obstacle to gender parity in outcomes across all world regions. They establish the parameters for acceptable and unacceptable decisions, choices or behaviours for women in society, and consequently define their role and impact their outcomes.

Gender-based discrimination in rights, opportunities and outcomes interconnect and overlap reinforcing the marginalisation of women and girls. Discriminatory laws, norms and practices as measured by the SIGI, limit the role of women in Africa as workers, entrepreneurs, healthy citizens, leaders at the national and local levels, and actors of human development, as measured by the Africa Gender Index (AGI) (AfDB, UNECA, 2020[18]). Therefore, higher levels of gender-based discrimination in social institutions are associated with lower equality in outcomes (Figure 1.8). In other words, African countries with higher levels of discrimination in social institutions are further from achieving gender parity. The following section explores the underlying factors that explain persistent discriminatory social institutions in three key areas: women's health and physical integrity, women's economic empowerment, and women's leadership and representation.

Figure 1.8. Higher levels of discrimination in social institutions are associated with lower levels of parity in outcomes

Correlation between the SIGI scores (social institutions) and the AGI scores (outcomes)



Note: The figure presents the estimated level of gender inequality in outcomes, as measured by the AGI and the level of gender-based discrimination in social institutions, as measured by the SIGI. Higher SIGI scores indicate higher inequality. SIGI scores range from 0 to 100, with 0 indicating no discrimination and 100 indicating absolute discrimination. Higher AGI scores indicate higher equality. An AGI score of 100% represents parity between women and men. An AGI score between 0% and 100% indicates gender inequality in favour of males, while a score above 100% means that women are doing better than men.
Source: (OECD, 2019[2]), Social Institutions and Gender Index, https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/f0c48e52-en; (AfDB, UNECA, 2020[18]), Africa Gender Index.

StatLink https://doi.org/10.1787/888934287205

Discriminatory social institutions hamper women's health and restrict their physical integrity throughout their lifecycle

Discriminatory legislation and social norms restrict women's access to sexual and reproductive healthcare and perpetuate harmful practices with implications for women's and girls' health and well-being. No country in Africa lawfully provides women with universal access to reproductive health. In 2017, 22% of African women of reproductive age (15-49 years) reported having an unmet need for family planning (OECD, 2019[3]). Simultaneously, considerable legal restrictions and social norms limit women's reproductive autonomy, negatively affecting their sexual and reproductive health and resulting in poor health outcomes. In 2017, there were 481 maternal deaths per 100 000 live births in Africa compared to the global average of 216 (World Bank, n.d.[14]). One factor underlying the high rates of maternal mortality across African countries is the prevalence of adolescent pregnancies. These early pregnancies increase the likelihood of health complications related to or aggravated by pregnancy, while also adversely affecting girls' educational attainment and well-being. In 2019, in sub-Saharan Africa, there were 100 births per 1 000 adolescent girls aged 15-19 compared to the global average of 42 (World Bank, n.d.[14]).

In the African region, numerous types of violence against women and weakened legal frameworks limit women's physical integrity. Domestic violence continues to affect a large number of African women during their lifetime: on average, approximately 33% of African women have experienced intimate partner violence or sexual violence in their lifetime compared to 31% at the global level. Despite the lack of data on the prevalence of FGM, evidence reveals the persistence of this harmful practice in Northern, East and West Africa. On average, in 27 countries with available data, 42% of women and girls aged 15-49 years have

undergone FGM, compared with 46% in 2014 (OECD Development Centre, 2014[19]) (OECD, 2019[3]). The absence of legal provisions criminalising domestic violence in 20 countries leaves women and girls without any legal protection from their perpetrators and without the possibility of seeking justice. Moreover, efforts to guarantee women's legal protection from various forms of gender-based violence have been inconsistent and slow. For instance, the majority of countries fail to recognise marital rape and 21 countries do not have criminal laws addressing FGM as a harmful practice (see Chapter 2).

The high rates of gender-based violence in African countries are deeply rooted in discriminatory social norms and attitudes that consider violence a private matter. Similarly, FGM, a particular form of violence against young girls and adolescents, persists in several African countries as a result of customary, religious or traditional practices or laws that allow and encourage this harmful practice. The absence of legislative frameworks aimed at eliminating and banning FGM allows the practice to persist. In 2018, on average, 16% of African women aged 15-49 years considered that FGM should continue (OECD, 2019[3]).

Discriminatory social institutions limit women's access to the labour market and key economic assets while hampering women's entrepreneurship

Discriminatory legal frameworks governing workplace rights in Africa jeopardise women's inclusion in the labour market and their economic empowerment. Legal barriers and the absence of laws guaranteeing equality in the area of workplace rights have serious consequences for women's economic empowerment. In particular, discriminatory laws across the continent continue to prevent women from entering the labour market and hinder their advancement. These laws also impede the recognition and redistribution of care responsibilities among men and women and contribute to the persistent gender pay gap (see Chapter 2).

Discriminatory social norms and biases, and notably discriminatory gender roles within the household, curtail women's access to the labour market. Traditional views of gender roles within the household prevail with caring for family members and the home still a primary social expectation of women. Consequently, women continue to assume the bulk of unpaid care and domestic work. At the same time, in a context of widespread informality and high unemployment rates in certain countries – particularly for youth and women – the region is characterised by a high level of discriminatory attitudes that often discourage women from seeking work outside the household. Women's unpaid care and domestic work burden and discriminatory attitudes explain women's low inclusion in the labour market and the large gender gaps observed across the continent. The characteristics of women's employment – low participation, high informality and vulnerable employment – are also direct consequences of women's dual role in many African countries as primary caretaker of the household and a necessary contributor to household income.

Biased perceptions of women's abilities and discriminatory educational norms tend to prevent women from accessing decent work and confine them to specific sectors of the economy. Norms and stereotypes associating men and women with certain inherent characteristics tend to orient women's and men's labour choices towards certain sectors of the economy, which results in high horizontal segregation. For instance, across all African sub-regions, men are systematically overrepresented in "manly" sectors – such as construction or transportation – whereas women are predominant in sectors such as accommodation, wholesale and retail trade or household services. Educational choices also play a critical role with biases related to boys' and girls' abilities shaping educational choices – for example, influencing the low enrolment of girls into Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) fields. This, in turn, accentuates gender-based segregation in the labour force. The implications for women's economic empowerment are far-reaching, as women in Africa are drawn to sectors that are less profitable or where wages are lower.

Men's traditional status and roles, household decision-making practices, and discriminatory inheritance laws and practices all limit women's ownership of agricultural land and constrain their economic independence. Women's limited ownership of agricultural land in Africa stems primarily from traditions and customs that consider men to be the rightful owners of the land. For the most part, customary laws are the primary determinant of who owns, manages, inherits and is allowed to access the land. Social practices

granting the administration of large household assets to husbands in marriage, as well as inheritance practices that favour men, also curtail women's land ownership. In the context of Africa, where agriculture remains a major source of employment and income, these barriers to women's agricultural land ownership have a major impact on women's capacity to have an income of their own and to amass capital to apply for loans.

Discriminatory social norms and biases related to women's access to markets, finance, training and networks also hamper women's entrepreneurship in Africa. African women are more likely to be entrepreneurs than men – often out of necessity and because barriers to formal waged employment encourage them to work as an account worker, running a small income-generating activity. Yet, evidence from several African countries[10] suggests that, on average, women-led companies have monthly profits that are 34% lower than those run by men (World Bank, 2019[20]). As with labour inclusion, this is partly explained by horizontal segregation as sectors dominated by men are more profitable than sectors in which women-led businesses are concentrated. This horizontal segregation stems, in turn, from underlying social norms and biases. Other deeply entrenched barriers to women's entrepreneurship include social norms that view men as better business managers than women – for example, in Burkina Faso, nearly 20% of the population think that a woman cannot manage a business as well as a man (OECD Development Centre, 2018[21]) – and their internalisation by women themselves, as well as reduced access to financing. The latter stems in particular from women's lack of collateral, which is itself the product of women's lower ownership of valuable assets and lower income.

Women's underrepresentation in political processes is rooted in discriminatory social institutions

Discriminatory social institutions are a root cause of women's underrepresentation within the political sphere. Social norms uphold the belief that public and political leadership is the domain of men and also value masculine leadership styles. Norms sustaining the view that men make better political leaders than women, and should be elected rather than women, are held by more than a quarter (28%) of the population in Africa (Afrobarometer, 2019[7]). These discriminatory beliefs at the population level are negatively correlated with women's political representation in parliaments (see Chapter 5 for more details). In addition, these social norms not only prevent women from stepping forward as candidates and political leaders, but also prevent them from gaining such positions whether through election or appointment.

Temporary special measures in Africa have created opportunities for women's political voice within the context of barriers imposed by electoral systems. Countries' electoral systems present specific opportunities and challenges for women's political representation (see Chapter 5 for more details). Regardless of the system in place, temporary special measures, such as quotas, play a pivotal role in women's levels of representation on the continent (see Chapter 2 for more details). Indeed, in African countries with quotas of any kind, women's representation in parliaments is 10 percentage points higher than in those that have no quotas. Nevertheless, to achieve results, these measures require political will in the form of supportive social norms and practices, in addition to strong enforcement mechanisms.

Discriminatory social institutions impede women's access to the tools and resources needed to pursue political leadership. Information and communications technologies (ICTs) constitute an increasingly important part of political processes in Africa, as was evident during the COVID-19 pandemic when campaigns continued in some countries despite social distancing measures being in place. However, women's access to these tools is limited due to discriminatory social norms, including unequal decision-making power in the household. The share of African women who report never having uses the Internet is 10 percentage points higher than the share of men (Afrobarometer, 2019[7]). Restricted access to ICTs hinders women's meaningful political participation not only as candidates but also as participants in political processes. In addition to ICTs, access to monetary resources is a crucial component of women's ability to run successful campaigns, as doing so can be expensive. However, social norms at the household level

position men as the main family providers and decision makers over the use of financial resources. Finally, time is a critical resource for political participation. Although similarly high shares of men and women reported voting in the most recent national elections in their countries, among those who did not, a greater share of women than men in 26 countries said that they did not vote because they lacked sufficient time to do so (Afrobarometer, 2019[7]). Unequal distributions of unpaid care and domestic work at the household level are deeply embedded, and have wide-reaching impacts on women's participation in diverse areas of life, including in politics as voters, candidates and active community members.

Gender-based violence in the political sphere is a discriminatory social institution that hinders women's full public and political engagement in Africa. Political violence and the fear of risk intimidates women and girls from pursuing leadership roles and exercising their voices in the public domain. Indeed, fear of political violence and intimidation is widespread among women in some countries, ranging from more than 70% in Kenya, Uganda and Zimbabwe to 16% in Cabo Verde and 23% in Morocco (Afrobarometer, 2019[7]). Furthermore, gender-based political violence online is increasingly an issue of concern, with women politicians in some African countries more likely than their male counterparts to face harassment on social media platforms (Pollicy, 2021[22]). Violence online prevents women from using digital tools, which further hinders their opportunities for political engagement and leadership.

Discrimination in social institutions undermines the region's inclusive growth and development

Discriminatory social institutions have a bearing on the unequal power relationships and dynamics between women and men in the family sphere, as well as on women's status in the economic and public spheres. For instance, persistently high rates of child marriage in African countries constrain girls' access to education and employment opportunities. Furthermore, the practice of FGM has adverse and long-lasting consequences on the mental and physical health of women and girls (UNFPA, 2019[23]). Sexual violence and violence against women, which are prevalent among many African countries, undermine women's and girls' capacity to participate in the labour market or become agents of change in society. Therefore, eliminating discriminatory social institutions will not only benefit half of Africa's population, but society as a whole. Overall, the cost of discriminatory social institutions for the African continent amounts to approximately USD 169 billion, accounting for 7.5% of the regional gross domestic product (GDP) (OECD, 2019[1]).

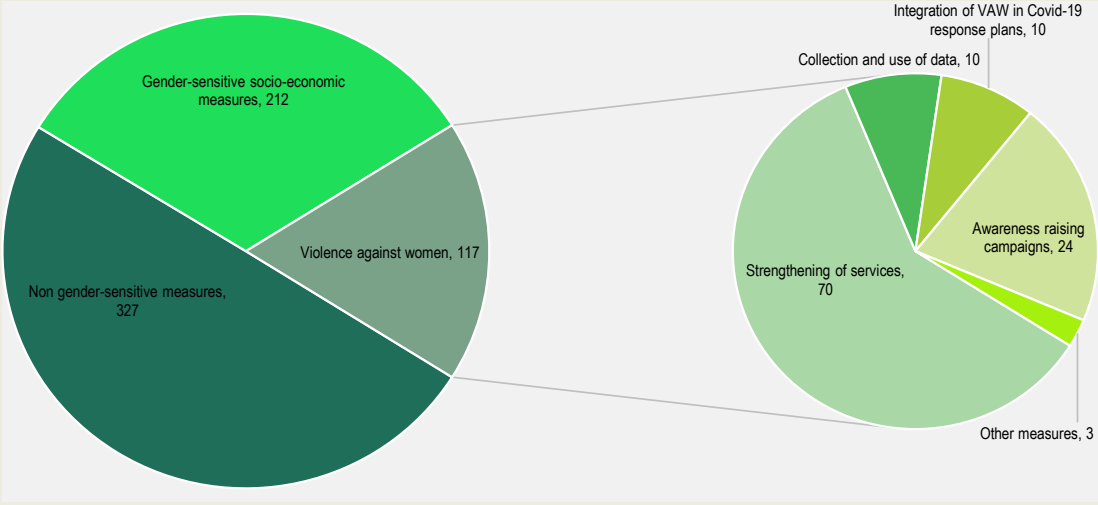
The COVID-19 crisis will considerably exacerbate the cost of discriminatory social institutions across African countries. The global economy has been severely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, and the African region, which is easily affected by external shocks, will experience its first recession in 25 years. Projections by the African Union and the OECD Development Centre indicate a 2.1% to 4.9% drop in GDP (AUC/OECD, 2021[24]). Moreover, the severe impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have already pushed nearly 40 million Africans into extreme poverty (World Bank Group, 2021[25]). The most significant consequences for African economies have been lower levels of productivity, more restricted use of capital and a substantial increase in trade costs. Coupled with this costs are the effects on educational attainment and health, which could curtail the ability of the young generation to earn incomes and improve their well-being. Furthermore, the COVID-19 crisis has significantly disrupted the allocation of available funds to critical nutrition, health and education services, with diverse effects on women and girls (AUC/OECD, 2021[24]) (see Box 1.1).

Box 1.1. Impact of COVID-19 on gender equality and women's empowerment in Africa

As the COVID-19 virus continues to spread across African countries and governments enforce rigid lockdown measures, it has become apparent that African women bear the brunt of the pandemic's devastating impacts. This is despite the fact that, on average, more African men than women contracted and died from the virus. Moreover, even though the disease does not discriminate between women and men, the various policy measures implemented in response to the COVID-19 crisis are generally discriminatory (UN Women, 2020[26]). At the regional level, only 39% of current measures aimed at addressing the socio-economic effects of the crisis on the most vulnerable, and in particular women, include a gender lens (Figure 1.9).

Figure 1.9. Policy measures aimed at tackling the socio-economic consequences of the COVID-19 crisis lack a gender lens

Number of policy measures implemented in Africa in response to the COVID-19 crisis by gender sensitiveness



Note: Gender-sensitive socio-economic measures look at a broad range of social protection, labour market, economic and fiscal measures taken in response to COVID-19 and identified as gender-sensitive. Social protection and labour market measures are defined as gender-sensitive if they target women's economic security or address unpaid care. Fiscal and economic measures are defined as gender-sensitive if they provide support to female-dominated sectors of the economy, on the assumption that this is likely to protect women's employment and thereby their economic security.
Source: (UNDP, n.d.[27]) Covid-19 Global Gender Response Tracker, https://data.undp.org/gendertracker.

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Women are at greater risk of losing their jobs in a context of more widespread informality

Recent evidence shows that the economic consequences of the COVID-19 crisis are disproportionally affecting women (UNHR; African Union, 2020[28]). In Africa, nine out of ten women workers are engaged in the informal economy (ILO, 2018[29]), many of whom work as street vendors and domestic workers. African women are also overrepresented in the retail, food and accommodation, and tourism sectors, which are characterised by low pay and limited job security. Moreover, African women make up the majority of the agricultural sector (ILO, n.d.[30]). These economic sectors have been considerably affected by COVID-19 mitigation measures, such as border and business shutdowns and international

travel restrictions. These dynamics will have long-term consequences for women's economic and social empowerment, and could contribute to exacerbating women's vulnerability. A recent study undertaken in Ethiopia, Malawi, Mozambique and South Africa reveals that nearly 60% of women in these countries have lost or seen a decrease in their incomes due to the COVID-19 pandemic (UN Women and UNFPA, 2021[4]).

Furthermore, the saturation of healthcare system capacities, coupled with the implementation of partial or full lockdowns in at least 42 countries on the continent (AUC/OECD, 2021[24]), and the reduced functioning of critical services such as schools or day-care centres, has increased the burden of unpaid care and domestic work that falls on African women. Such increase has heightened gender inequalities that existed prior to the pandemic. Rapid gender assessments conducted by UN Women in several countries of East and Southern Africa show that a great number of women than men reported spending more time on unpaid care and domestic work compared to the situation prior to the pandemic (UN Women and UNFPA, 2021[4]).

The COVID-19 crisis has produced a surge in gender-based violence in African countries

Documented research shows that mitigation measures and responses to the COVID-19 crisis have led to increased rates of intimate partner violence and sexual harassment in the public sphere (UNHR; African Union, 2020[28]). Across many African countries, a substantial number of women living in quarantine are trapped in their homes with their abusers. Many of these women lack access to information on how to seek support and be confined separately from their violent partners. In addition, cases of targeted violence against nurses, many of whom are considered a potential source of infection, are currently not being recorded by any country. Recent evidence from six Sahel countries[11] shows a 12-percentage point increase in reported domestic violence cases due to confinement measures where women are isolated at home without access to people and resources that could help them. Additionally, evidence from East Africa, indicates a 48% increase in reported gender-based violence cases (UN Women and UNFPA, 2021[4]).

Refugee and displaced women and girls will face additional challenges as available funds and human resources are redirected in response to the COVID crisis

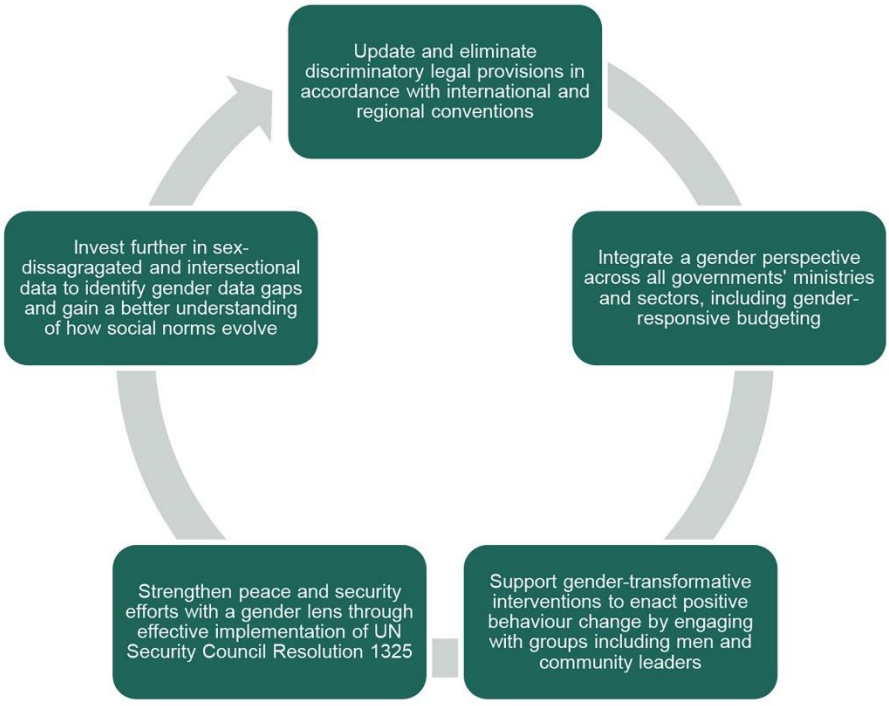
Africa has over 23 million refugees and approximately 12.5 million internally displaced persons from conflict settings. As of March 2020, women accounted for half of Africa's internally displaced persons (UN Women and UNFPA, 2021[4]). Difficult living conditions, restricted or no livelihood options, and reliance on humanitarian assistance for survival makes this population particularly vulnerable to the spread of the COVID-19 virus. Within this context, displaced women have less access to health services and comprehensive information, and are more likely to experience sexual violence. In addition, the redirection of funds to emergency response and restrictions on the freedom of humanitarian workers can result in a lack of qualified women aid workers in refugee camps and humanitarian settings, putting women's and girls' well-being at further risk. Humanitarian crises and precautionary efforts to control the spread of COVID-19 are most likely to increase gender-based violence by relatives or intimate partners, as well as harmful practices against girls such as child and/or forced marriage, unwanted pregnancies and FGM (Plan International, 2020[31]).

A Roadmap for Action: Paving the way towards gender equality in African countries

Despite significant progress made across various fronts in the majority of African countries, gender equality remains a distant goal. To address current gender gaps and inequalities, policy makers, development practitioners, the private sector, civil society organisations, academia, youth groups, and religious and local

leaders should reinforce efforts to harness the potential of women and girls. In 2020, the COVID-19 crisis upended the livelihood of millions of Africans, and its social and economic consequences threaten to reverse decades of progress made on gender equality and women's empowerment. Addressing discriminatory social institutions in a holistic approach is paramount to reinforcing and achieving the ambitious 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063. This section outlines the main policy recommendations and develops them across five potential pathways to fully integrate gender equality into the broader development strategies of African governments (Figure 1.10).

Figure 1.10. Five potential pathways to enhance gender equality and women's empowerment in Africa



Update and eliminate discriminatory legal provisions in accordance with international and regional conventions

The national legal frameworks of some African countries have integrated gender-related international, regional and sub-regional legal instruments. As of September 2021, 42 African countries have ratified and deposited the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (the "Maputo Protocol"). Over the last decade, some African countries have undertaken various legal reforms, including the enactment of new constitutions, constitutional amendments, changes to existing regulations, and the adoption of new acts and bills to address gender issues on various dimensions related to women's empowerment (see Chapter 2). However, implementation remains a challenge due to the co-existence of discriminatory legal frameworks, legal loopholes, and plural legal systems where discriminatory, customary and religious informal laws tend to prevail over the civil law compromise *de jure* and *de facto* equality (see Chapter 2).

African governments should therefore ensure that their national legislation is aligned and harmonised with international, regional and sub-regional conventions and instruments, and amend existing laws to eliminate

discriminatory legal frameworks. This alignment and harmonisation with commitments at different levels will produce an enabling environment that encourages women and girls to exercise and claim their rights. For instance, African governments should close legal loopholes that permit harmful practices against women and girls, such as child marriage and FGM, and remove discriminatory provisions concerning women's workplace rights, inheritance, land and citizenship rights. Legislation on violence against women should be reinforced by protecting women from all forms of gender-based violence. In addition, governments should strengthen enforcement measures to reconcile any gaps or contradictions between statutory and customary, traditional and religious laws.

In particular, policy makers in Africa should focus on laws covered by the following SIGI indicators:

- **Child marriage**. African countries should establish 18 years as the minimum legal age for marriage for girls and boys, without any legal exceptions. For instance, in Côte d'Ivoire, Law No. 2019-570 of 26 June 2019 stipulates the legal age of marriage at 18 years for both men and women (Government of Côte d'Ivoire, 2019[32]).
- **Inheritance**. African governments should strengthen their efforts to close loopholes in national legislation by establishing the supremacy of civil law over customary, religious and traditional laws that discriminate against women's and girls' rights to inheritance. Countries should also repeal discriminatory laws that do not allow a widow to maintain her inheritance rights over her dead husband's property if she re-marries.
- **Violence against women.** Policy makers should incorporate a comprehensive approach by ensuring that women are protected from all forms of violence, including sexual harassment, domestic violence, rape (including marital rape) and honour crimes, regardless of location. In 2019, Liberia's Domestic Violence Bill became law and criminalises domestic violence, which comprises physical, mental and sexual abuse, neglect and exploitation (Government of Liberia, 2019[33]).
- **Female genital mutilation**. African countries should recognise FGM as a harmful practice and abide by related international, regional and sub-regional commitments. African countries in which some communities perform, tolerate and encourage FGM should enact legislation to criminalise the practice and establish penalties for all perpetrators, including parents and medical practitioners. In addition, governments should add an extraterritorial jurisdiction clause extending penalties to citizens who commit the crime outside of the country. For example, Kenya adopted a law penalising citizens who practice FGM, even beyond its borders (Government of Kenya, 2011[34]).
- **Workplace rights**. Policy makers should remove discriminatory legal provisions affecting women's equal access to employment. For instance, lists of banned professions for non-pregnant and non-nursing women should be eliminated.
- **Citizenship rights**. African governments should grant women the same rights as men to acquire, change and retain their nationalities, irrespective of their marital status or group of origin, and to transfer their nationality to their children or their non-citizen spouse.

Integrate a gender perspective across all governments' ministries and sectors, including gender-responsive budgeting

Gender equality and women's empowerment should be set as a national priority

Gender equality should be considered a cross-cutting issue and mainstreamed into the formulation, planning and implementation of national development agendas, plans and strategies across all line Ministries and areas. In the African context, Article 2(c) of the Maputo Protocol mandates African Member countries to "integrate a gender perspective in their policy decisions, legislation, development plans, programmes and activities and all other spheres of life" (African Union, 2003[35]). Regardless of policy objectives, if women and girls do not benefit in the same way as men and boys from the implementation of policies and programmes, Africa's overall social and economic progress will not reach its potential.

- African governments should ensure that all policies and programmes aim to achieve equal results for both women and men. Gender equality should not be considered a distinct category or sector but rather a fundamental element of any national policy priority, whether concerning the national economy, the environment, employment, natural resources or social services. For instance, the 2009 Gender Policy of the African Union establishes eight priority areas. Half of these areas relate closely to enhancing gender mainstreaming efforts in all sectors and at all levels (African Union, 2018[36]).
- African governments should ensure that women's rights are incorporated effectively into national development plans and strategies, not only at the assessment or analysis level but across the full extent of the implementation framework.

Building a multi-level, multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral approach will reduce inequalities in women's and girls' access to education, health and employment in Africa

Each structure, branch and ministry of African governments must be responsible and accountable for women's rights and gender issues within the range of its mandate. Building such a multi-level and multi-sectoral approach is a prerequisite to reduce inequalities in women's access to education, health and employment in Africa. Women's inequalities and disparities are multidimensional and often affected by a range of interconnected social, environmental and economic factors. A multi-sectoral approach offers an opportunity to tackle these issues through collaboration across multiple policy areas (health, education, social, economic) and different sectors (public, private) with the involvement of local and religious leaders (UNDP, 2016[9]). A multi-level and multi-sectoral approach offers governments in Africa the potential to leverage diverse resources, knowledge, reach and expertise.

- African governments should establish a clear division of responsibilities at the technical as well as the managerial level, encompassing planning, resource allocation, implementation, monitoring, evaluation, reporting and dissemination. This division of responsibilities should be adapted to national, central or local government bodies and co-ordinated with other stakeholders. For instance, the Ministry of Labour should work with actors such as trade unions and employers' associations to strengthen gender equality in the working environment. In addition, the Ministry should co-ordinate actions and proposals with the Ministry of Justice to guarantee that women's workplace rights are legislated and adequately enforced. Some issues related to women's rights may therefore fall under the scope of different ministries and stakeholders.

More investment in capacity-building programmes will help mainstream gender equality

Technical expertise is crucial to mainstream gender equality and promote women's empowerment. As gender equality and human rights do not form an integral part of university educational programmes in the majority of African countries, government officials may not be trained, or have the necessary technical skills to incorporate and implement the guidelines established in the Maputo Protocol or the CEDAW recommendations into their line of work (see Chapter 2 and Annex A for more details).

- The national co-ordinating body on gender equality and/or women's rights should establish a technical group of individuals or structures able to provide support on women's rights and capacity development, research and policy advice to line ministries and government bodies. This technical advisory group should be in constant communication with focal points in charge of mainstreaming gender or incorporating a gender perspective into line ministries and the co-ordinating mechanism. The needs and objectives of the different ministries and government structures must be assessed to develop a comprehensive capacity-building plan or strategy with clear roles and responsibilities. For instance, all African countries have national machineries in place for gender equality, 38 countries have established gender co-ordinating units within line ministries and five countries have set up independent gender commissions (African Union, 2018[36]).

Gender-responsive budgeting ensures consideration of women's rights

Many African countries adopt national development strategies or plans that reflect government objectives and measures for the medium and, in some cases, the long term. National budgets are often aligned with the national priorities established in these broader development strategies. National commitments towards enhancing gender equality and improving women's conditions and rights should therefore be incorporated into national budget lines, expenditure frameworks and the annual budget from the outset. National commitments to gender equality and women's empowerment across all expenditure categories should be monitored to establish necessary expenditure allocations and to determine the desired results. In Africa, Article 19 of the Maputo Protocol mandates Members States to "provide adequate budgetary and other resources for the implementation and monitoring of actions aimed at preventing and eradicating violence against women" (Box 1.2).

Box 1.2. Gender budgeting in African countries

Sub-Saharan African countries were among the first group of countries in the world to adopt gender budgeting, defined as the use of fiscal policy and management to improve the status of women and girls, with a view to achieving gender equality (IMF, 2016[37]). On average, gender ministries or divisions receive 1% of national budgets across African countries (African Union, 2018[36]). In 1996, South Africa was the first country in sub-Saharan Africa to implement gender-responsive budgeting and initiatives; they were followed by Tanzania and Uganda, and subsequently other countries in the sub-region (IMF, 2016[37]). In 2009, 20% of African countries were implementing gender-sensitive budgeting driven either by civil society organisations or government agencies. in 2014, the 9th African Regional Conference on Women recommended and endorsed the use of gender-responsive budgeting (UNDP, 2016[9]). In the same year, the African Union endorsed the Addis Ababa Declaration, which calls upon all member countries to adopt gender-sensitive planning and budgeting schemes (UNECA, 2015[38]).

The following framework could be used to strengthen government efforts to adopt and implement gender responsive budgets across ministries (Diop, 2004[39]):

1. Analyse the situation of women and men, girls and boys in the sector (e.g. agriculture, trade, energy, water, etc.) using data disaggregated by sex, geographical area, level of education and ethnicity, and taking into account other socio-economic characteristics.
2. Provide a comprehensive assessment of sectoral strategies, programmes and measures in terms of gender sensitivity.
3. Evaluate whether sufficient financial and other resources are earmarked for gender-sensitive policies and measures.
4. Monitor whether the expenditure set aside is spent as planned.
5. Review whether the policy and corresponding expenditure has promoted gender equity and transformed the situation of the target group.

The adoption of a gender-sensitive budget allows African governments to i) strengthen transparency mechanisms by specifying the intended beneficiaries of financial resources, ii) enhance attention to women's needs by disaggregating how expenses are distributed among women and men, iii) guarantee that public spending does not exacerbate existing gender inequalities, and iv) allocate the necessary resources to programmes addressing previously identified gender gaps (Florence and Awori, 2010[40]). For instance, In 2010, the African Union Member States created the Fund for African Women, allocating at least 0.5% of the African Union's budget to funding initiatives related to women's empowerment. The fund provided resources for 105 projects up to 2017 (African Union, 2018[36]).

Support gender-transformative interventions to enact positive behaviour change by engaging with groups including men and boys and community leaders

Gender equality and women's empowerment increasingly form part of mainstream policy across African countries. However, without dynamic and vigorous engagement with civil society organisations, men and boys, feminist groups, youth groups and other community leaders, legislation promoting gender equality will exist in a vacuum with restricted impact. Men and boys play an important role in changing social norms, particularly attitudes towards gender-based violence and harmful practices against women and girls. Women and girls have also been identified as critical agents of change and should not be considered solely as "victims of the patriarchal system". In some cases, women are also perpetrators and vectors of discrimination, as has been well documented (OECD Development Centre, 2018[21]).

- African governments should establish and fund transformative interventions and programmes targeting widespread female acceptance and intergenerational transmission of discriminatory attitudes and practices that represent key obstacles to gender equality.

Customary chiefs and religious and local leaders play a pivotal role in eradicating harmful practices and discriminatory attitudes towards women and girls. Religious and local leaders have broad access to all members of the community and guide behaviours and attitudes towards women and girls that are deemed acceptable at the community level.

- National and local government structures should offer training to religious and community leaders to raise awareness and promote the elimination of child marriage, violence against women and FGM. Religious and community leaders can also act as powerful agents of change by providing and relaying adequate guidance on sexual and reproductive health to children and adolescent girls and boys. For instance, in West Africa, some religious leaders have been vocal and endorsed community efforts to end violence against women and girls (Girls not Brides, 2019[41]).

Furthermore, awareness-raising and targeted campaigns are essential to prevent, reduce and end gender-based violence. African governments have strengthened efforts in this area. For example:

- Namibia implemented a nationwide campaign in 2015 to influence harmful social norms concerning gender-based violence. Entitled "Love Is", the campaign commissioned a series of radio dramas targeting key areas such as intimate-partner violence, rape and mental illness (Government of Namibia, 2019[42]).
- The Ministry of Labour of Lesotho hosts annual awareness-raising campaigns aimed at sensitising workers on issues related to sexual harassment in the workplace (Government of Lesotho, 2019[43]).
- In 2014, South Africa launched the social media campaign #CountMeIn aimed at promoting collective responsibility and engaging various actors such as community and religious leaders to eradicate violence against women and children (Government of South Africa, 2019[44]).

Strengthen peace and security efforts with a gender lens through effective implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325

United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 addresses the disproportionate and unique impact of armed conflict on women, and thereby functions as a key instrument to advance the women, peace and security agenda. UNSCR 1325 emphasises the crucial role that women play in peace and security and calls for their equal participation in such processes, as well as the inclusion of a gender perspective in all areas of peacebuilding (United Nations Security Council, 2000[45]). Following the adoption of UNSCR 1325, countries have been encouraged to develop national strategies to implement the resolution. These strategies take the form of National Action Plans, which outline the policies and resources put in place to meet the objectives of the resolution. Although over half of African governments have

produced a National Action Plan to implement UNSCR 1325[12] and its subsequent resolutions, more progress is needed to advance the women, peace and security agenda across the continent. Beyond adoption of the resolution, countries with a National Action Plan designating actions to implement UNSCR 1325 should focus on the following three axes to ensure women and girls are central to peace and security issues.

Ensure that sufficient financial resources are allocated to national action plans for the implementation of UNSCR 1325

National action plans represent the first step in the implementation of UNSCR 1325. However, even at the global level, only 41% of Member States have adopted a National Action Plan, and only 22% of all plans included a budget for implementation at the time of adoption (United Nations Security Council, 2019[46]). Some governments are taking steps in this direction:

- Angola adopted its first National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 in 2017 for the period 2017-20. The plan includes gender-responsive budgeting as one of its six objectives. Each objective has a corresponding action with an allocated budget (Peacewomen, n.d.[47]).
- Liberia's second phase National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 for the period 2019-23 is aligned with the National Gender Policy (2018-22) in terms of gender-responsive budgeting, and aims to increase "coordination, implementation, reporting and accountability" (Government of Liberia, 2019[48]).

Incorporate a gender perspective in post-conflict peace and reconstruction processes

Gender equality is strongly correlated with human development and peaceful societies, and in this context is also closely linked with fragile contexts. It is therefore important to incorporate a gender perspective and analysis in fragile contexts to prevent conflict from occurring. The OECD's fragility framework integrates gender across its dimensions and emphasises the significant role that persistent gender inequalities play in perpetuating fragility and impeding progress towards the SDGs (Loudon, Goemans and Koester, 2021[49]). In cases where conflict has occurred, however, policy makers need to ensure that a gender perspective is reflected in peace agreements. Furthermore, women and girls need to be empowered to participate meaningfully in the peace-building and reconstruction process of their countries.

Across Africa, only 174 out of the 611 peace agreements concluded since 1990 incorporate issues related to women, girls and gender (Bell et al., 2021[50]). However, the key role of women in conflict-affected countries is well documented. For example, during the civil war in Rwanda, women not only assumed non-traditional roles in the absence of men by becoming the sole family provider, but also organised themselves into groups to address their immediate needs. Following the 1994 war and genocide, women's civil society organisations provided critical services to assist survivors and took part in negotiating peace in their communities. Women were also at the heart of the process that led the government to put in place structures favouring gender equality and long-lasting peace (Murungi, 2014[51]). There are numerous other examples of women's engagement, such as in Somalia, where women organised peace rallies and used radio to educate the public about their roles in spreading peace; or in Uganda, where women not only became peace mediators, dissuading or preventing family members from participating in the war, but also participated with NGOs in psycho-social programmes catering for people who were victims of rape or severely wounded during the war (Peacewomen, 2012[52]). Governments should therefore ensure that women are included both in informal and formal decision-making in regard to conflict prevention, peacebuilding and reconstruction, and increase their representation as mediators and peace negotiators.

- The Revitalized Agreement for the Resolution of Conflict in South Sudan provides evidence that when women are active contributors in peace processes, agreements are more likely to focus on women's and girls' needs and concerns. Women at the negotiations pushed for 35% of female

representation in the Executive and called for several provisions protecting women from gender-based violence (Oxfam, 2020[53]).

Engage with civil society and women's organisations and networks at national and local levels

Governments play a fundamental role in driving national action plans, ensuring their outcomes are consistent with national security priorities, dedicating necessary resources to support their implementation, and co-ordinating monitoring and evaluation. However, a wide range of actors can also contribute to successful implementation efforts. Governments should engage with civil society organisations and leaders, in particular women, to ensure their meaningful input into the design of national action plans, and make them key partners in implementation activities. Policy makers should therefore ensure that mechanisms are in place to enable proactive consultation with civil society organisations on the development of national action plans, and provide them with clear responsibilities to facilitate implementation.

- For example, South Africa's first National Action Plan 2020-2025 establishes "participation" as its first pillar, the first priority of which is to "develop, implement and address gender-sensitive laws, policies and strategies" through ensuring the "effective participation of civil society". The second priority is to "ensure meaningful participation of women in peace processes, structures and institutions" includes "community-level participation" (Peacewomen, n.d.[54]).
- Mali's most recent National Action Plan for 2019-2023 offers another good example as it places women front and centre in peacebuilding and reconciliation processes, as well as in post-conflict governance. The National Action Plan was developed in consultation with civil society and recognises its essential role, including representatives in an ongoing dialogue known as a "Community of Practice". In addition, the plans supports the efforts of women's rights organisations and movements throughout the country to implement innovative actions. The plan also emphasises decentralisation with a view to ensuring implementation at regional and local levels, empowering and encouraging women at all levels to participate in peacebuilding (Peacewomen, n.d.[55]).
- Efforts of local women peace-builders and human rights defenders should also be scaled up through technical, financial and political support for those working on the frontlines to prevent and resolve conflicts, as is the case recently in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mali and South Sudan, for example (United Nations Security Council, 2019[46]).

Invest further in sex-disaggregated and intersectional data to identify gender data gaps and gain a better understanding of how social norms evolve

The African Union has acknowledged the importance of using harmonised and reliable data in all domains of political, social, economic and cultural activity. In 2009, the African Union adopted the African Charter on Statistics and developed the Strategy for the Harmonization of Statistics in Africa in association with development partners. One of the objectives of this strategy is to disaggregate available data according to different categories of the population including by gender, poverty, ethnic group, region, discriminated population and others (African Union, Afdb, ECA, 2009[56]). In 2015, the indicator and target framework of the SDGs called governments and national statistical systems to collect disaggregated data that can support decision makers and development practitioners in measuring and tracking progress towards the goals. This effort is underpinned by the promise of the 2030 Agenda to "leave no one behind", a concept that has reintroduced a focus on systematically underprivileged individuals and has expanded the frontiers of global prospects regarding what data can and should be able to reveal about the lives of women and girls. The AU Strategy for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment 2018-2028 also highlights the importance of sex-disaggregated data for their results framework and for undertaking a gender budget audit of AU expenditure, while also acknowledging the difficulty of accessing such data across countries.

The strategy also highlights the fact that sex-disaggregated data are not always analysed and used to improve gender policies (African Union, 2018[36]).

Indeed, significant gaps remain in the collection, monitoring, analysis and dissemination of sex-disaggregated data across African countries. Issues of limited or missing data are not unique to gender-related issues, but constitute a pervasive problem affecting a wide range of economic and social statistics in the region. Limited financial and human resources and a lack of institutional capacity have been and possibly will continue to be a significant challenge for national statistical offices and systems in African countries. To address the root causes of gender inequality as well as gender gaps in employment, education and health, African governments should focus on the following three areas.

Overcome current gender data gaps

National and international statistical offices, international organisations and specialised government agencies, as well as the donor community promoting statistical development, should work in tandem to strengthen the quality of existing gender statistics and prioritise the collection and dissemination of new indicators to close data gaps.

- For instance, in 2019, the African Centre for Statistics at the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, in collaboration with Data2X and Open Data Watch, established the Africa Gender Data Network to develop the production and use of gender data and statistics within African national statistics systems. The Network promotes gender data knowledge, enables cross-country education and exchanges, facilitates capacity building and training of government officials and technical experts, and provides a platform for participants to raise issues (Open Data Watch, 2020[57]).
- In addition, with the support of the World Bank and PARIS 21, Senegal put in place its third National Strategy for the Development of Statistics 2019-23. The Strategy aims to increase the production and dissemination of sex-disaggregated data at all levels (PARIS 21, 2020[58])

Develop more sophisticated data disaggregation strategies

Disaggregated data by detailed sub-categories provides a better overview of multiple forms of discrimination, experiences and outcomes for both women and men. African countries should prioritise the type of disaggregation (e.g. by sex, age, disability, etc.) that responds best to their national needs and development objectives. For instance, national household surveys could be improved by incorporating disaggregation into the data collection process.

Collect and produce more leading and core indicators and conduct surveys across regular periods

African countries should further invest in the capacity building of national statistical systems and undertake mid-course adjustments of their national household health and well-being surveys. For instance, producing some indicators once will not be sufficient to be able to track progress over time. Countries should adopt regular data production cycles of labour force surveys, further invest in regular time-use surveys and income or expenditure as well as multi-topic household surveys

- For example, Senegal has established a firm foundation for its principal gender data system. Between 2015-19, Senegal has achieved or has surpassed the recommended occurrence of national surveys, conducting four health and wellbeing surveys, five labour force surveys, two agricultural surveys or censuses, finalised its preceding census in 2013 and foresees to complete the 2020 round of population and housing censuses in 2023 (Open Data Watch, 2020[57]).

Notes

[1] The countries are Algeria, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Morocco, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Tunisia, Uganda, Tanzania and Zimbabwe.

[2] Burundi does not have a score in this dimension because there are no laws regulating inheritance rights, matrimonial regimes and gifts in Burundi.

[3] South Asia is home to the largest number of child brides around the world with approximately 285 million child brides.

[4] The countries are Algeria, Burundi, Cameroon, Chad, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Egypt, Gabon, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Libya, Madagascar, Mali, Morocco, Niger, Republic of the Congo, Seychelles, South Sudan, Togo and the United Republic of Tanzania.

[5] The countries are Central African Republic, Comoros, Equatorial Guinea, Gambia, Guinea, Mauritania, Senegal, Somalia, Sudan and Tunisia.

[6] All procedures involving partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or other injuries to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons

[7] The countries are Angola, Cabo Verde, Central African Republic, Ghana, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe, South Africa, Togo, Tunisia and Zimbabwe.

[8] The countries are Armenia, Azerbaijan, China and India

[9] This Indicator is based on the survey question: "Do you feel safe walking alone at night in the city or area where you live?", and the data shown here reflect the percentage of women among all the respondents who replied "yes". Data are sourced from the Gallup World Poll, which samples around 1 000 people per country, per year. The sample is ex ante designed to be nationally representative of the population aged 15 and over.

[10] The countries are Benin, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Ghana, Malawi, Mozambique, Nigeria, South Africa, Togo and Uganda.

[11] The countries are Chad, Senegal, Mali, Burkina Faso, Mauritania and Niger. The reported increase describes a rise from 40.6% prior to the pandemic to 52% during the pandemic.

[12] Across Africa, 29 of the 54 countries have ratified at least one National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325.

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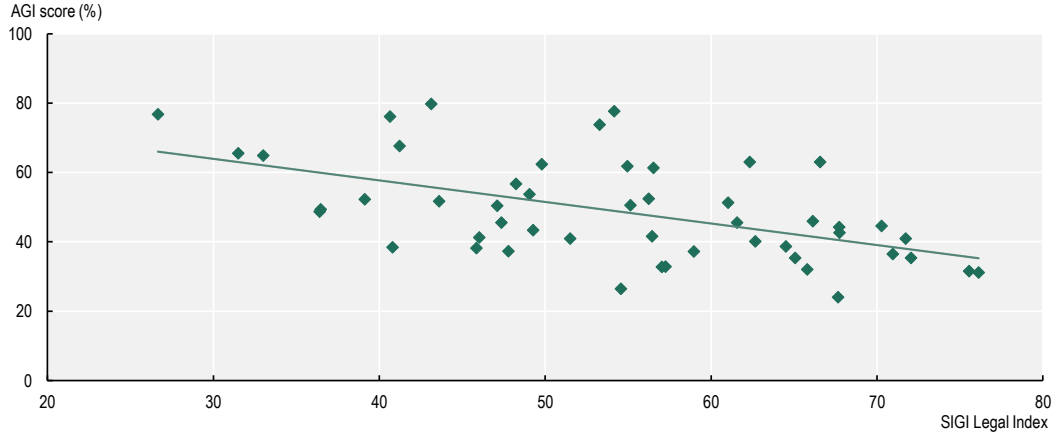
2 Legal frameworks in the African region

This chapter presents an overview of the legal landscape in Africa regarding women's rights in areas covered by the Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI). It begins with a description of existing international and regional legal instruments designed to promote gender equality and women's empowerment. Through cluster analysis, the chapter highlights similarities among different national legal frameworks. It concludes by discussing legal frameworks governing workplace rights, violence against women, female genital mutilation and child marriage, as well as political voice and access to financial services. For each of these themes, the chapter highlights relevant reforms and common elements of legal frameworks governing these issues on the African continent. Finally, the chapter offers recommendations for countries to strengthen legal frameworks in order to guarantee women and girls equal rights with men and boys.

Legal frameworks can either support or hinder gender equality and women's empowerment. By incorporating gender equality within formal laws, countries support women's economic empowerment, political voice and widen their opportunities for development overall. Conversely, discriminatory laws promote the subordination of women and girls and support attitudes and harmful practices that limit their opportunities and potential. Discrimination in legal frameworks contributes significantly to persistent gender gaps in women's economic, social and political empowerment. In fact, high levels of discrimination in legal frameworks are positively correlated with wider gender gaps across the three dimensions – economic, social, and empowerment and representation – measured by the Africa Gender Index (AGI) (African Development Bank Group, 2020[1]) (Figure 2.1). However, supportive legal frameworks alone are not sufficient to ensure substantive gender equality and must be fully implemented and accompanied by concerted policy action in order to be truly transformative.

Figure 2.1. Legal frameworks have a negative impact on women's outcomes relative to those of men

Correlation between the SIGI Legal Index (legal frameworks) and AGI scores (outcomes)



Note: The figure presents the estimated level of gender inequality in outcomes as measured by the AGI, and the level of gender-based discrimination in legal frameworks as measured by the SIGI legal index. Higher AGI scores indicate greater levels of parity in outcomes. An AGI score between 0% and 100% indicates gender inequality in favour of men, while a score of 100% represents parity between men and women. SIGI Legal Index scores range from 0 to 100, with 0 indicating no discrimination and 100 indicating absolute discrimination in legal frameworks.
Source: Authors' own calculations; (AfDB, UNECA, 2020[2]), Africa Gender Index.

StatLink https://doi.org/10.1787/888934287376

This chapter commences with an overview of certain pre-eminent international, regional and sub-regional legal instruments that establish standards for women's rights. This is followed by an assessment of forms of discrimination against women which are embedded in the laws of African countries. Here, cluster analysis is used to group countries based on similarities in their legal frameworks, as measured by the Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI). The final part of the chapter is split into four thematic sections that examine legal reforms and existing gaps across six of the SIGI's 16 indicators: "Workplace rights", "Violence against women", "Female genital mutilation", "Child marriage", "Political voice" and "Access to financial services". These four thematic sections capture areas where significant action is required and also identify areas where legislation adequately protects women's rights.

Overview of international, regional and sub-regional agreements and legal instruments

National governments throughout Africa have signed and ratified international, regional and sub-regional agreements and instruments that aim to promote women's empowerment and gender equality. In some cases, countries have incorporated the standards and goals set forth in these commitments into national legal frameworks, policies and other measures; however, in others, this has yet to take place. Even where national laws have yet to align fully with these agreements, the standards set forth have served as an important tool in the advocacy efforts of civil society organisations working to promote women's and girl's rights on the continent. This section outlines some of the pre-eminent international, regional and sub-regional agreements and legal instruments that exist to promote women's empowerment and gender equality around the globe and in Africa specifically.

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) (1979)[1] is one of the foremost international instruments on women's rights and gender equality. Exclusively devoted to gender equality, CEDAW defines sex-based discrimination and its root causes, outlines legal obligations for States parties in regard to the fulfilment of substantive equality between women and men, and provides a framework for monitoring its implementation by the CEDAW Committee. In addition to CEDAW, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) form the basis of a global agenda for women's empowerment. The Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA) highlights 12 areas for urgent action to promote women's empowerment including women and health, violence against women, women and the economy, women in power and decision making, and more. Every five years, the Commission on the Status of Women reviews implementation of the BPfA. Finally, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (2016), specifically SDG 5: "Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls", includes targets to eliminate discrimination and harmful practices, and promote gender equality and women's empowerment by 2030, among others.

On the continent, the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa ("The Maputo Protocol") (2003),[2] outlines a range of women's rights including economic, social, civil and political as well as cultural and environmental rights. The Maputo Protocol was devised to complement and strengthen the commitments to women's rights made in the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights ("The Banjul Charter") (1981). Article 18 of the Banjul Charter specifically calls on states to eliminate discrimination against women and to protect women's rights in alignment with international declarations and conventions.

Within Africa's sub-regions, multiple instruments address women's empowerment and gender equality. Both the Southern African Development Community's (SADC) Gender Protocol (2008)[3] and the East African Community Gender Equality and Development Bill (2016)[4] are harmonised with international and regional agreements that aim to enhance planning, implementation and monitoring to support the elimination of discrimination, the empowerment of women and the achievement of gender equality in the respective sub-regions. The Economic Community of West Africa States (ECOWAS) Treaty (1975, revised in 1993)[5] includes a dedicated article on Women and Development (Article 66), which calls on states to address constraints and promote "the enhancement of the economic, social and cultural conditions of women". Moreover, the Supplementary Act relating to Equality of Rights between Women and Men for Sustainable Development in the ECOWAS Region (2015) was adopted to strengthen the harmonisation of national legislation with international standards on women's rights. As yet, there are no similar sub-regional legal instruments in the Central and North Africa sub-regions.

Current status of legal frameworks in Africa

On the African continent, as well as at the sub-regional level, the SIGI reveals significant variation among national legal frameworks. It is however possible to group African countries based on the similarity of their legal frameworks using the SIGI Legal Index, an aggregation of the SIGI's legal variables (Box 2.1). These clusters, or groupings, permit analyses of the strengths and weaknesses in African countries' legal frameworks in terms of gender-based discrimination. This section presents the SIGI Legal Index, the findings of cluster analysis undertaken using the Legal Index including specific information on the individual character of the legal frameworks in each cluster, and a detailed analysis of legal frameworks linked to six of the SIGI's indicators. The six indicators profiled include four – "Workplace rights", "Violence against women", "Female genital mutilation" and "Child marriage" – in which the legal frameworks of African countries need strengthening as a matter of urgency to guarantee women's and girl's equal rights; and two indicators – "Political voice" and "Access to financial services" – in which legal frameworks and reforms have established a strong basis for equality.

Box 2.1. The construction of the SIGI Legal Index

The SIGI Legal Index is created by aggregating one of the three types of variables that make up the SIGI legal variables, while excluding the others pertaining to attitudes and practices. The SIGI's legal variables evaluate the level of discrimination in countries' formal and informal[6] legal frameworks across 15 of the SIGI's 16 indicators.[7] Using a clustering technique, countries' scores on the Legal Index at the dimension level are used to create groupings of countries with similar scores, which indicate similarities regarding their legal frameworks. The result of the analysis points to four distinct clusters of countries, each with specific characteristics.

Each of the four clusters of countries identified by the SIGI Legal Index reveals distinct patterns in their scores across the four SIGI dimensions, with some similarities among the clusters. Each cluster presents a high score in the "Restricted access to productive and financial resources" dimension relative to the other dimensions' scores. This demonstrates that the legal frameworks governing access to resources, such as land, non-land assets, workplace rights and access to finance, are of particular importance for all countries of the region. Similarly, all of the clusters show relatively high scores in the "Discrimination in the family" dimension, which implies that laws on child marriage, divorce, inheritance and household responsibilities merit deeper investigation. Performance of the clusters is mixed in the "Restricted civil liberties" and "Restricted physical integrity" dimensions, with some clusters performing relatively well, while others present high levels of discrimination (Table 2.1).

Table 2.1. Scores in the legal index by clusters and SIGI dimensions

Clusters	Discrimination in the family	Restricted physical integrity	Restricted access to productive and financial resources	Restricted civil liberties
Cluster 1 Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Central African Republic, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique, Namibia, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, South Africa and Zimbabwe	Medium (46)	Medium (38)	Medium (49)	Medium (28)
Cluster 2 Liberia, Libya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Nigeria, Seychelles and Zambia	High (52)	Medium (42)	High (73)	High (56)

Cluster 3 Angola, Cameroon, Chad, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Eswatini, Gabon, Guinea-Bissau, Lesotho, Mali, Niger, Sierra Leone, South Sudan and Uganda	High (60)	High (71)	High (71)	Medium (31)
Cluster 4 Algeria, Burundi, Comoros, Egypt, The Gambia, Guinea, Mauritania, Morocco, Somalia, Sudan, Togo, Tunisia and Tanzania	Very high (85)	High (54)	High (64)	High (58)

Source: (OECD Development Centre/OECD, 2019[3]), Gender, Institutions and Development Database (GID-DB), https://doi.org/10.1787/ba5dbd30-en.

StatLink https://doi.org/10.1787/888934287395

Among the four clusters, Cluster 1 has on average the lowest score for each of the four SIGI dimensions, representing a medium level of discrimination. This cluster performs particularly well on the "Restricted civil liberties" dimension with a score of 28, indicating the existence of legal frameworks for citizenship rights and freedom of movement that do not discriminate on the basis of gender. For example, every country in Cluster 1 grants women and men, married and unmarried, the same rights to apply for passports and identity cards. The same cluster scores 38 in the "Restricted physical integrity dimension", the higher score a result of the presence of national legal frameworks that fail to protect women from violence against women and female genital mutilation (FGM). The even higher score of 46 in the "Discrimination in the family" dimension is mainly the product of legal frameworks that do not adequately protect girls from child marriage and those that fail to endow women and men with the same rights and responsibilities in the household. The highest score of 49 in the "Restricted access to productive and financial resources" dimension is linked to high scores for these countries in the "Workplace rights" indicator, signifying the presence of legal discrimination against women in the workforce. For example, in Cluster 1, six[8] of the 16 countries score 100 in the "Workplace rights" indicator, indicating that the legal frameworks do not provide women with equal rights to enter all professions, register businesses or work the same night hours as men.

Cluster 2 is characterised by high levels of discrimination in the "Discrimination in the family", "Restricted access to productive and financial resources" and "Restricted civil liberties" dimensions. In the "Discrimination in the family" dimension, the score of 52 reflects discriminatory laws regarding household responsibilities and early marriage. For example, three[9] of the eight countries in Cluster 2 do not grant women the same legal rights as men to be the head of household. Cluster 2 scores 56 in the "Restricted civil liberties" dimension, reflecting high levels of discrimination in the "Access to justice" and "Freedom of movement" indicators. Of particular note is the fact that five[10] of the eight countries in this cluster do not guarantee married women and married men equal rights in the passport application process. The highest score (73) relates to the "Restricted access to productive and financial resources dimension", a result of laws that discriminate against women's rights in the workplace. The dimension in which Cluster 2 performs best is "Restricted physical integrity" with a score of 42. However, this score also reveals significant legal discrimination against women and girls, especially in relation to FGM.

Cluster 3 is characterised by high scores in three of the four SIGI dimensions. In the "Discrimination in the family" dimension, the score of 60 is a function mainly of laws under the "Household responsibilities" indicator, which do not grant women the same legal rights and responsibilities as men within the household, particularly the right to be recognised as the head of household or the right to equal parental authority. For instance, in six[11] of the cluster's 17 countries, laws that grant women the legal right to be recognised as the head of household, do not apply to all groups of women. The highest levels of discrimination, with a score of 71, are found in the "Restricted physical integrity" and "Restricted access to productive and

financial resources" dimensions. The former is the product of high scores in the three indicators for "Violence against women", "Female genital mutilation" and "Reproductive autonomy". As with the other three clusters, Cluster 3 scores highly in the "Workplace rights" indicator, leading to a high score in the dimension on "Restricted access to productive and financial resources". In the "Restricted civil liberties" dimension, Cluster 3 achieves a score of 31 denoting a medium level of discrimination. This relatively low score is the product of low levels of discrimination in laws evaluated in the "Freedom of movement", "Political voice" and "Citizenship rights" indicators. For example, in all but one[12] of the Cluster's countries, the legal framework guarantees women the same rights as men, regardless of marital status, to acquire, change and retain their nationality.

Cluster 4 is characterised by high levels of discrimination in three of the four dimensions. Unlike the other three clusters, Cluster 4's highest dimension score is not found in "Restricted access to productive and financial resources", but rather emerges in "Discrimination in the family". This cluster's very high score of 85 for this dimension is the result of very high levels of discrimination in three of the dimension's four indicators: "Household responsibilities", "Divorce" and "Inheritance". For example, in 10[13] of the 13 countries included in Cluster 4, the law does not provide daughters with the same rights as sons to inherit land and non-land assets. In the "Restricted civil liberties" dimension, Cluster 4 scores 58 – a score that derives from a high score in the "Citizenship rights" indicator and lower scores in the "Political voice" and "Freedom of movement" indicators. Regarding citizenship rights, nine[14] of the cluster's 13 countries do not guarantee married women the same rights as married men to retain their nationality. In the "Restricted access to productive and financial resources" dimension, the high score of 64 is owned to a similarly high score in the "Workplace rights" indicator and a very low score in the "Access to financial services" indicator. The cluster's lowest score is found in the "Restricted physical integrity" dimension (54). This is the result of a relatively low score in the "Female genital mutilation" indicator relative to other indicators.

General legal recommendations to promote gender equality and women's empowerment

- Eliminate laws that exempt customary law from legal prohibitions of discrimination, such as those included in constitutions.
- Ratify the Maputo Protocol, CEDAW and other relevant sub-regional legal instruments, such as the Southern African Development Community's (SADC) Gender Protocol (2008).
- Align national legislation with the standards set forth by these international, regional and sub-regional agreements.

Legal frameworks governing workplace rights in the region feature the highest levels of discrimination

In Africa, legal discrimination against the rights of women in the workplace is a salient issue. For three of the four clusters discussed in the previous section, the "Workplace rights" indicator has the highest level of discrimination; for Cluster 2, it has the second highest level. This indicator evaluates the legal barriers that restrict women's labour force participation and hinder equality in the workplace. These legal barriers and the absence of laws guaranteeing equality in this area have serious consequences for women's economic empowerment in practice. They prevent them from entering the labour market, hinder their advancement, impede the recognition and redistribution of care responsibilities among men and women, and enable persistent gender pay gaps. While discrimination in the legal frameworks governing workplace rights is particularly high, recent legal reforms have been undertaken to change this reality.

The landscape of legal frameworks on workplace rights

In Africa, all but four countries[15] have national legislation that prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in employment. Legal prohibitions on discrimination in employment are often found in constitutions and labour codes. For example, the Labour Code of Burkina Faso prohibits all discrimination in employment including on the basis of sex and pregnancy (Article 4) (Government of Burkina Faso, 2008[4]). In Ethiopia, the Constitution (Article 35(8)) outlines women's rights to quality employment, promotion, pay and the transfer of pension entitlements, while the Labour Code (Part 6, Chapter 1) prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in employment and payment (Government of Ethiopia, 1994[5]; Government of Ethiopia, 2019[6]). Under the Decent Work Act (2015), discrimination is prohibited on broad grounds in Liberia including on the basis of sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, marital status, family responsibilities, and previous, current or future pregnancy or breastfeeding (§ 2.4 and § 2.7) (Government of Liberia, 2015[7]).

In Africa, 28 countries[16] have laws that prohibit women from entering certain professions. Many such legal restrictions concern jobs deemed arduous and/or hazardous. For example, the Labour Codes of Angola, Cameroon, Chad, Djibouti, The Gambia, Kenya and others allow ministries, such as those overseeing labour and/or health, to determine the list of jobs prohibited for women. More generally, Act No. 12 of 1378 on the Labour Relations Act of Libya states that "women workers shall not be employed in types of work that are unsuited to their nature as women, to be defined in regulations issued by the General People's Committee" (Chapter 3, Section 24) (Government of Libya, 2010[8]). These laws are rooted in stereotypes regarding men's and women's abilities, specifically physical abilities, as well as in traditional gender roles. Although legislation prohibiting women from entering certain sectors is often framed around concern over women's health, it is inherently discriminatory and serves to promote persistent gender-based occupational and sectoral segregation.

In many African countries, formal legal systems coexist alongside informal ones, which may be customary, religious and/or traditional in nature (Box 2.2). These informal laws can prevent women from entering certain professions and establish a requirement for a husband to grant permission before a women can take a paid job and/or register a business. For example, under some customary laws in Zimbabwe, women have the legal status of minors rather than legal adults, regardless of their age, impacting their ability to choose professions and/or register a business without their father's or husband's approval (FAO, n.d.[9]). Some customary legal systems in the region, by positioning men as the heads of household, contribute to the shrinking of women's economic opportunities by limiting their choice and autonomy to seek employment and training as well as access to resources (Nesbitt-Ahmed and MacLean, 2017[10]).

Box 2.2. Customary laws pose a challenge to legal equality between men and women in many African countries

The legal frameworks of many African countries are pluralistic and include customary, religious and common as well as civil laws. As a result of this legal pluralism, customary law has a significant impact on the lives of many, especially women. While no uniform set of customary laws exists, and customary legal systems vary across communities and ethnic groups, there are indeed some similarities among customary laws, especially pertaining to the status of women (Ndulo, 2011[11]). Customary law is typically applied in relation to issues of marriage, inheritance, guardianship, appointment to traditional positions and age of majority, and many of these laws tend "to see women as adjuncts to the group to which they belong, such as a clan or tribe, rather than equals" (Ezer, 2016[12]). In such cases, customary law has broad-reaching implications for women's and girl's rights and opportunities.

Most African Constitutions include prohibitions on discrimination and introduce equal rights for men and women, while also granting recognition to customary laws. For example, the Constitutions of Botswana, Lesotho and Zambia exempt customary law from their prohibitions on discrimination. Conversely, the Constitution of Kenya specifically invalidates any law, including customary law, that is inconsistent with the Constitution. In many Africa countries, conflict between customary law and constitutional, common and civil law, remains a major challenge.

Recent legal reforms

While the landscape of legal frameworks governing women's workplace rights in Africa is characterised by significant gender-based discrimination, over the last four years a number of African countries have enacted legislation to eliminate discrimination and promote equal rights between men and women in the workplace. For example, in Senegal, legislation was passed to prohibit discrimination in recruitment on broad grounds – such as on the basis of sex, pregnancy, family situation and more – and outlines the responsibility of employers to observe equal treatment in terms of remuneration, training and conditions of employment (Articles 19-20) (Government of Senegal, 2019[13]). In 2018, Sao Tome and Principe passed Law No. 6/2019 approving the Labour Code which included a number of gains for women in terms of their workplace rights. The law prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex (Article 21), includes provisions stipulating equal pay for men and women (Article 22), extends maternity leave to 14 weeks (Article 249) and prohibits discrimination against women on the basis of maternity leave (Article 262) (Government of Sao Tome and Principe, 2019[14]). Zambia also extended maternity leave to 14 weeks in alignment with international standards (Article 41) and specifically prohibits dismissal or demotion during or in relation to maternity leave (Article 43) (Government of Zambia, 2019[15]). In 2019, Ethiopia's Labour Proclamation No. 1156/2019 included a prohibition on discrimination on the basis of sex in employment and increased paid maternity leave from 90 to 120 days (Part 6, Chapter 1) and introduced paid paternity leave of three days (Part 5, Chapter 2) (Government of Ethiopia, 2019[6]). Finally, in Guinea, the revised Code Civil specifically states that each spouse may freely earn a wage as long as no special legal provisions state otherwise (Article 291), thereby establishing the right of married women to work for pay (Government of Guinea, 2019[16]).

Legal recommendations to guarantee women's equal workplace rights

- Ensure that legislation clearly prohibits discrimination in employment, promotions, remuneration, hiring and dismissal based on sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, pregnancy, family and marital status.
- Repeal legal provisions that prevent women from entering certain professions and industries (in alignment with ILO Convention No. 111).
- Ensure that paid maternity leave entitlements are aligned with the international standard of 14 weeks (in line with ILO Convention No. 183), and consider the enactment and extension of paid paternity and parental leaves.

Legal frameworks in Africa do not yet provide comprehensive protection from violence against women and other harmful practices such as FGM and child marriage

The SIGI indicators on violence against women, FGM and child marriage assess the formal and informal legal frameworks governing harmful practices faced by women and girls. In its evaluation of legal frameworks on violence against women, the SIGI evaluates whether legal frameworks protect women from violence, including domestic violence, rape and sexual harassment. In the case of FGM, the SIGI's legal frameworks component assesses whether the laws criminalise FGM and include penalties for practitioners. For child marriage, the SIGI considers whether the legal framework sets the minimum age of marriage for women and men at 18 years without exceptions. Each of the clusters discussed in this chapter record high levels of discrimination in their legal frameworks on both violence against women and child marriage. Regarding FGM, some differences exist with scores ranging from 47 for Cluster 1 to 91 for Cluster 2. These scores reveal a pressing need for stronger legislative efforts to close legal loopholes and prohibit violence against women and girls, in order to ensure women's and girl's physical integrity and overall health.

The landscape of legal frameworks on violence against women, FGM and child marriage

Of the 54 African countries, 34[17] have laws that outline criminal penalties for domestic violence. The most common forms of abuse covered in these legal frameworks are physical abuse followed by sexual abuse. Nevertheless, some countries take a more expansive approach to domestic violence, covering not only physical and sexual abuse, but also economic and psychological abuse. For example, Algeria's Law No. 15-19 penalises physical, sexual, psychological and economic abuse committed by current and former spouses; however, it does not cover abuse committed by partners outside of marriage or other household or family members (Government of Algeria, 2015[17]). In Burundi, Law No. 1/13 on the Protection of Victims and the Prevention and Punishment of Gender-Based Violence (2016) defines domestic violence as all acts of physical, sexual, psychological or economic violence occurring within the family or the family home (Article 2) (Government of Burundi, 2016[18]).

Laws banning FGM as a harmful practice can serve to delegitimise the practice, which in turn plays an important role in changing social norms and beliefs. Nevertheless, 21 African countries[18] do not have criminal laws addressing FGM as a harmful practice. Some of the countries without laws criminalising the practice have high prevalence rates of FGM; for example, Sierra Leone and Mali have prevalence rates of FGM greater than 85% (UN Statistics, 2021[19]). Informal customary, traditional and religious laws in many countries support the continued practice of FGM as a rite of passage into womanhood or preparation for marriage, and women and girls who have not undergone FGM may face stigma (OECD Development Centre, 2018[20]; Berg and Denison, 2013[21]).

Table 2.2. Overview of legal frameworks on the minimum legal age of marriage and legal exceptions

Legal framework on child marriage	Number of countries	Countries
Legal age of marriage greater than or equal to 18 years for both girls and boys without legal exception	10	Chad, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, The Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mauritania, South Sudan, Rwanda
Legal age of marriage greater than or equal to 18 for both girls and boys years with legal exception	32	Algeria, Angola, Benin, Botswana, Cabo Verde, Central African Republic, Comoros, Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Guinea-Bissau, Lesotho, Libya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Sao Tome and Principe, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe
Legal age of marriage differs for men and women and/or is less than 18 years for either girls and/or boys	11	Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Gabon, Guinea, Liberia, Mali, Republic of the Congo, Senegal, Seychelles, Tanzania
No legal minimum age of marriage	1	Sudan

Source: (OECD Development Centre/OECD, 2019[3]), Gender, Institutions and Development Database (GID-DB), https://doi.org/10.1787/ba5dbd30-en.

StatLink https://doi.org/10.1787/888934287414

In regard to legal discrimination and marriage, 11 African countries[19] have laws outlining different legal ages of marriage for women and men. In each of these countries, the legal age of marriage for women is lower than the legal age for men, and in four countries is as low as 15 years.[20] Among the 42 countries that set the same legal age of marriage for both women and men, only ten[21] have laws that do not include legal exceptions that allow individuals below the minimum age to marry with the consent of parents, guardians, judges and/or courts (Table 2.2). In addition to formal statutory laws, informal customary, religious and traditional laws constitute an important part of the social institutions governing marriage in many African countries. For example, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Mozambique, Niger, Sierra Leone, Uganda and Zimbabwe all have mixed legal systems which include both common/civil and customary law (UNICEF, 2020[22]). In Uganda, for example, marriages conducted under customary law are officially recognised (OECD Development Centre, 2019[23]).

Recent legal reforms

Since 2018, a number of African countries have undertaken legislative reforms to increase protection from gender-based violence in an effort to eliminate violence against women. For example, in 2018, Eswatini and Morocco enacted legislation to address gender-based violence. In the former country, the Sexual Offenses and Domestic Violence Act (Act No. 15 of 2018) provides protection from sexual and domestic violence, which includes physical, sexual, psychological and economic abuse, among other forms (Government of Eswatini, 2018[24]). In the latter country, Law No. 103.13 established a normative framework to address violence against women (Government of Morocco, 2019[25]). Additionally in 2018, Law 025-2018 on the Penal Code of Burkina Faso provided a definition of domestic violence for the first time incorporating physical, psychological, sexual, economic and spiritual abuse (Government of Burkina Faso, 2018[26]). In 2019, Liberia's Domestic Violence Bill became law criminalising domestic violence, including physical, mental and sexual abuse, neglect and exploitation (Government of Liberia, 2019[27]). In addition, in 2019, Madagascar passed Law No. 008/2019, which provides for the prevention and prosecution of gender-based violence and established women's and girl's rights to physical integrity (Government of Madagascar, 2019[28]). These legislative efforts are a critical aspect of countries' efforts to address and end violence against women.

Similarly, since 2018, legal reforms have adopted and/or increased protections for women and girls from FGM. For example, Law 025-2018 on the Penal Code of Burkina Faso criminalises the practice of FGM, prescribing penalties for all practitioners (Government of Burkina Faso, 2018[26]). In 2020, through an amendment to Criminal Law (Article 141), Sudan criminalised FGM, which is now subject to fines and imprisonment (Lugiai et al., 2021[29]). Furthermore, in 2021, Egypt strengthened its Penal Code (Article 242 bis), banning FGM and increasing criminal penalties, specifically the time of imprisonment (Farouk, 2021[30]). In Sierra Leone, despite a lack of laws addressing the practice, in 2019 the government banned FGM (Batha and Peyton, 2019[31]). Finally, in 2021, the High Court of Kenya upheld a ruling stating that the country's Prohibition on Female Genital Mutilation Act (No. 32 of 2011) was constitutional following a legal challenge brought by a medical doctor (High Court of Kenya, 2021[32]).

New legislation in Africa aims to protect children and especially girls from child marriage. For example, in Morocco, Law No. 103.13 (2018) includes protections from forced marriage for minors under 18 years of age and outlines criminal penalties for persons facilitating such unions (Government of Morocco, 2019[25]). In Côte d'Ivoire, Law No. 2019-570 of 26 June 2019 set the legal age of marriage at 18 years for both men and women (Government of Côte d'Ivoire, 2019[33]). Finally, in 2019, the Supreme Court of Tanzania upheld a ban preventing parents from arranging the marriage of girls as young as 14 years, but amendments to legislation to formalise this ban have yet to be enacted (Girls Not Brides, 2019[34]).

Legal recommendations to prevent and address violence against women, FGM and child marriage

- Ensure that legislation on domestic violence proscribes criminal penalties and covers violence from current and former partners regardless of marital status as well as family members.
- Enact legislation that utilises an expansive definition of domestic violence that includes physical, sexual, psychological and economic abuse in the spirit of the Maputo Protocol's call for legislative measures "to ensure the prevention, punishment and eradication of all forms of violence against women" (Article 4).
- Align domestic legislation on FGM with international, regional and sub-regional commitments and standards such as CEDAW General Recommendation No. 14 and the Maputo Protocol (Article 10).
- Pass legislation to ban the practice of FGM and establish criminal penalties for all practitioners, including but not limited to parents and medical practitioners as well as anyone facilitating the practice.
- Set 18 years of age as the legal minimum age of marriage for both boys and girls and develop enforcement mechanisms and strategies to prevent child marriage in alignment with both the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and the Maputo Protocol.
- Enact marriage laws that include provisions that establish requirements for the consent of both spouses and proof of age before marriage licenses are issued.

Legal frameworks in Africa include provisions to protect and promote women's political voice though certain areas need strengthening

The SIGI's Political Voice indicator assesses the extent to which legal frameworks discriminate against women's participation in political life as both candidates and voters. Women's meaningful participation in politics and public decision making has a significant impact on a number of development indicators in addition to being a key component of truly representative governance. All of the clusters discussed in the

previous section perform relatively well in the "Political voice" indicator with scores revealing medium levels of discrimination. While legal frameworks in this area are well developed, legislative efforts in recent years have led to stronger protections for women's political voice in the region.

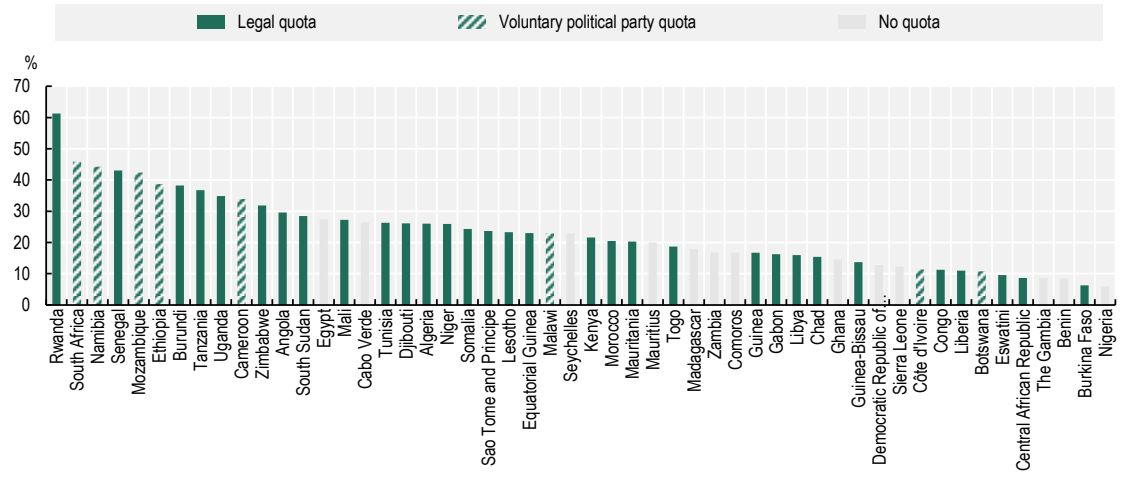
Recent legal reforms

Since 2018, a number of African countries have enacted legislation to protect and promote women's political representation. These include, Chad, which adopted Law 22/2018 and Law 30/2019, establishing a progressive quota of 30% for women's representation in elected offices. Furthermore, Chad's Constitution obliges the state to promote women's political rights and representation (Article 34) (Government of Chad, 2019[35]). In 2018, Guinea-Bissau passed the Parity Law which requires a minimum of 36% women candidates on party lists for national and municipal elections (UNIOGBIS, 2018[36]). Djibouti's Law No. 2017/AN/18/7th amended Law No. 192/AN/02/4th increasing the quota for women from at least 10% to at least 25% in elected positions and the state administration (Government of Djibouti, 2019[37]). In 2019, Guinea adopted the Law on Parity which states that women must make up 50% of candidates on lists for elected positions at both national and local levels as well as in public institutions (UN Women, 2019[38]). In South Sudan, the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan, signed in September 2018, sets various quotas for women's representation in the executive and legislative branches of government as well as commissions and ministerial positions (IGAD, 2018[39]).

The landscape of legal frameworks on political voice

Every African country provides women and men with equal rights to hold legislative and executive public offices and to vote regardless of marital status. However, significant differences in legislative frameworks arise regarding the matter of temporary special measures to promote women's political representation. In 34 of the 54 countries,[22] legal quotas[23] exist to promote women's political participation in lower houses of parliaments/legislatures, and in nine countries[24] voluntary political party quotas are in place (see Chapter 5). Such quotas are not in place in 13 African countries.[25] Temporary special measures such as quotas play a decisive role in women's political representation on the continent. On average, women's representation in the parliaments of African countries with quotas of any kind is 10 percentage points higher than in those that have no quotas. Furthermore, the countries with the highest levels of representation of women in lower houses of parliament have quotas in place (Figure 2.2). Indeed, 18 of the top 20 countries in terms of women's political representation in lower houses of parliament have some kind of quota in place, and 13 of these countries have legislated/constitutional quotas. In Rwanda, the African country with the highest percentage of women in its lower house – and which ranks first at the global level in this respect – the Constitution (Article 10) grants 30% of posts in decision-making bodies to women. Organic Law 03/2010/OL (Article 109) outlines the process for appointing 24 female Deputies in administrative entities, and Law 27/2010 (Article 156) outlines the process for the quota to be met in District Councils and the Council Bureau of Sectors (Government of Rwanda, 2015[40]; Government of Rwanda, 2010[41]).

Figure 2.2. African countries with the highest levels of representation of women in parliament have quotas



Note: No data available for Sudan and Eritrea.
Source: Data on representation from (IPU Parline, 2021[42]); data on quotas from (IDEA and Gender Links, 2021[43]).

StatLink https://doi.org/10.1787/888934287433

The design of temporary special measures, enforcement, political will and the overall structure of the electoral system, each play a fundamental role in determining whether such measures, including laws, will promote parity in representation both effectively and sustainably. For example, constitutional and legislated quotas in Eswatini, which do not include enforcement mechanisms, were not respected in the last election cycle and the percentage of women in both the House of Assembly and Senate were below the minimum levels set by law (IDEA and Gender Links, 2021[43]). Similarly, in Kenya, the minimum level of representation of women set by the Constitution was not achieved during the 2017 elections (IDEA and Gender Links, 2021[43]). When legislated or constitutional quotas are not met, there may be no consequences, as is the case in Eswatini; candidates may be rejected by the Constitutional Court, such as in Mali and Niger, or by electoral management bodies, as permitted in Mauritania; or the parliament may face court orders, as in Kenya (IDEA and Gender Links, 2021[43]). Furthermore, in the absence of legislated/constitutional quotas, when voluntary political party quotas are the only measures in place under proportional representation systems, women's representation depends directly on those parties' levels of representation. As such, party quotas may not be the answer to achieving and sustaining parity in political representation. A challenge remains for many African governments to design temporary special measures that can effectively and sustainably promote gender equal representation in the context of their individual political systems.

While women's political voice is relatively well protected, informal laws remain a source of discrimination in some African countries. For example, in Benin, the customary law of Dahomey establishes that women lack legal power and find their importance in the domestic sphere (Article 27) (IDEA and Gender Links, 2021[43]). This status set forth in customary law can have serious implications for women's autonomy to engage fully in public and political life. In Ghana, while some regional chieftaincy bodies recognise affiliated Queen Mothers and Female Chiefs, the government-recognised National and Regional Houses of Chiefs have inducted no women as members (Government of Ghana, 2020[44]). Similarly, in Sierra Leone, customary practices prevent women from serving as paramount chiefs – a parallel system of tribal government in operation in each of the country's 190 chiefdoms (Government of Sierra Leone, 2019[45]). Finally, in Niger, customary law excludes women from participating in traditional chieftainship (CEDAW, 2017[46]).

Legal recommendations to guarantee women's political voice

- Enact legislation creating temporary special measures aimed at accelerating gender-equal representation in electoral processes at all levels in alignment with CEDAW General Recommendation No. 23.
- Enforce and monitor existing temporary special measures. Support electoral bodies and Constitutional Courts in fulfilling their obligations to enforce legislated and constitutional quotas. Include substantial financial penalties for political parties failing to include a sufficient percentage of women on party lists.
- Align national targets for women's representation with those set forth in regional legal instruments. For example, the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development (2008) calls on states to use affirmative action measures to reach at least 50% women in "decision-making positions in the public and private sectors".

Legal frameworks in Africa have evolved over the last 50 years to protect women's access to financial services

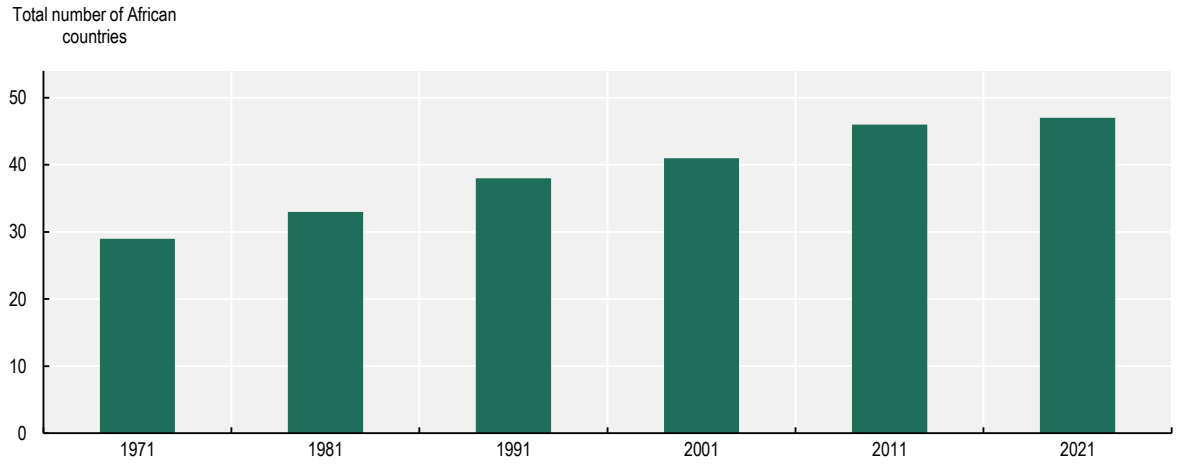
The SIGI's "Access to financial services" indicator assesses the levels of discrimination in legal frameworks regarding women's rights to open an account and obtain credit at a formal financial institution, while taking into account both formal and informal – customary, religious or traditional – laws. Legal barriers to women's access to financial services have significant ramifications for their autonomy, bargaining power in the household and ability to pursue economic activities such as entrepreneurship (see Chapter 4). For three of the four clusters discussed in the previous section, the "Access to financial services" indicator features the lowest level of discrimination compared to all other indicators. This is not the case for Cluster 3, as three countries[26] included in the cluster do not guarantee women the same rights as men to open a bank account in a formal financial institution.

Recent legal reforms

On the African continent, formal legal discrimination against women's access to financial services diminished significantly between 1971 and 2021 (Figure 2.3). In 1971, women were able to open a bank account in the same way as a man in 29 of the 54 African countries. In 2021, this was the case in 47 of the 54 countries. Furthermore, in the last four years, two African countries[27] have enacted legal reforms to guarantee women's access to financial assets and services (World Bank, 2021[47]). In Mozambique, in 2019, legislation eased women's access to credit by prohibiting discrimination based on gender in financial services. The same year, the High Court of Eswatini ruled that the common law which previously denied married women the right to act without their husband's consent was unconstitutional and subsequently struck down the parts of the law that allowed Swazi customary law to govern marital power and spousal property rights (United States Department of State, 2021[48]). In 2018, Guinea included incorporated into its new Penal Code similar prohibitions against gender-based discrimination in financial services. Also in 2018, an amendment to the Family Code of the Democratic Republic of the Congo allowed women to sign contracts and open a bank account without spousal consent (World Bank, 2021[47]).

Figure 2.3. Laws granting women equal access to financial services increased significantly between 1971 and 2021

The number of African countries where women can open a bank account in the same way as a man 1971 to 2021



Source: (World Bank, 2021[47]), Women, Business and the Law, https://wbl.worldbank.org/en/wbl-data.

StatLink https://doi.org/10.1787/888934287452

The landscape of legal frameworks on access to financial services

All African countries grant women the same rights as men to access credit regardless of marital status. In terms of access to bank accounts, three countries[28] do not grant married women the same rights as married men to open a bank account in a formal financial institution. The Civil Codes in each of these countries introduce special restrictions for women that are discriminatory in nature. Among the 51 remaining countries that grant women and men the same rights, some have legal frameworks that expressly prohibit discrimination in financial services. For example, South Africa's Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act (Act 4 of 2000) specifically prohibits policies and conduct that unfairly limit the access of women to finance (Article 8e) (Government of South Africa, 2000[49]). In addition to the law, South Africa's Code of Banking Practice (2012), a voluntary code, establishes standards for financial services including a prohibition of discrimination on the basis of marital status, gender, age or race in banking services (Section 6.2) (Banking Association of South Africa, 2012[50]). In Angola, the Central Bank of Angola's Notice 02/2011 prohibits financial institutions from differentiating their products and services based on individuals' gender, civil status and other characteristics (Article 5) (Banco Nacional de Angola, 2011[51]).

While many countries have formal laws in place to provide women and men with equal rights to financial services, informal laws continue to discriminate against women in this regard. Informal customary, traditional and religious laws that discriminate against women's legal rights to open accounts and access credit are closely linked to women's status under these laws as subordinates to their husband and male guardian. For example, in Cameroon, some customary legal systems regard women as the legal property of their husbands (United States Department of State, 2016[52]). Furthermore, in Lesotho, under customary law women have the legal status of minors rather than adults of legal majority, regardless of age, which restricts their access to assets and credit as well as their ability to enter into contracts without a man's assistance as her guardian (FAO, n.d.[53]; OECD Development Centre, 2019[54]). Furthermore, formal and informal laws hindering women's ownership of land and non-land assets impose additional barriers to access to credit as collateral is often a requirement (see Chapter 4 for more details).

Legal recommendation to ensure women's access to financial services

- Pass legislation that specifically prohibits discrimination based on gender and sex in financial services including in regard to access to accounts and credit from formal financial institutions in alignment with CEDAW.

Notes

[1] Sudan is the only African country that has yet to sign CEDAW.

[2] Botswana, Egypt, Eritrea and Tunisia have not yet signed the Maputo Protocol.

[3] All member countries except Mauritius have signed the Protocol.

[4] Passed by the East Africa Legislative Assembly, which include five partner countries: Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda.

[5] Signed by all 15 member countries.

[6] Informal laws are laws defined by the customs, religions and traditional practices observed among a specific community, outside of the formal legal code that may or may not be written.

[7] The Missing Women indicator does not include a legal frameworks component.

[8] Benin, Burkina Faso, Central African Republic, Ethiopia, Sao Tome and Principe, and Senegal.

[9] Libya, Madagascar and Seychelles.

[10] Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Seychelles and Zambia.

[11] Angola, Chad, Lesotho, Mali, Niger and Sierra Leone.

[12] In the Republic of the Congo, married women do not have the same rights as married men to acquire, change or retain their nationality under the Nationality Code of 20 June 1961.

[13] Algeria, Burundi, Comoros, Egypt, The Gambia, Mauritania, Morocco, Sudan, Tanzania and Tunisia.

[14] Algeria, Burundi, Comoros, Egypt, Guinea, Mauritania, Somalia, Togo and Tunisia.

[15] Botswana, Republic of the Congo, Nigeria and Sudan.

[16] Angola, Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Gabon, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Lesotho, Libya, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Nigeria, Republic of the Congo, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan and Tunisia.

[17] Algeria, Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Djibouti, Eswatini, Ethiopia, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

[18] Algeria, Angola, Cabo Verde, Comoros, Equatorial Guinea, Eswatini, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritius, Morocco, Namibia, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Tunisia and Zimbabwe.

[19] Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Gabon, Guinea, Liberia, Mali, Republic of the Congo, Senegal, Seychelles and Tanzania.

[20] Cameroon, Gabon, Seychelles and Tanzania.

[21] Chad, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, the Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mauritania, South Sudan and Rwanda.

[22] Algeria, Angola, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Eswatini, Gabon, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda and Zimbabwe.

[23] Enshrined in national constitutions and/or legislation such as electoral laws.

[24] Botswana, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia and South Africa.

[25] Benin, Cabo Verde, Comoros, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, The Gambia, Ghana, Madagascar, Mauritius, Nigeria, Seychelles, Sierra Leone and Zambia.

[26] Chad, Gabon and Nigeria.

[27] Guinea and Mozambique.

[28] Chad, Gabon and Niger.

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3 Women's physical integrity

This chapter focuses on women's reproductive autonomy and physical integrity in Africa. Taking a holistic approach, it examines formal and informal laws, social norms and practices to identify the main health challenges facing women in the region, such as unmet needs for family planning, maternal complications and poor birth outcomes as well as gender-based violence. The chapter also highlights persistent forms of discrimination, namely unequal decision-making power and customs that perpetuate harmful practices, including child marriage, violence against women and female genital mutilation (FGM). The analysis considers both the current situation of women and uncovers longstanding underlying factors. Based on this analysis, the chapter provides policy recommendations to improve women's access to reproductive autonomy and eliminate pervasive gender-based discrimination.

Introduction

Meeting women's health care needs is essential for women's and girls' empowerment, autonomy and control over their bodies. Furthermore, women's health influences their well-being and educational attainment as well as their employment opportunities and productivity (AfDB, UNECA, 2020[1]). The Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women (Maputo Protocol) in Africa recognises the importance of guaranteeing women's health and access to sexual and reproductive health services (African Union, 2003[2]). With women representing over half of the population and human resources in Africa, improving their health status will contribute greatly to the economic and social development of African countries.

The present chapter is divided into three main sections. The first section looks at women's health and reproductive indicators and outcomes. It provides a broad overview of the situation of women in Africa, specifically in reference to the unmet need for family planning, maternal complications and poor birth outcomes, as well as gender-based violence, with a particular focus on the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic on these outcomes. The chapter's second section explores underlying factors and causes that explain women's restricted reproductive autonomy, violence against women, female genital mutilation (FGM) and child marriage. The section uncovers the role played by discriminatory social norms, attitudes and practices in explaining women's poor health status on the continent, the persistence of child marriage, high rates of violence against women and FGM. The third and last section presents some key policy recommendations that could help address discriminatory social institutions that constrain women's health status in Africa. A table summarising some key indicators for women's health and reproductive autonomy in Africa can be found at the end of the chapter in Annex 3.A.

What is the situation regarding women's reproductive autonomy and physical integrity in Africa?

Unmet need for family planning remains an area of concern in most African countries

Generally, unmet need for family planning is reflected in gaps in the demand and supply of contraceptive services and is defined as the percentage of sexually active and fecund women who report not desiring any more children or having to postpone their next child but who are not using contraception (WHO, n.d.[3]). Modern contraception methods have a higher efficacy than traditional methods, which are widely used in some places in the region. Modern methods include oral contraceptive pills, implants, injections, contraceptive patches and vaginal rings, intrauterine devices, female and male condoms, female and male sterilisation, emergency contraception pills, and so on (WHO, n.d.[4]). Traditional contraceptive methods include periodic abstinence, withdrawal, and the calendar and cervical mucus methods. In some African countries, traditional methods are also based on the use of traditional medicine and herbs (Rabiu and Rufa'i, 2018[5]).

Regardless, despite the growing use of modern contraception methods in Africa, the vast majority of women and girls still lack secure access to family planning services. The proportion of women of reproductive age (15-49 years) who use modern methods to satisfy their needs for family planning has increased from 36% in 2000 to 56% in 2017 (United Nations Population Division, n.d.[6]). However, the number of women of reproductive age is increasing in Africa, driving a spike in the birth rate. From 1950 to 2015, the number of women of reproductive age has risen from 54 million to approximately 280 million (You, Hug and Anthony, 2015[7]). In 2017, an average of 22% of African women of reproductive age reported having an unmet need for family planning, compared to 12% at the global level. West Africa has the highest rate[1] compared to other African sub-regions: in 2018, 27% of women of reproductive age in West Africa reported having an unmet need for family planning. At the national level this figure conceals

wide variations, with percentages ranging from 7% in Algeria to 38% in Equatorial Guinea (OECD Development Centre/OECD, 2019[8]). More recently, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on health care systems and disrupted women's access to family planning services and information across the continent (Box 3.1).

Improved access to sexual health and reproductive rights would prevent unwanted pregnancies that lead to unsafe abortions. Africa accounts for 29% of all unsafe abortions and 62% of all unsafe abortion-related deaths at the global level. At the regional level, the World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that approximately half of all abortions occur in the least safe conditions,[2] putting women's health at great risk (WHO, 2020[9]). As a consequence of rapid population growth in Africa, the number of abortions per year in sub-Saharan Africa increased between 1995 and 1999 and from 2015 to 2019, from 4.3 million to approximately 8 million (Guttmacher Institute, 2020[10]).

Pregnancy-related complications can lead to an increase in maternal deaths and compromise infant health and well-being

Maternal deaths remain prevalent in Africa despite significant progress under Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 5 (Improve maternal health). In 2017, there were 481 maternal deaths per 100 000 live births in Africa compared to the global average of 216 maternal deaths per 100 000 live births (World Bank, n.d.[11]). Between 1990 and 2015, sub-Saharan Africa achieved a reduction in maternal mortality rates of 45% (UNDP, 2016[12]). Over the same period, North Africa recorded the largest decrease and achieved the lowest maternal mortality rate of the continent, dropping from 210 to 81 maternal deaths per 100 000 live births between 1990 and 2017, representing a decrease of 61% (World Bank, n.d.[11]). In West Africa, the maternal mortality rate remains high, having declined only marginally, with a maternal mortality ratio of 715 per 100 000 live births in 2017, one of the highest rates at the sub-regional and global level. In Central Africa in the same year, the maternal mortality ratio was 564 per 100 000 encompassing any cause related to or aggravated by pregnancy. Maternal deaths in Southern Africa were lower at 254 per 100 000 live births. At the country level, Sierra Leone records the highest number of maternal deaths with a ratio of 1 150 per 100 000 live births in 2017 (World Bank, n.d.[11]).

Maternal death is considered a human rights violation with far-reaching consequences for neonatal mortality. It also results in the loss of significant economic resources and amplifies poverty cycles at the household and community levels (Miller and Belizán, 2015[13]). Numerous studies have revealed the links between maternal mortality and the heightened risk of stillbirth and neonatal mortality (WHO, 2014[14]). If the new-born survives after the death of the mother, the infant may face enormous challenges such as nutritional problems due to lack of adequate and early breastfeeding, lack of access to drinkable water and stunting. Older children within the household of the dead mother are more likely to drop out of school and to suffer from interrupted education and difficult living arrangements (Whetten et al., 2011[15]); (Wang et al., 2013[16]). In addition, girls will often assume maternal roles and become more vulnerable to child marriage, adolescent pregnancy and risks of maternal morbidity (Miller and Belizán, 2015[13]). Other findings indicate that maternal mortality is associated with considerable costs to national health systems. In 2013, estimates showed that maternal and neonatal mortality slows economic growth and induces income losses of nearly USD 15 billion each year at the global level (UNFPA, 2013[17]). In Africa, the economic cost linked to poor maternal health care reached USD 45 billion over the 2000-10 period (WHO, 2002[18]). Most recently, the COVID-19 crisis has strained services related to antenatal, delivery and postnatal care with direct consequences for maternal health (Box 3.1).

Box 3.1. Impacts of the COVID-19 crisis on women's health outcomes in Africa

The health, social and economic implications of the COVID-19 pandemic for the African continent are far-reaching. The crisis is having an uneven effect on women's health access and outcomes, with long-lasting impacts on their empowerment, threatening to set back progress achieved over the last two decades. On average, more men than women have contracted and died from the virus in Africa, a trend that could heighten the economic vulnerability of women and families, as men are typically the primary earners in households (UN Women, 2020[19]; World Bank, 2020[20]). In addition, lockdown measures, social distancing, school closures and increasing poverty due to lost income negatively affect girls' and women's health (UNICEF, 2021[21]). On the positive side, progress has been recorded in the protection of women and girls from gender-based discrimination, ranging from the first-ever marital rape conviction in Eswatini to the criminalisation of FGM in Sudan (Amnesty International, 2020[21]).

The majority of primary formal and informal frontline health care workers are women, who are at higher risk of exposure to COVID-19

As in the rest of the world, women represent the majority of the African health workforce, for example accounting for 65% of the region's nurses (World Bank, 2020[20]). Combined with their unequal share of unpaid care and domestic work, which involves caring for ill and elderly relatives, women face a higher risk of contracting the virus.

The strain on health care systems has diverted economic and human resources, putting women and girls at risk

Africa's limited economic and human resources and capacities pre-pandemic, coupled with the current crisis, has increased the risk of care shortages and disruption of services, resulting in a wide range of consequences on women's and girls' health. Resources normally used for routine health services, and girls' and women's (sexual and reproductive) health care needs, have been diverted to combat the pandemic (African Union, 2020[22]). Among the consequences are:

- **Increased maternal mortality and adolescent pregnancies**. Lockdown measures or fear of contracting the virus prevent pregnant women from accessing prenatal care (World Bank, 2020[20]). This trend is amplified by a rise in **adolescent pregnancies,** stemming from limited access to contraception and sexual and reproductive health and research (SRH) services, increasing child marriage rates and violence against girls (UNICEF, 2021[23]). For instance, in Kenya, preliminary evidence from the International Rescue Committee aid group in the northern town of Lodwar revealed that teenage pregnancies had tripled among beneficiaries (Smith, 2020[24]).
- **Unmet family planning needs**. African women face additional barriers to access family planning services due to the closure of health facilities, unavailability of medical staff to provide family planning services, and women themselves being hesitant to visit health facilities due to concerns about COVID-19. Recent estimates reveal that for every three months of a lockdown (under high disruption), up to 2 million additional women may be unable to use modern contraceptives at the global level. This will lead to millions of unintended pregnancies, which themselves pose risks to the health of the mother and child (UNFPA, 2020[25]).

The COVID-19 pandemic has prompted a sharp and steady rise in child marriages in African countries

At the global level, the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the lives of children and families, and has threatened the continuity of programmes and strategies to end child marriage, in particular in developing countries. In Africa, evidence from previous epidemics reveals that teenage girls are disproportionately affected by health crises and emergencies (UNFPA; UNICEF, 2020[26]). In the context of COVID-19,

governments have taken measures to stop the spread of the virus and avoid new infections such as closing schools, imposing general lockdowns, and decreasing the availability of social support networks and programmes to alleviate extreme poverty (UNICEF, 2021[23]). These combined measures have medium and long-term consequences for the livelihoods of millions of Africans who rely on informal economic activities. Due to external economic shocks and restricted access to basic services, ranging from access to reproductive health services to child protection, COVID-19 has increased poverty rates, which in turn has enhanced the likelihood of girls being forced into child marriage. Indeed, evidence from an initial assessment conducted in Ethiopia, Mozambique, Uganda and Zambia shows that teenage girls are being disproportionally affected by the pandemic and are experiencing increases in child marriage and adolescent pregnancy (UNFPA; UNICEF, 2020[26]). The interruption of prevention programmes combined with higher levels of poverty is increasing the likelihood of families marrying off their daughters in exchange for a bride price. It is estimated that globally **10 to 13 million child marriages** will take place, which otherwise would have been averted (UNICEF, 2021[23]) (UNFPA, 2020[25]).

Violence against women and girls increased in all countries affected by the pandemic, with progress towards ending gender-based violence by 2030 reduced by one-third.

Recent research from six Sahel countries[3] found a 12-percentage point increase in reported domestic violence cases, due to confinement measures. In these cases, women were isolated at home and without access to people and resources that could help them (African Union et al., 2020[27]). Additionally, in East Africa, there was a 48% increase in reported cases of gender-based violence (African Union et al., 2020[27]).

Skilled birth attendance has been recognised as a key element for maternal and new-born survival. Postnatal care services for mothers and new-borns prevent, detect and treat health complications after delivery including infections and post-partum depression, yet many women in Africa continue to lack access to these services. In 2016, in sub-Saharan Africa, 82% of pregnant women received prenatal care compared to 87% of women at the global level (World Bank, n.d.[11]). Nonetheless, only 62% of births are attended by skilled health personnel in the region, ranging from 89% in North Africa to 52% in East Africa (World Bank, n.d.[11]). When women are not able to give birth in a health facility or do not have access to primary neonatal services, they may call on local midwives and nurses in their area to ensure that skilled personnel can address health complications during labour. Yet, the number of nurses and midwives (per 1 000 people) in Africa was 1.1 in 2018 compared to 2.8 at the global level (WHO, n.d.[28]).

In cases of adolescent pregnancy, there is a heightened risk of spontaneous abortion, complications during labour, postpartum haemorrhaging, HIV infection, malaria and obstetric fistula, which can take place when a mother delivers children before her body is physically ready to do so. Adolescent pregnancy is thus accompanied by a higher risk of maternal mortality. For instance, in Mali, the maternal mortality rate for girls aged 15-19 years is 178 per 100 000 live births compared to only 32 maternal deaths per 100 000 live births for women aged 20-34 years (Nour, 2006[29]). In addition, the children of adolescent mothers face higher rates of under-nutrition and mortality (UNDP, 2016[12]). The infant mortality rates are higher for young mothers due to their limited access to information and adequate health services. For instance, at the global level, new-born mortality rates are 73 higher for mothers under the age of 20, a correlation that also applies to the five African sub-regions (UNDP, 2016[12]).

Gender-based violence against women can cause long-term physical and mental health problems

Restrictions on physical integrity prevent women from pursuing their goals in the private and public spheres, such as education, employment and participation in public life. The spectrum of violence affecting women and girls includes intimate partner violence, rape, FGM and sexual violence. Moreover, gender-

based violence decreases women's reproductive options and increases rates of maternal mortality and HIV/AIDS infection (UNDP, 2016[12]).

On average, approximately 33% of African women have experienced intimate partner violence or sexual violence in their lifetime compared to 31% at the global level. At the sub-regional level, Central Africa has the highest prevalence of domestic violence (45%) followed closely by East Africa (36%) and North Africa (28%). Compared to the prevalence rates of these regions, intimate partner violence appears to be less pervasive in North, West and Southern Africa, where it affects, respectively, 28%, 27% and 22% of women at some point in their lives (OECD, 2019[30]). At the national level, there is wide variation in domestic violence rates ranging from 6% in Comoros to 80% in Guinea. However, prevalence rates of recent episodes of intimate partner violence are decreasing slightly. In 2019, 19% of women were the victims of assault by their partner in the past year, compared to 26% in 2014 (OECD Development Centre, 2014[31]; OECD Development Centre/OECD, 2019[8]). Since the COVID-19 outbreak began, initial estimates and reports have revealed that all types of violence against women and girls have increased in countries affected by the pandemic. Gender based-violence is exacerbated particularly under lockdown measures, restrictions on movement and school closures (Box 3.1). For instance, administrative data from the South African Police Services reveal that within the first week of a level 5 lockdown in 2019, cases of gender-based violence reported to the police increased 37% compared to the weekly average (African Union et al., 2020[27]). Similarly, in Nigeria, data from 24 states show that the number of reported cases of domestic violence increased by 56% throughout the first two weeks of April following the imposition of lockdown measures on 31 March (African Union et al., 2020[27])

Domestic violence is linked to negative health outcomes for women, ranging from poor mental health to adverse reproductive health consequences such as poor birth outcomes. Results from various studies in Africa indicate that women who have experienced physical abuse and violence are more likely to have body injuries ranging from contusions to broken bones (Emenike, Lawoko and Dalal, 2008[32]). In sub-Saharan countries, women present numerous emotional and mental disorders in response to intimate partner violence (Ahinkorah, Dickson and Seidu, 2018[33]). In addition, recent evidence reveals a strong relationship between intimate partner violence and poor pregnancy outcomes (Salazar and San Sebastian, 2014[34]). Women who reported experiencing either physical or sexual violence by their husbands are more likely to suffer from unwanted pregnancies. Furthermore, intimate partner violence has been connected to health complications during pregnancy and delivery, spontaneous abortions and termination of pregnancy (Emenike, Lawoko and Dalal, 2008[32]). In addition, women who have experienced intimate partner violence are more likely to contract sexually transmitted infections and diseases, which in African countries carry importance as latent gateways[4] to HIV/AIDS infection (Seth et al., 2010[35]).

Another acute form of violence against women is the harmful practice of FGM. On average, in 27 countries with available data, 42% of women and girls aged 15-49 years have undergone FGM, compared with 46% in 2014 (OECD Development Centre, 2014[31]) (OECD, 2019[30]). The pace of decline has been uneven and is dependent on country contexts. At the sub-regional level, the highest prevalence of FGM is found in North Africa where 43% of women have been cut. The practice is also predominant in East and West Africa where, respectively, 38% and 28% of women and girls have undergone this procedure, which constitutes in itself a severe form of discrimination. Conversely, only 5% of women and girls have been cut in Central Africa and no cases have been reported or measured in Southern African countries (OECD, 2019[30]). At the national level, the prevalence of FGM varies greatly across countries where data are available, ranging from 2% of women in Cameroon to over 90% of women in Sierra Leone, Djibouti, Guinea and Somalia. In the latter countries, over nine in ten women aged 15-49 years have been subjected to FGM.

Female genital mutilation/cutting can be classified into four distinct categories (OHCHR, UNAIDS, UNDP, UNECA, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNIFEM, WHO., 2008[36]):

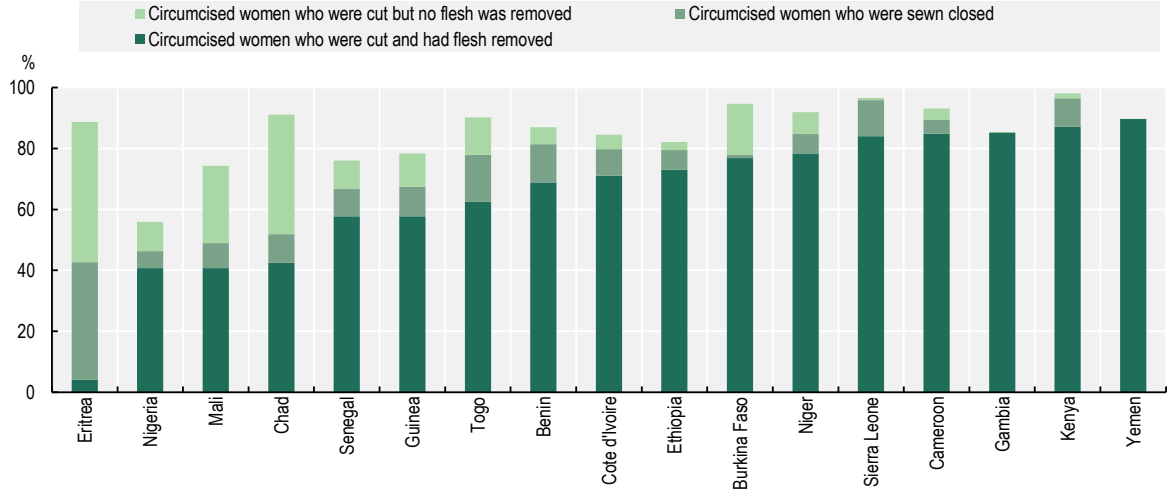
- Type I: Excision of the prepuce and part or the entire clitoris

- Type II: Excision of the prepuce and clitoris together with partial or total excision of the labia minora
- Type III: Infibulation. Excision of part or all of the external genitalia and stitching together of the two cut sides, to varying degrees
- Type IV: Pricking, piercing, incision, stretching, scraping or other procedures harming the clitoris or labia, or both.

With the exception of Eritrea, the largest percentage of women who had been circumcised reported having some flesh removed as opposed to being infibulated (Figure 3.1). Extensive research has proven that the first three types of FGM/C have long-lasting and severe health implications. The most critical health problems comprise shock, severe haemorrhage, infections and psychological consequences. In the long term, women and girls who have been cut will experience throughout their lives prolonged pain, infections, potential infertility and birth complications. Although the first two types of FGM/C are perceived by people as harmless and relatively safe procedures, they too may provoke a series of health complications including haemorrhage, urogenital complications and in some cases sexual dysfunction (Kaplan et al., 2011[37]).

Figure 3.1. Types of female genital cutting in African countries

Distribution of circumcised women by type of circumcision in most recent DHS survey, selected countries



Note: This figure presents three types of female genital cutting, including the percentage of circumcised women who were cut but no flesh was removed; the percentage of circumcised women who were cut and had flesh removed; and the percentage of circumcised women who were sewn closed.
Source: (IFC, 2015[38]). The DHS Program STATcompiler. www.statcompiler.com.

StatLink https://doi.org/10.1787/888934287471

How do discriminatory social institutions constrain women's reproductive autonomy and physical integrity?

Discriminatory social institutions represent a significant structural obstacle for women and girls to access empowerment opportunities on an equal basis to men and boys, perpetuating health-related gender inequalities. Deeply entrenched social institutions that comprise legal frameworks particularly affect girls' and women's rights and discriminate against women's physical integrity and well-being (see Chapter 2).

In addition to laws and regulations, social institutions include norms, attitudes, stereotypes based on customs, traditions and beliefs that restrict girls' and women's rights in the family, private and public spheres and undermine their ability to exercise agency. These discriminatory social institutions often overlap and have long-lasting impacts throughout the lifecycle of women and girls. This section highlights the role played by these discriminatory social institutions in explaining the persistence of harmful practices including violence against women, FGM and child marriage.

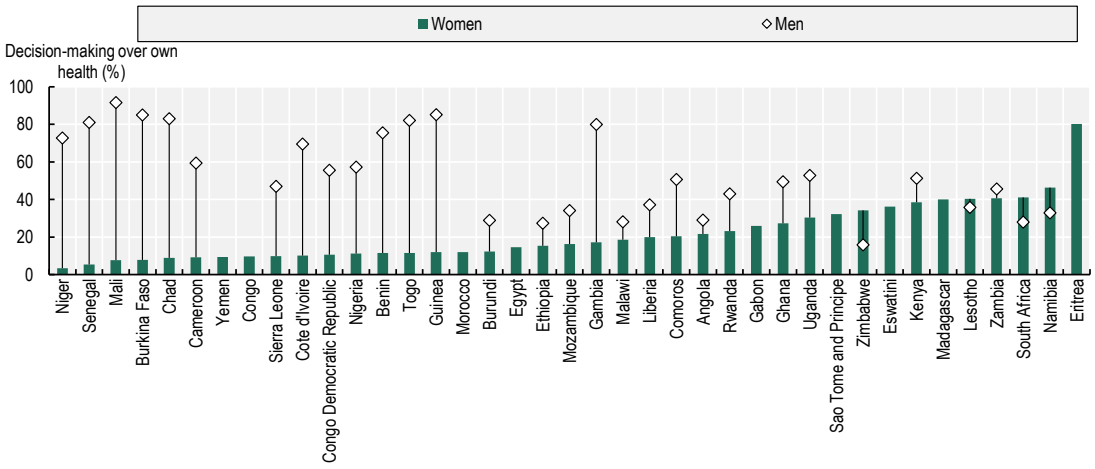
Deep-rooted discriminatory social norms result in unequal power relations within the private sphere which may result in poorer health outcomes

Gender power imbalances constrain women's full control over decisions related to their health. Women's ability to seek appropriate health services and attend health care facilities relies on their decision-making autonomy. Yet, African women's status within society significantly constrains their decision-making power regarding their own lives. Prevailing cultural beliefs, traditions and customs determine gender roles, thereby establishing the conditions under which women can exercise autonomy in making decisions regarding their own health care (Woldemicael and Tenkorang, 2009[39]). Despite variations across countries, data suggest that men's control over women's access to health care is widespread. Moreover, men may not have adequate knowledge about the female body and therefore cannot make reliable and legitimate choices. Furthermore, men might refuse women's access to health care and treatment if they disagree with certain practices derived from discriminatory social norms, including examinations or medical treatment by male doctors and nurses (OECD, 2021[40]).In at least half of the 40 countries for which data are available for 2002-18, the husband was the main decision-maker regarding women's health care. In contrast, men are more likely to have decision-making authority over their own health care than their female counterparts (Figure 3.2).

The domination of male partners over women's health also affects their reproductive health choices and autonomy. Numerous research studies in developing countries reveal that partners exert a considerable influence over the decision of women to use contraceptives (Bankole and Singh, 1998[41]). Moreover, well-educated women who intend to use contraceptive methods may fail to do so because of their partners' reluctance to adopt family planning measures. For instance, a study conducted in Ghana found that a husband's attitude toward family planning was an important contributing factor to his wife's attitude toward contraception (Bankole, 1995[42]). In Africa, women confronted with decisions on family planning are more likely to base their decision on their partner's fertility preferences and attitudes toward family planning. Only 45% of women, on average, can make their own informed decisions regarding sexual relations, contraceptive use and reproductive health.[5] This proportion ranges from 58% in Southern Africa to 33% in Central Africa (World Bank, n.d.[11]).

Figure 3.2. In most African countries, women are less likely than men to have decision-making power over their access to health care

Percentage of women and men stating that they are the main decision maker regarding their own health care



Note: Decision making over own health care refers to the percentage of respondents who acted as the principal decision maker for their own health care. No data were available for men in Congo, Egypt, Eritrea, Eswatini, Gabon, Madagascar, Morocco, Sao Tome and Principe, and Yemen.
Source: (IFC, 2015[38]) The DHS Program STATcompiler. www.statcompiler.com.

StatLink https://doi.org/10.1787/888934287490

In Africa, women and young girls are more vulnerable to HIV due to gender power imbalances (Box 3.2) with consequences for their ability to negotiate safe sex. It has been well documented that women's household decision making in relation to the negotiation of sex, and ultimately safe sex, constitutes a crucial determinant of their likelihood of and vulnerability to contracting HIV infections. Married women's HIV infection is associated with various factors, including their inability to ask their partners to use condoms or to refuse sexual intercourse even in risky situations. For instance, in Yemen (Seidu et al., 2021[43]), only 50% of women aged 15-49 years consider that a woman is justified asking a men to use a condom if she knows that her husband has a sexually transmitted infection (DHS, n.d.[44]). In other contexts, young girls begin their sexual activities with older men who are more likely to be infected with HIV and have greater decision-making power over young girls, which in turn, determine their reproductive health choices and contraception methods. Data on this area are lacking at the regional level, but various demographic and health surveys carried out among a group of 27 African countries found that infection rates increase significantly among women in the 20-24 age group in comparison with women in the 15-19 age range (Seidu et al., 2021[43])

The links between women's ability to make decisions about their health care and HIV testing may be explained by the Theory of Gender and Power (Connell, 2013[45]). This theory hypothesizes that power dynamics between women and men are expressed in three major crucial structures: sexual division of labour, sexual division of power, and the structure of social exposure and affective attachment. These various structures determine the power relationships between women and men and illustrate the dynamics at play in the ways men control women (Connell, 2013[45]). Women's decision to visit a health care facility and take a test therefore depends strongly on whether they enjoy equal status in the home. A recent study using data from the DHS in 28 Africa countries revealed that women's decision-making abilities and capacities play a fundamental role in their uptake of HIV testing (Seidu et al., 2020[46]).

Box 3.2. The spread of HIV/AIDS represents a significant health and social issue with major implications for women and girls in Africa

HIV is considered to be one of the main causes of illness and death for women aged 15-49 years, accounting for 19% of all deaths among women globally. Sub-Saharan Africa is the region with the most prominent HIV/AIDS epidemic at the global level, with women disproportionally affected by this infectious disease. In 2018, women accounted for around 59% of new HIV infections among individuals aged 15 and older. This proportion has remained stable over the last two decades (UNAIDS, 2020[47]) Recent figures show that East and Southern Africa are the most impacted sub-regions with approximately 12 million women living with HIV (UNAIDS, 2020[47]). In Southern Africa, in particular, an estimated 13% of adults aged 15-49 years are living with HIV compared to 0.7% at the global level in 2019. Countries with prevalence rates over 20% are Eswatini (27%), Lesotho (23%) and Botswana (21%) (World Bank, n.d.[11]).

Women who are HIV positive experience and suffer various forms of discrimination in the family sphere, limited access to inheritance and property rights, marginalisation and exclusion from the community or kinship, and divorce or denial of rights related to the guardianship of their children (Paudel and Baral, 2015[48]). In addition, women who were already excluded and marginalised, including sex workers, can lose their main source of income and suffer from social stigma and discrimination, which may aggravate their socio-economic condition and increase their vulnerability (WHO, 2012[49]). Finally, in 2020, measures taken by governments to combat the COVID-19 crisis and pandemic exacerbated difficulties and barriers for women living with HIV/AIDS to access treatment, services and information.

Discriminatory social institutions increase women's and girls' vulnerability to multiple forms of violence during their lifetime

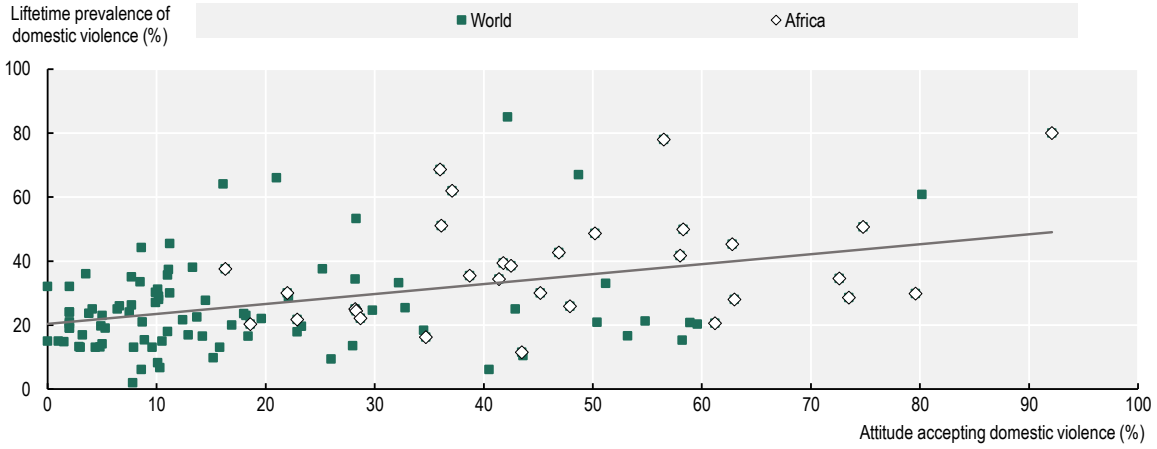
Gender-based violence remains an area of concern in Africa given, among other factors, present weaknesses in legislation. The absence of legal provisions criminalising domestic violence in 20 countries leaves women and girls without any legal protection from the perpetrators of violence against them and without any recourse to justice. Moreover, efforts to guarantee women's legal protection from various forms of gender-based violence have been inconsistent and slow. The majority of countries still fail to recognise marital rape and 21 countries lack criminal laws acknowledging FGM as a harmful practice (see Chapter 2).

Violence against women remains socially accepted across African countries. On average, 47% of women and girls consider that a husband may be justified in hitting or beating his wife under certain circumstances – if she burns the food, argues with him, goes out without telling him, neglects the children or refuses to engage in sexual relations. Over the last ten years, domestic violence has become less tolerated and accepted among women. For instance, between 2012 and 2018, acceptance of spousal violence decreased by nine percentage points among women (i.e. from 56% to 47%). At the sub-regional level, North Africa shows the lowest level of acceptance of domestic violence among women (34%), followed by Southern (40%) and West Africa (42%). Conversely, female acceptance of spousal violence is much higher in East (54%) and Central Africa (66%). At the country level, this figure ranges from 16% in Malawi to 92% in Guinea. These attitudes combined with restrictive norms of masculinities[6] explain in part the persistently high rates of domestic violence in Africa. SIGI data reveal a correlation between countries where intimate partner violence is condoned by an important proportion of the population and high rates of domestic violence (Figure 3.3).

At its root, gender-based violence stems from restrictive norms of masculinities that perpetuate male dominance in the private sphere and acceptance and entitlement to perpetrate physical, sexual,

psychological and economic violence (OECD, 2021[40]). Following these restrictive norms of masculinities, women are expected to be "obedient, silent and good" and should accept the violence inflicted by men and in some cases by other women. For example, FGM is associated not only with expected behaviours for woman in the community, but also with notions of masculinity. In communities where FGM is widely practised, a man should marry a woman who has been excised or cut. In Burkina Faso, for instance, a staggering 50% of men would prefer to marry a woman who has undergone FGM. (OECD Development Centre, 2018[50]). Women also often uphold social norms that limit their empowerment and opportunities. Incidences of violence towards daughters-in-law perpetrated by mothers-in-law and the role played by elder women and grandmothers in perpetuating mutilation of their own daughters' and granddaughters' genitals have both been largely documented (UNDP, 2016[12]).

Figure 3.3. Higher acceptance of domestic violence by women is related to higher prevalence rates



Note: Attitude towards domestic violence is defined by the percentage of women aged 15-49 years who consider a husband to be justified in hitting or beating his wife for at least one of the specified reasons: if his wife burns food, argues with him, goes out without telling him, neglects the children or refuses to engage in sexual intercourse with him. The lifetime prevalence of domestic violence is the percentage of women who have suffered intimate partner physical and/or sexual violence during their lifetime.
Source: (OECD Development Centre/OECD, 2019[8]), Gender, Institutions and Development Database, https://doi.org/10.1787/ba5dbd30-en.

StatLink https://doi.org/10.1787/888934287509

Similarly, discriminatory social norms contribute to condoning or tolerating harmful practices such as FGM. This practice is largely considered a rite of passage for young girls transitioning into adulthood and determines their eligibility for marriage. However, the teenage girl rarely decides herself whether she should undertake the procedure or not (UNICEF, 2013[51]). Instead, decisions concerning FGM are often determined based on pressure from elder people, extended families, relatives, neighbours and customary, local or traditional leaders (UNICEF, 2013[51]). Acceptance of this harmful practice appears to be declining, however, in particular among younger generations. However, acceptance remains high in sub-regions where FGM is commonly practised. In 2018, on average, 16% of African women of reproductive age were of the opinion that FGM should continue. At the sub-regional level, these rates vary from 15% in East Africa to 27% in North Africa (OECD, 2019[30]).

The practice of child marriage engenders significant health risks for young girls and women

Decreasing the prevalence of child marriage is essential for securing girls' rights and wellbeing and helping them to take full advantage of opportunities for empowerment. In concrete terms, the later a girl marries,

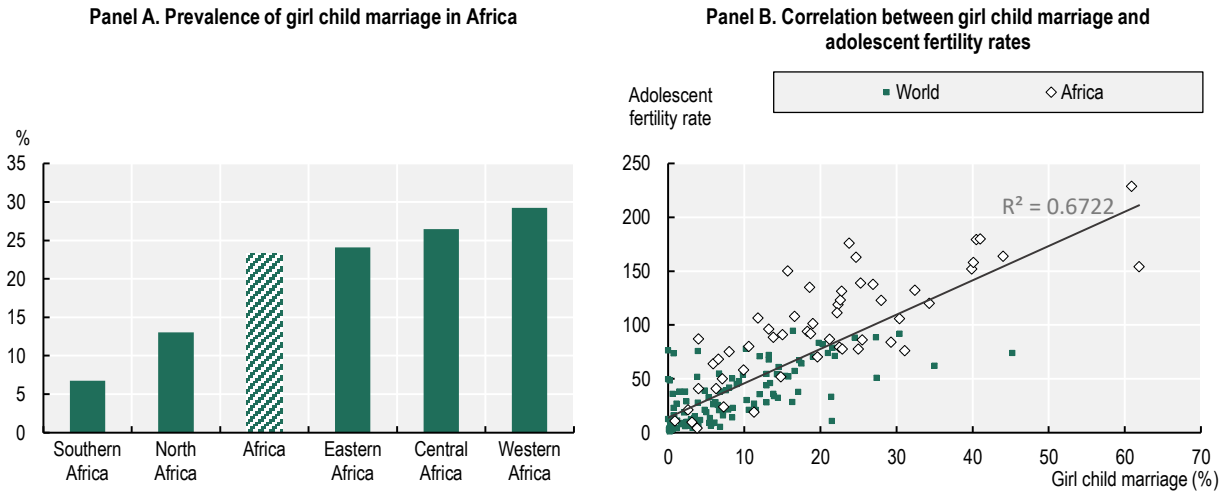
the higher her level of education, which increases her employment opportunities. In addition, eliminating child marriage would provide other positive gains, ranging from better health outcomes to greater autonomy in sexual and reproductive decision making, as well as additional development and economic benefits (Harper et al., 2014[52]). In Niger, for instance, the annual economic benefit from eliminating child marriage could reach USD 1.7 billion by 2030 (Wodon et al., 2017[53]).

A staggering 23% of African girls marry before their 18th birthday compared to just 3% of boys. Africa is also home to 15 of the 20 countries with the highest number of child brides globally. Whereas the prevalence of child marriage remains relatively low in North Africa (11%), it represents a major cause for concern in Central (26%) and West Africa (29%). Child marriage rates range from around 1% in Libya to 62% in Niger, the highest level in the world, together with the Central African Republic (61%) and Mali (44%) (OECD, 2019[30]). If current rates of child marriage remain unchanged, and the present trajectory of population growth continues, child marriage will double by 2050 (OECD, 2019[54]).

Child marriage is closely associated with adverse impacts on girls' and women's physical and psychological health and well-being. In particular, SIGI data show that child marriage prevalence rates are correlated with high rates of adolescent pregnancy in Africa (see Figure 3.4). In addition, a 2016 study in nine West and Central African countries established strong links between child marriage, lower use of modern contraception and higher fertility rates (ICRW; UNICEF, 2016[55]). In sub-Saharan Africa, there were 100 births per 1 000 adolescent girls aged 15-19 years in 2019. This is well above the world average of 42 (World Bank, n.d.[11]).

Figure 3.4. Adolescent pregnancies stem from discriminatory social institutions such as child marriage among girls

Share of women aged 15-19 years who have been or are still married, divorced, widowed or in an informal union, 2018; and correlation between child marriage among girls and adolescent fertility rates



Note: Girl child marriage is calculated as the share of women aged 15-19 years who have been or are still married, divorced, widowed or in an informal union. The adolescent fertility rate is calculated as the number of births per 1 000 women aged 15-19 years. (SDG indicator 3.7.2)
Source: (OECD Development Centre/OECD, 2019[8]), Gender, Institutions and Development Database, https://doi.org/10.1787/ba5dbd30-en; and (United Nations Population Division, n.d.[56]), United Nations Population Division https://population.un.org/wpp/Download/Standard/Fertility

StatLink https://doi.org/10.1787/888934287224

At the global level, social norms reinforce marriage systems, which play a critical role in the development of social institutions. A marriage system is defined as the set of rules that regulate reproduction in a given

society (Fortunato, 2015[57]). In the majority of African countries, the normative structure of the institution of marriage is based on a patriarchal system and organisation of power that allows individuals to permit and tolerate the practice of girl child marriage. The normative structure covers norms, beliefs and ideologies related to girls' transition from childhood to adulthood, the community's compliance with elders' customs and beliefs, and the predominant role of marriage in the development of girls' lives. For instance, in some African countries, girls reaching the last stage of puberty are expected to take on gender roles linked to womanhood and reproduction, including entering a marriage and becoming a mother (Deane, 2021[58]). In addition, within the African context, families may be afraid of facing stigmatisation from their community if they do not marry their daughters at a young age in conformity with traditional social expectations coupled with the considerable concern of dishonour from pregnancy outside of marriage (Gemignani and Wodon, 2015[59]).

The practice of bride price – which is generally paid by the groom's family to the bride's family – is commonly found across sub-Saharan Africa. It is widely accepted that bride price payments can exceed or even reach seven or eight times the annual households' income (Lowes and Nunn, 2018[60]). In many African countries, the bride price can be paid in kind (livestock) or in cash. For example, among the Zulu and Xhosa of Southern Africa, the bride price varies from 10 cows to a maximum of 60. (Forkuor et al., 2018[61]). In sub-Saharan Africa, bride price payments stem primarily from customs and traditions and are practised irrespective of religious considerations (Mbaye and Wagner, 2016[62]). Bride price also generates a strong incentive for parents living in poor households to marry off their daughters in exchange for the payments, which in turn results in high rates of child marriage and adolescent pregnancies (Lowes and Nunn, 2018[60]). In some cases, under extreme poverty, girls may be considered an economic burden and a potential source of wealth through this custom. In areas where bride price is a common practice, loss of household earnings increases the likelihood of marriage by 3% (Voena and Corno, 2016[63])

The bride price practice is both a source and a symptom of male dominance over women and girls. It curtails girls' education and compels women to remain in abusive relationships if they or their family do not have the financial resources to repay the bride price (Brown, 2012[64]). In Uganda, 78% of people consider it to be a common practice. Furthermore, 92% of people consider that the practice is required and gives status to a girl (93%), while bestowing ownership on the husband (72%) (OECD Development Centre, 2015[65]).

In Africa, as in the rest of the world, unequal power relationships are intrinsic to child marriages. Growing evidence shows that young girls are more likely than adult women to be married to substantially older men. The apparent age gap between child brides and their adult husbands results in limited agency, autonomy and low decision-making power within the household. Because of this imbalance of power in child marriages, a substantial number of girls are unable to negotiate contraceptive methods with their partners, which in turn results in early pregnancies. Furthermore, as men are perceived and considered to be the head of the household in many African countries, they remain the main and/or sole decision makers regarding girls' futures and opportunities.

Policy recommendations to tackle discriminatory social institutions restricting women's reproductive autonomy and perpetuating gender-based violence

Improve women's access to family planning

- In line with Article 14 of the Maputo Protocol, governments should lift mandatory authorisations from parents or husbands of married teenage girls for them to access family planning services.
- Strengthen the supply chain of contraceptive methods through the adoption of innovative logistic models.

> *The Ministry of Health and Social Action of Senegal together with the National Pharmacy and other partners formed a public-private partnership to reduce contraceptive shortages within the country. The government implemented the Informed Push Model aimed at reinvesting profits from users' contraceptives purchases back into the public contraceptive supply system to guarantee the availability of modern methods of contraception to everyone. With the application of this approach, the shortages have been practically eliminated (Gueye et al., 2017[66]).*

- Carry out awareness-raising campaigns and activities in schools, universities and youth groups on family planning and contraception methods.
- Expand information on family planning and HIV prevention by sharing key family planning messages via motorised caravans and radio spots.

> *A 2.5 year randomised controlled trial was conducted in 16 areas of Burkina Faso to broadcast brief spots on family planning on eight radio stations across the country and in six languages. The broadcasts covered a wide range of topics on modern contraception including myths about side effects of using modern contraception methods and birth spacing. The national wide campaign led to a 20% increment in the use of modern contraception methods among women. The radio broadcasts also transformed general knowledge about family planning and attitudes towards the use of contraception (DMI, n.d.[67]).*

Reduce maternal mortality rates

- Train more midwives to provide skilled birth attendance to women (poor women, women living in rural areas, migrant women) and comprehensive family planning counselling.
- Employ new technologies to deliver important information on maternal, new-born and child health.

> *Zero Mothers Die is a global programme aimed at decreasing maternal and new-born mortality rates through the utilisation of mobile technologies as well as information and communications technology. In Nigeria, for instance, the initiative targets pregnant women who are victims of risky practices. The programme shares instant phone messages with crucial information on pregnancy and on the potential risks of harmful practices to save women's lives during labour (Zero Mothers Die, n.d.[68]).*

- Offer conditional cash transfers to improve maternal health and birth indicators.

> *From 2006-2008, the government of Rwanda provided presents to pregnant women in exchange for receiving antenatal and postnatal health care, as well as for delivering in health care centres. The results of the randomised control trial conducted in 19 districts and four sectors revealed that pregnant women who started antenatal care within the first four months of their pregnancy increased by 8 per cent. In addition, women who received postnatal care in the 10 days after childbirth incremented by 9 per cent (Shapira et al., 2017[69]).*

Prevent and eliminate child marriage

- In line with Article 6 (c) of the Maputo Protocol, governments should establish 18 years as the minimum legal age for marriage for girls and boys, without any legal exceptions, in compliance with international and regional legal frameworks aimed at eliminating the harmful practice of child marriage.

> *In 2019, the Supreme Court of Tanzania upheld the ban preventing parents from arranging the marriage of girls as young as 14 years (Girls not Brides, 2019[70]).*

- Remove bans prohibiting pregnant and married adolescent girls from returning to school and sitting exams.
- Establish programmes aimed at providing mentoring and support networks to adolescent girls.

Eradicate violence against women and protect them from all forms of gender-based violence

- Provide all women with legal protection from all forms of gender-based violence at work and in public places and educational institutions.

> *In 2019, The Domestic Violence Bill became law and criminalises domestic violence, which includes physical, mental, and sexual abuse, neglect and exploitation (Government of Liberia, 2019[71]).*

- Establish one-stop-service centres for victims and survivors of gender-based violence.

> *One stop-centres providing comprehensive health care, information and legal advice to victims of gender-based violence have been implemented in South Africa, Kenya, Malawi, Uganda, Somalia and South Sudan. In Somalia, for instance, the one stop-centre is located next to a health care facility and provides health treatment, counselling services and legal support to victims of rape or domestic violence (UNFPA, 2020[72]).*

- Improve adequate and affordable access to legal and psychosocial services for victims and survivors of gender-based violence, including women in detention, domestic workers and survivors of sexual exploitation.

End the harmful practice of female genital mutilation

- Criminalise the practice and establish penalties for all perpetrators, including parents and medical practitioners. Add an extraterritorial jurisdiction clause extending penalties to citizens who commit the crime outside of the country.

> *In Kenya, the Prohibition of Female Genital Mutilation Act penalises its citizens who practice FGM, even when they are beyond its national borders (Government of Kenya, 2011[73]). In 2021, the High Court of Kenya upheld that the country's Prohibition on Female Genital Mutilation Act was constitutional after a legal challenge was brought by a medical doctor (High Court of Kenya, 2021[74]).*

- Ensure the effective enforcement of the law by prosecuting perpetrators and providing guidance on prevention, protection, support and follow-up assistance services for survivors.
- Involve customary chiefs, religious and local leaders in the formulation and adoption of national programmes, policies and strategies aimed at eradicating harmful practices and discriminatory attitudes towards women's health and physical integrity.

> *In 2019, the Council of Traditional Leaders was created to shift and eliminate harmful practices, including, child marriage and female genital mutilation. In Malawi, thanks to a collaboration between traditional chiefs and police and child services, they were able to dissolve over 1 800 child marriages across the country.*

> *Furthermore, in Liberia, customary chiefs of the 11 countries where FGM is widely practised, endorsed a Seven County Policy prohibiting this harmful practice (UN Women, 2021[75]).*

- Mobilise public opinion against the practice through tailored awareness-raising interventions within local communities on the short- and long-term negative consequences of FGM on women's and girls' physical and mental well-being.
- Include FGM modules in national surveys on a systematic basis to monitor its appearance.

Notes

[1] Unmet need levels of 25% or more are considered very high and values of 5% or less are regarded as very low.

[2] Abortions are dangerous or least safe when they involve the ingestion of caustic substances, or when untrained persons use dangerous methods such as the insertion of foreign bodies or the use of traditional concoctions.

[3] The six countries are Chad, Senegal, Mali, Burkina Faso, Mauritania and Niger. Domestic violence cases increased from 40.6% prior to the pandemic to 52% during the pandemic.

[4] Sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) share a complex bidirectional relationship.

[5] This proportion of women were aged 15-49 years (married or in union) and are able to make their own decisions on three selected areas: to refuse sexual intercourse with their husband or partner; to make decision regarding the use of contraception; and to make decisions regarding their own health care. Only women who answered "yes" answer to all three areas were considered to make their "own decisions regarding sexual and reproductive health".

[6] "Restrictive masculinities" describes masculinities that confine men to their traditional role as the dominant gender group, undermining women's empowerment and gender equality.

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Annex 3.A. Key indicators for women's health and reproductive autonomy in Africa

Annex Table 3.A.1. Key indicators for women's health and reproductive autonomy in Africa

Indicator	Women	Men
Maternal health		
Maternal mortality ratio (maternal death per 100 000 live births)	481	
Births attended by skilled health staff (% of deliveries attended by personnel trained to give the necessary supervision, care and advice to women during pregnancy, labour and the postpartum period; to conduct deliveries on their own; and to care for new-borns)	62%	
Nurses and midwives (per 1 000 people)	1.1	
HIV/AIDs		
Prevalence of HIV (% of people aged 15-49 who are infected with HIV)	3.1%	
Nutrition		
Stunting prevalence among children under 5 years of age (%)	29%	
Access to family planning		
Adolescent fertility rate (births per 1 000 women aged 15-19 years)	94	-
Prevalence of unmet need for family planning – percentage of currently married or in-union women of reproductive age (15-49) who want to cease or delay childbearing but are not using any method of contraception	22%	-
Women making their own informed decisions regarding sexual relations, contraceptive use and reproductive health care (% of women age 15-49)	45%	-
Child marriage		
Percentage of girls/boys aged 15-19 years ever married, divorced, widowed/widower or in an informal union	23%	3%
Violence against women		
Percentage of women who ever have suffered intimate partner physical and/or sexual violence	33%	-
Proportion of women experiencing intimate partner physical and/or sexual violence within the last 12 months	19%	-
Percentage of girls and women aged 15-49 who consider a husband to be justified in hitting or beating his wife for at least one of the specified reasons: if his wife burns the food, argues with him, goes out without telling him, neglects the children or refuses sexual relations.	47%	-
Female genital mutilation		
Percentage of women aged 15-49 years who have undergone FGM	27%	-
Percentage of women aged 15-49 years who have heard about FGM and think the practice should continue	16%	-

Source: (WHO, n.d.[76]), Global Health Observatory, (World Bank, n.d.[11]), World Development Indicators, (OECD Development Centre/OECD, 2019[8]), Gender Institutions and Development Database.

StatLink https://doi.org/10.1787/888934287528

Annex 3.B. Women's health and reproductive rights in African regional conventions

Maputo Protocol, Article 14 Health and Reproductive Rights

1. State Parties shall ensure that the right to health of women, including sexual and reproductive health is respected and promoted. This includes:
   a the right to control their fertility
   b the right to decide whether to have children, the number of children and the spacing of children
   c the right to choose any method of contraception
   d the right to self-protection and to be protected against sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/ AIDS
   e the right to be informed on one's health status and on the health status of one's partner, particularly if affected with sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDS, in accordance with internationally recognised standards and best practices
   f the right to have family planning education.
2. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to:
   a provide adequate, affordable and accessible health services, including information, education and communication programmes to women especially those in rural areas
   b establish and strengthen existing pre-natal, delivery and post-natal health and nutritional services for women during pregnancy and while they are breast-feeding
   c protect the reproductive rights of women by authorising medical abortion in cases of sexual assault, rape, incest and where the continued pregnancy endangers the mental and physical health of the mother or the life of the mother or the foetus.

Health in the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development

Article 26 on Health

States Parties shall, by 2015, in line with the SADC Protocol and other regional and international commitments by Member States on issues relating to health, adopt and implement legislative frameworks, policies, programmes and services to enhance gender sensitive, appropriate and affordable quality health care, in particular, to:

   a reduce the maternal mortality ratio by 75% by 2015
   b develop and implement policies and programmes to address the mental, sexual and reproductive health needs of women and men
   c ensure the provision of hygiene and sanitary facilities and nutritional needs of women, including women in prison.

Article 27 on HIV and AIDS

1. States Parties shall take every step necessary to adopt and implement gender sensitive policies and programmes, and enact legislation that will address prevention, treatment, care and support in accordance with, but not limited to, the Maseru Declaration on HIV and AIDS.

2. States Parties shall ensure that the policies and programmes referred to in sub-Article 1 take account of the unequal status of women, the particular vulnerability of the girl child as well as harmful practices and biological factors that result in women constituting the majority of those infected and affected by HIV and AIDS.
3. State Parties shall, by 2015:
    a develop gender-sensitive strategies to prevent new infections
    b ensure universal access to HIV and AIDS treatment for infected women, men, girls and boys
    c develop and implement policies and programmes to ensure appropriate recognition of the work carried out by caregivers, the majority of whom are women, the allocation of resources and the psychological support for caregivers as well as promote the involvement of men in the care and support of people living with HIV and AIDS.

Supplementary Act relating to Equality of Rights between Women and Men for Sustainable Development in the ECOWAS Region

Article 23: Prohibition and Support for Victims

1. Member States shall:
    a adopt laws prohibiting all forms of gender-based violence, and ensure their enforcement
    b ensure that the perpetrators of gender-based violence, including domestic violence, sexual harassment, female genital mutilation and all other forms of gender-based violence are brought before a court of competent jurisdiction and punished accordingly.
2. Member States shall adopt laws on gender-based violence that provide for testing, treatment and care of victims of sexual offenses. Victims of sexual offences shall have access, in particular, to:
    a emergency medical care and treatment
    b post-exposure treatment/prophylaxis in all health centres so as to reduce any risk of contracting HIV and other opportunistic infections.

4 Women's economic empowerment

This chapter focuses on women's economic empowerment and access to productive and financial resources in Africa. Adopting a holistic approach, it examines formal and informal laws, social norms and practices to identify the main challenges and forms of discriminations affecting women in the region. These consist of limited employment and labour participation, a large burden of unpaid care and domestic work, and reduced access to agricultural land, food, financial services and entrepreneurship opportunities. The analysis considers the current situation of women and uncovers underlying factors. Based on this analysis, the chapter provides policy recommendations to improve women's economic empowerment and to promote equal access to productive and financial resources.

The economic dimension is central to women's empowerment and includes women's ability to participate in the labour market and to earn an income, as well as their ability to access and control productive and financial resources. It also encompasses a wider set of issues, including control over their own time, lives and bodies, and their meaningful participation and representation in economic decision-making processes at all levels – from within the household to the highest economic and political positions (UN Women, 2020[1]). Women's economic empowerment focuses primarily on women's capacity to make strategic choices and exercise agency in the economic sphere, but it also paves the way for changes in other dimensions of their lives, such as well-being, social empowerment, health or education (Kabeer, 2009[2]).

Africa continues to experience large gender gaps, as shown by its performance against key economic indicators on the African Gender Index (AGI), a composite index developed jointly by the African Development Bank and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa. The continent obtains a score of 62% in the AGI's economic dimension, indicating that women in African countries benefit from about two-thirds of the economic opportunities available to men (AfDB and UNECA, 2020[3]).

The present chapter is divided into three main sections. The first section looks at the main indicators of women's economic empowerment. It provides a broad overview of the situation of women in Africa across two dimensions: their inclusion and position in the labour market and their access to critical assets and resources. The second section of the chapter explores underlying factors that explain the inequalities observed between men and women in terms of labour and access to resources. This section uncovers the role played by discriminatory social norms, attitudes and stereotypes in explaining women's exclusion from the labour market, their lower job status compared to men, their limited ownership of agricultural land and assets, and the constraints faced by women entrepreneurs in Africa. The third and last section presents some key policy recommendations that could help address discriminatory social institutions that constrain women's economic empowerment in Africa. A table summarising some key indicators for women's economic empowerment in Africa can be found at the end of the chapter in Annex 4.A.

What is the situation regarding women's economic empowerment in Africa?

Women's employment in Africa is characterised by limited participation, high informality and jobs of low status

As elsewhere in the world, women's labour force participation in Africa is lower than that of men. In 2020, the labour force participation gap stood at nearly 20 percentage points, with 54% of African women contributing to the labour force compared to 73% of men (Figure 4.1, Panel A). However, these averages conceal a much more diverse landscape at the regional, national and sub-regional level. In East Africa, women's labour force participation rate is 73% – the highest on the continent – while the gender gap is lower at 9 percentage points. In Central Africa, women's labour force participation is slightly lower at 66%, but the sub-region displays the lowest gender gap on the continent at only 7 percentage points. In contrast, women's participation in the labour force in North Africa is very low at only 21%, with an extremely large gender gap of 49 percentage points. At the country level, in Burundi, Madagascar, Rwanda and Tanzania, women's labour force participation rate is greater than 80%. Moreover, in some countries, women have a higher labour force participation than men, as observed in Guinea and Rwanda, for instance.

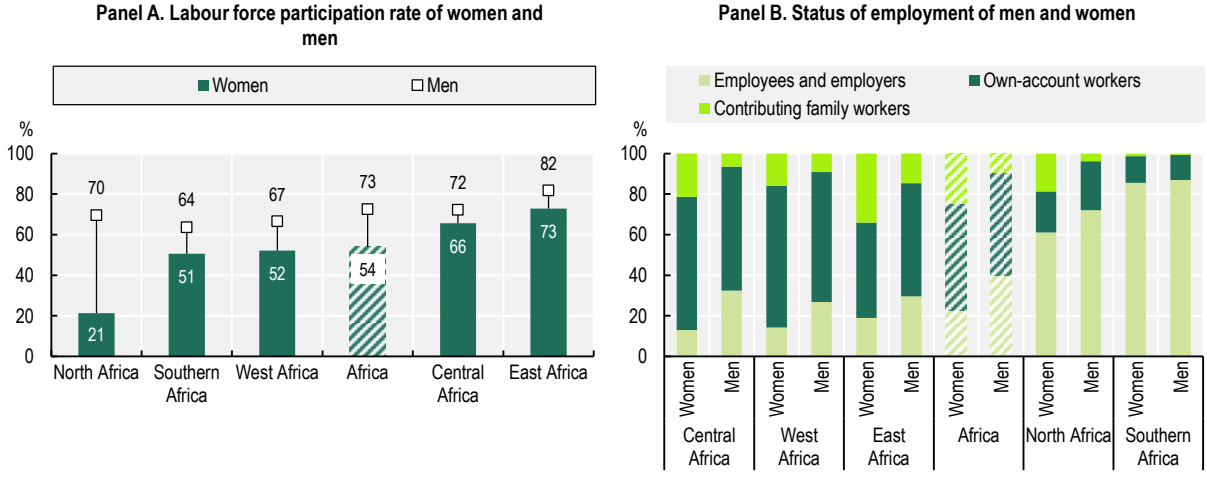
Nevertheless, women in Africa – and particularly in sub-Saharan Africa – have always contributed significantly to household income, in many instances through informal arrangements or as a family worker. This is particularly the case in rural settings, where women often work on the family's plot and contribute to the production of both cash crops and subsistence farming. Moreover, women's paid or unpaid contribution to household income comes on top of unpaid care and domestic work, the vast majority of which is performed by women, resulting in them working significantly longer hours than men, particularly in rural areas (ActionAid, 2017[4]).

Women's employment in Africa is characterised by high rates of informality. The proportion of employed women working in the informal sector is slightly higher than for men (90% and 83%, respectively) (ILO, 2018[5]). Such informal employment status excludes them from social protection benefits and makes them extremely vulnerable to shocks, such as the COVID-19 pandemic (Box 4.1).

Women's employment is also characterised by lower job status compared to men. For instance, women tend to be confined to more vulnerable forms of employment such as contributing family workers. At the continental level, 23% of employed women work as paid employees or employers, compared to 40% of men. Conversely, 25% of working women are contributing family workers compared to only 9% of working men (Figure 4.1, Panel B). This distribution of men and women across the different forms of employment is found in all African sub-regions and countries: women are systematically underrepresented as employees and employers and overrepresented as contributing family workers.

Figure 4.1. Women's participation in the labour market is limited and characterised by low-status jobs across all sub-regions of the continent

Share of men and women aged 15 years and older participating to the labour force (ILO modelled estimates); and share of men and women by status of employment



Note: The labour force participation rate is calculated as the labour force divided by the total population aged 15 years and older.
Source: (ILO, n.d.[6]), ILOSTAT, https://ilostat.ilo.org/data.

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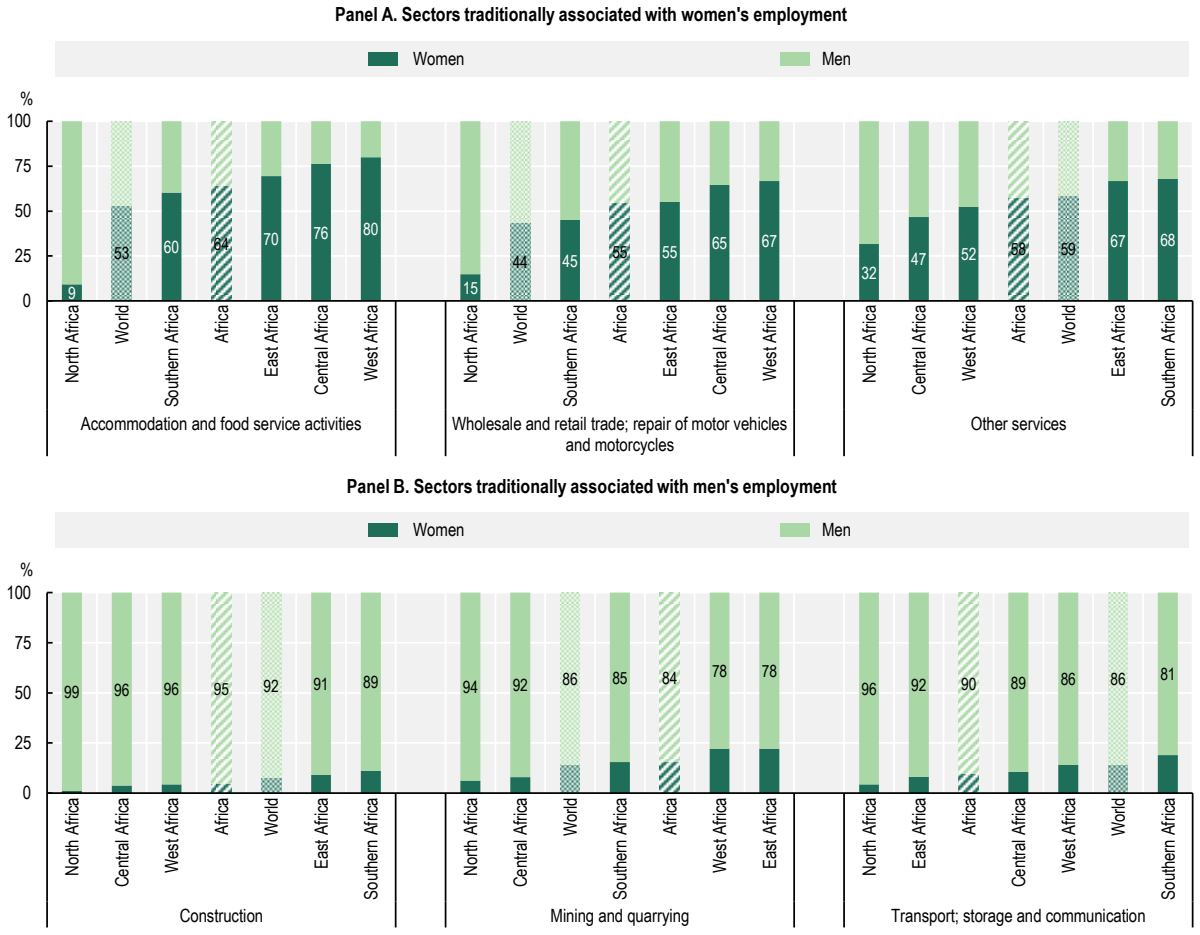
The impact of women's lower job status on the gender pay gap is difficult to measure. The importance of informality, the weight of agriculture – which implies that the majority of income is earned at the household level – the lack of statistical capacities as well as other factors mean that measures of income in most African countries are scarce, collected irregularly and subject to potential strong biases. Yet, in the few countries where data exist – although often partial – evidence suggests that women earn less than men. In 2015, in South Africa, the gender pay gap was estimated at nearly 20%. Furthermore, in ten African countries that were analysed, data suggest that the gender pay gap is particularly large at the bottom of the wage distribution (ILO, 2019[7]).

Horizontal segregation is high across all economic sectors. Women tend to be overrepresented in certain sectors while being almost completely absent from others. For instance, in sectors such as construction, mining and quarrying, or transport, storage and communication, men systematically and consistently

account for more than 80% of the workers (Figure 4.2, Panel B). Conversely, women are predominant in sectors such as accommodation, wholesale and retail trade or household services. At the continental level, women account for 64% and 55% of workers in the accommodation and food services sector and the wholesale and retail sectors, respectively. In East, Central and West Africa, women account for more than 70% of the workers in the accommodation sector. Likewise, women represent about 65% of the workers in wholesale and retail trade in Central and West Africa (Figure 4.2, Panel A). In the context of the crisis triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic, this horizontal segregation has induced greater adverse economic consequences for women than for men (Box 4.1).

Figure 4.2. Gender segregation across economic sectors mirrors stereotypes regarding the inherent characteristics of men and women

Share of men and women in selected economic sectors



Note: Sectors are based on the ISIC rev.4 classification of ILO. In Panel A, "Other services" corresponds to the aggregation of categories R (Arts, entertainment and recreation), S (Other service activities), T (Activities of households as employers; undifferentiated goods and services producing activities of households for own use) and U (Activities of extraterritorial organizations and bodies) of ISIC rev.4.
Source: (ILO, n.d.[6]), ILOSTAT, https://ilostat.ilo.org/data.

StatLink https://doi.org/10.1787/888934287566

Box 4.1. The impact of the COVID-19 crisis on women's employment in Africa

The COVID-19 pandemic has triggered the deepest global economic recession in nearly a century, disrupting economic activity and negatively affecting well-being and jobs. For the first time in 25 years, Africa has experienced its first recession. The economic output of the continent, which is highly exposed to external shocks, has contracted by 2.1% to 4.9%, according to different scenarios jointly developed by the African Union and the OECD Development Centre (AUC/OECD, 2021[8]). Furthermore, the crisis is having disproportionate economic impacts on women that if not mitigated, may worsen long-term economic empowerment and pre-existing labour market imbalances.

The economic crisis primarily affects sectors in which women are overrepresented

The COVID-19 crisis encompassing lockdown and confinement measures, as well as the disruption of international supply chains and tourism, has severely affected specific sectors, such as retail trade, accommodation and food services, and domestic services, where women in Africa are overrepresented (Annex Table 4.A.1). Across the region, women account for 55% and 64% of workers employed in the wholesale and retail trade sector and the accommodation and food services sector, respectively. Women also account for a disproportionate share of workers involved in household and domestic services, which suffered heavily from the crisis (ILO, 2020[9]). Domestic workers often do not benefit from any social protection schemes, a situation that increases their hardship when faced with job uncertainty. Moreover, women in the informal economy are more often found in the most vulnerable situations, for instance as domestic workers, home-based workers or contributing family workers, compounding their vulnerabilities (ILO, 2018[5]).

Lockdown and confinement measures exacerbate women's burden of unpaid care and domestic work and jeopardise their jobs in a context of widespread informality

Overloaded healthcare systems combined with partial or full lockdowns in at least 42 countries on the continent (AUC/OECD, 2021[8]), and reduced availability of essential services such as schools or day-care centres, has increased the burden of unpaid care and domestic work that falls on African women. This increase has accentuated pre-existing gender imbalances. Rapid gender assessments conducted by UN Women in several countries of East and Southern Africa showed that women were more likely than men to spend more time on unpaid domestic work compared to the situation prior to the pandemic (UN Women and UNFPA, 2021[10]).

Lockdown and confinement measures have primarily affected informal workers. Faced with strict movement limitations to contain the spread of the pandemic, many informal workers, particularly in urban settings, have lost their jobs and income. Recent evidence suggests that in Africa, the impact on women has been particularly strong, pushing many out of the labour force and widening the pre-pandemic gender gap (Weber, Palacio-Lopez and Contreras-Gonzalez, 2020[11]).

Limited access to assets and resources constrains women's ability to invest and create businesses

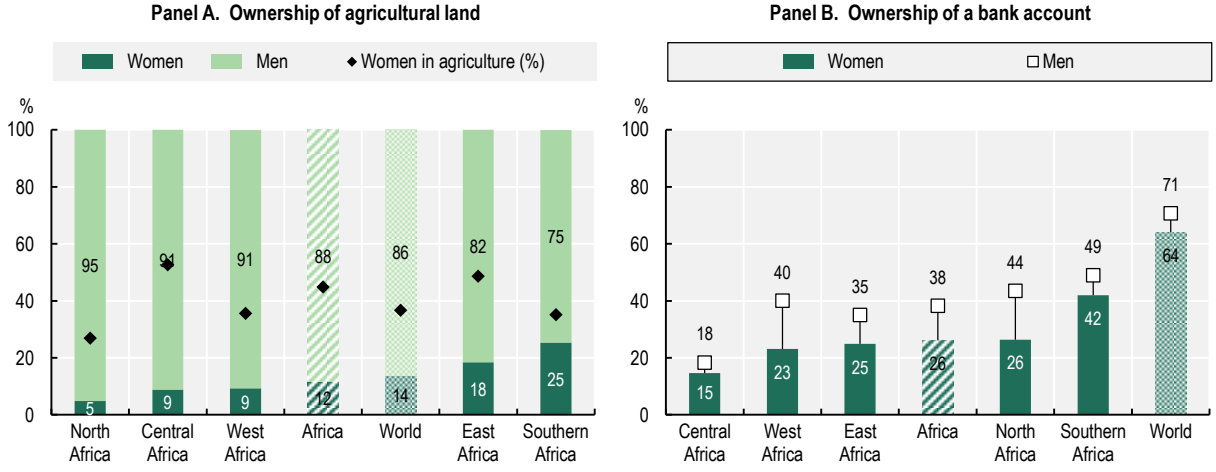
Women's ownership of agricultural land across African countries appears extremely limited in a context where agriculture remains central to many African economies. In 2020, estimates indicated that agricultural output represented about 15% of the continent's gross domestic product (GDP) (World Bank, n.d.[12]). More importantly, in spite of the progressive transition among countries towards industry and services, the agricultural sector continues to function as the main source of employment, particularly for women. At the continental level, 49% of the labour force and 51% of working women are employed in agriculture. In certain sub-regions, such as Central Africa or East Africa, more than 60% of women are employed in the

agricultural sector. Yet, although women account for 45% of the agricultural workforce on the continent, their ownership of agricultural land remains much lower than men's. At the continental level, women account for only 12% of agricultural landowners (Figure 4.3, Panel A). Even in East Africa and Southern Africa, where the share of women among agricultural landowners is highest, the proportion only reaches 18% and 25%, respectively. The situation is particularly critical in Central Africa where women make up 53% of the agricultural workforce but only account for 9% of agricultural land owners.

Women's limited ownership of land assets has significant consequences for their empowerment. Ownership of agricultural land and related decision-making power is critical to women's economic empowerment as land is not only an essential element for food security and income generation, it can also serve as collateral for credit and as a means of saving for the future. Moreover, agricultural land is also a social asset: historically, land ownership has brought political power, especially in agrarian societies (Holcombe, 2020[13]). In this regard, women's low ownership of agricultural land in Africa shapes their lack of agency, political influence and decision-making power (see Chapter 5).

Figure 4.3. Women benefit from only limited ownership of agricultural land and access to basic financial instruments

Proportion of men and women among agricultural landowners and share of women who work in the agricultural sector; and share of men and women who own a bank account at a formal financial institution



Note: In Panel A, data are available for 24 African countries. In Panel B, data are available for 44 African countries. Global, regional and sub-regional averages are calculated based only on the available data.
Source: (OECD Development Centre/OECD, 2019[14]), Gender, Institutions and Development Database, https://doi.org/10.1787/ba5dbd30-en; and (World Bank, 2017[15]), Global Findex database, https://globalfindex.worldbank.org.

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Women in Africa are more likely to be entrepreneurs than men, but their businesses face more challenges than those owned by men. At the continental level, 55% of women work as employers or own-account workers. In particular, evidence suggests that limited opportunities for formal waged employment act as a powerful incentive for individuals, and particularly women, to start a business. In many cases, starting a business allows women to engage in income-generating activities and to diversify sources of household income (AfDB/OECD/UNDP, 2017[16]). The inherent greater flexibility in working hours of entrepreneurship compared to waged employment may also allow women the time they may need to assume other responsibilities, such as caring for children or performing unpaid care and domestic work (e.g. cooking or

cleaning). The continent has given rise to many successful women entrepreneurs who have managed to create and operate large and profitable businesses (Box 4.2).

Box 4.2. Women entrepreneurs in Africa: Success stories

Historically, Africa has been home to many successful women entrepreneurs who have succeeded in spite of the challenges and barriers they may face. Three such success stories are presented below.

The "Nana Benz" and the Dutch wax printed cloth industry, Togo

An early example of entrepreneurial success were the "Nana Benz" in Togo. Filling a gap created by the booming phosphate industry and the diversion of much of the labour force towards the extractive industry, a group of women built a business trading Dutch wax printed cloth. Historically, Dutch wax was a major trading good of West Africa but the industry had since fallen into disarray. Within a few years, these women established a quasi-monopoly over the clothing trade spanning the whole region, from Burkina Faso to the Congo. Their nickname came from the Mercedes Benz cars they imported at the height of their success during the 1970s and the 1980s. Their business started to decline in the 1990s in the face of intense competition from women entrepreneurs from countries such as Nigeria. However, today a new generation of Togolese women entrepreneurs dubbed the "Nanettes" has emerged and is carrying on the early entrepreneurial success enjoyed by the "Nana Benz".

Massogbè Touré Diabaté and the cashew business, Côte d'Ivoire

In the 1980s, cashew was not a significant crop in Côte d'Ivoire, although thousands of cashew trees had been planted to reforest land parcels and protect the soil. At this time, the agricultural sector was heavily dominated by men. Following a business trip to India where she observed the successful cashew trade, Massogbè Touré Diabaté established a women's co-operative to plant cashew trees. Initially focusing on cashew production, she moved progressively up the value chain initiating the industrial transformation of cashew in Côte d'Ivoire. In 2000, she founded the *Société ivoirienne de traitement d'anacarde*. By 2018, the company had more than 800 employees, the majority of whom were women. The company has also operated a microfinance institution since 1991 with the objective of facilitating women's access to capital.

Julian Adyeri Omalla and fruit juices, Uganda

In 1996, after working for her brothers, Julian Adyeri Omalla established Delight Uganda Limited, which sells a popular fruit drink under the brand name "Cheers". Over the years, the business has grown becoming the main producer of fruit juice in Uganda, with more than 1 000 employees, and exporting to all neighbouring countries. Since the outset, Julian Adyeri Omalla's strategy has relied on setting up growers' schemes and developing networks of raw fruits providers. These efforts focused primarily on creating business relationships with small women growers across Uganda. Estimates suggest that Julian Adyeri Omalla has mobilised and engaged with over 500 000 vulnerable women farmers to establish orchards, which are intercropped with short-term seasonal crops for income and sustainability.

*Source*s: Gaston-Breton (2020[17]), "De si puissantes femmes d'affaires… L'étonnante histoire des « Nanas Benz » du Togo", *History & Business*; Gbadamassi (2018[18]), "#8Mars2018. Côte d'Ivoire: le cajou, les femmes et Massogbè Touré Diabaté", *France Info Afrique* ; Cloutour (2018[19]), *Leadership Féminin dans l'Economie Africaine : portrait de Massogbè Touré Diabaté, PDG du groupe SITA*; Jjingo (2020[20]), "Julian Omalla wins UN award for inclusive business model", *The Observer*; Lioness of Africa (n.d.[21]), *Profile of Julian Adyeri Omalla*, Lioness of Africa.

However, data on the characteristics of enterprises owned by African women, although scarce, seem to suggest that women-led businesses face specific constraints that limit their profitability, scalability and growth. Women entrepreneurs are concentrated in specific sectors and are much more likely to work in

non-tradable services than men entrepreneurs (AfDB/OECD/UNDP, 2017[16]). Moreover, women-owned businesses are smaller, less capital intensive and are more likely to operate in the informal sector than men-owned businesses (World Bank Group, 2019[22]). Self-employed workers are also less likely to use digital resources. As self-employment – often in the informal economy – will likely continue to be the most dominant form of employment in Africa in the short-to-medium term, efforts to develop the use of digital tools to support existing business activities will prove critical to raising the profitability of micro and small enterprises, particularly in rural areas and for firms owned by women (AUC/OECD, 2021[8]).

Access to financial services, and more precisely to bank accounts and formal credit, remains limited for both men and women. At the continental level, only 26% of women have a formal bank account, compared to 38% of men. Women's rate of bank account ownership ranges from 15% in Central Africa (18% for men) to 42% in Southern Africa (49% for men) (Figure 4.3, Panel B). Beyond existing gender gaps in access to formal bank accounts, the primary issue remains the low development of banking capacities and the limited offer, which concerns both men and women alike. Structural barriers to bank account ownership are significant, and include the lack of official identification required to open an account or seek a loan, long distances to branches and lack of financial literacy among the population. In rural areas in particular, the cost of providing banking services is often too high for financial institutions. For financial intermediaries, factors such as income level, level of household savings, average size of loans, but also population density or age dependency ratios, may have a profound effect on the cost effectiveness of providing financial services to the population (Barajas et al., 2020[23]).This may create multiple levels of discrimination for women, who may also need to ask their husband's permission to travel to the nearest bank branch (or post office access point).

Initiatives to address the financial access gap have led to the rapid development of mobile banking across African countries. Between 2014 and 2017, in the 29 African countries with available data, the share of women with a mobile bank account increased in all countries but one,[1] and by more than 15 percentage points in eight of them.[2] Governments have also tried to address traditional barriers to financial inclusion through innovative approaches based on the roll-out of digital technologies. In many parts of the continent, one of the main impediments to access to finance is a lack of formal identity and related documentation, which are necessary to open a bank account. Recent experiments across the continent have sought to deploy biometric-based technology to provide individuals with reliable identification tools and to enhance registration at birth. However, governments are looking beyond traditional usage of biometric tools (e.g. for security purposes), seeking to create an identity ecosystem to support the delivery of financial services as well as social benefits, health services and so forth (Toesland, 2021[24]; Aït-Hatrit, 2020[25]). For instance, since 2017, Malawi has embarked on a nationwide mass registration initiative aimed at building a single identity registry with unique national identity numbers. The programme aims to register citizens who lack a formal identity on a massive scale and to revamp birth registration processes in a country where only 2-3% of births were previously recorded in an official manner. Among other goals, the provision of a reliable identity document is expected to lift current barriers to financial inclusion (Hersey, 2020[26]; Handforth and Wilson, 2019[27]).

Borrowing capital is not uncommon in Africa but is traditionally done informally through family and friends. The gender gap in obtaining formal credit or loans is very small in Africa. In 2017, only 6% of women and 8% of men in sub-Saharan Africa declared having borrowed money from a financial institution. These figures show that formal borrowing is very limited for the whole population, women and men alike. However, informal borrowing occurs at high levels: in sub-Saharan Africa, more than 30% of the population had borrowed from family or friends (29% of women). In countries such as Burundi, Kenya, Libya, Namibia, Swaziland and Uganda, the share of women who had borrowed from family and friends in 2017 was higher than 40% (World Bank, 2017[15]).

Women face higher constraints than men to obtaining loans (e.g. lack of potential collateral), which results in less favourable financial terms – higher interest rates, shorter maturity, etc. – and smaller loans. These differences in loan characteristics contribute significantly to the capital investment gap between women-

owned and men-owned businesses. Drawing on data collected in ten African countries,[3] analysis from the World Bank shows that the typical man-owned firm in these countries has over six times the capital investment of the typical woman-owned enterprise. This, in turn, plays a central role in explaining the gender gap in business performance (World Bank Group, 2019[22]).

How do discriminatory social institutions constrain women's economic empowerment in Africa?

Deeply entrenched and structural, discriminatory social institutions are at the root of these unequal gender outcomes. They entail laws and regulations that discriminate against women and prevent them from being economically on an equal footing with men (see Chapter 2). Beyond structural and legal barriers, they also include norms, attitudes, stereotypes and fundamental customs and traditions that place constraints on women's economic activity, participation in the labour market, ownership of assets and so on. This section uncovers the role played by these discriminatory social institutions in explaining women's exclusion from and marginalisation within the labour market, their lower job status compared to men, their limited ownership of agricultural land and assets, and the barriers to successful women-led entrepreneurship in Africa.

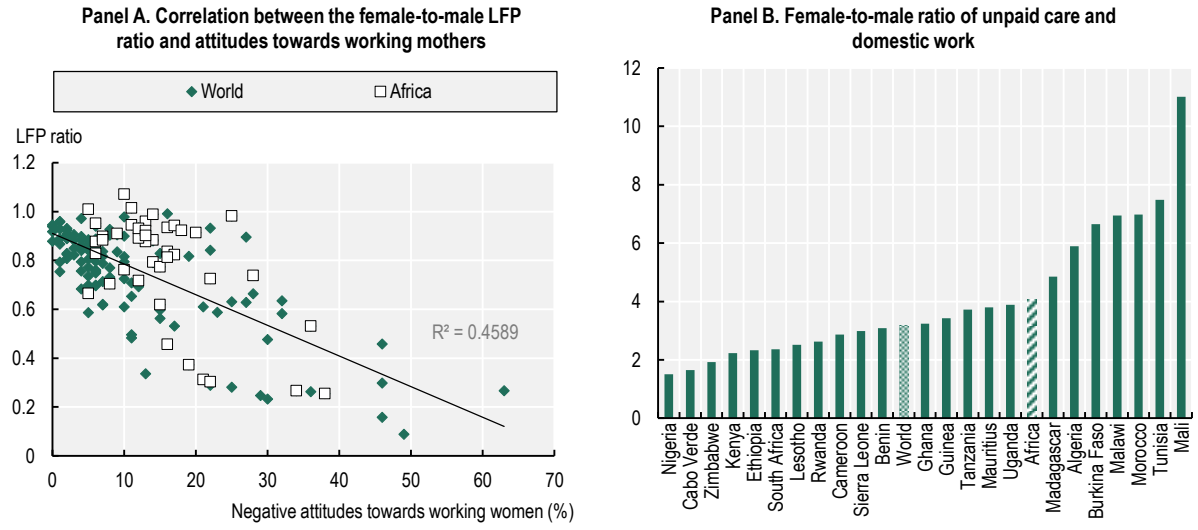
Discriminatory gender roles within the household constrain women's access to the labour market

Discriminatory social institutions – in particular social norms within society and the household – severely constrain women's labour force participation (Ferrant and Kolev, 2016[28]). Evidence from the SIGI shows that in almost all African countries, formal laws as well as discriminatory customary and traditional practices that undermine these legal frameworks continue to restrict women's work-related rights (see Chapter 2 on legal frameworks). Attitudes related to women's paid employment are also important. Social norms that discourage women from choosing to have a paid job outside the household are highly and negatively correlated with lower female-to-male labour force participation ratios (Figure 4.4, Panel A). In Africa, 18% of the population disagrees with the statement: "It is perfectly acceptable for any woman in your family to have a paid job outside the home if she wants to." Rates range from 4% in Mauritius to 38% in Algeria.

African women continue to assume the bulk of unpaid care and domestic work. In 2018, in the 23 African countries for which data are available, women spent, on average, 4.1 times more time than men did on unpaid care and domestic work, including raising children, caring for sick or elderly family members, and managing household tasks (Figure 4.4, Panel B). The ongoing COVID-19 crisis exacerbates these imbalances with lockdown measures often leading to additional unpaid care and domestic work which falls on the shoulders of women and girls (Box 4.1).

Women's disproportionate burden of unpaid care and domestic work reinforces their low participation in the labour market and limits their economic empowerment. Among others, it constrains the allocation of their time, their mobility, their employment opportunities and their ability to engage in political and civic activities (see Chapter 5). It also pushes women to seek work arrangements that are more flexible, often part-time and closer to home, all of which results in the segregation of women into the informal sector and low-status jobs (Dieterich, Huang and Thomas, 2016[29]; Kabeer, 2009[2]).

Figure 4.4. Traditional gender roles within the household and discriminatory attitudes hamper women's labour force participation



Note: Panel A: Negative attitudes towards working women are defined as the share of the population that disagrees with the statement: "It is perfectly acceptable for any woman in your family to have a paid job outside the home if she wants to." The female-to-male labour force participation ratio is calculated as the women's labour force participation rate divided by the men's labour force participation rate. The labour force participation rate is calculated as the labour force divided by the total working-age population. The working-age population refers to people aged 15-64 years. Attitudinal data cover 147 countries; data are missing for ten African countries: Angola, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Comoros, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Guinea-Bissau, Sao Tome and Principe, and Sudan. R^2 is 0.4589.
Panel B: The female-to-male ratio of unpaid care and domestic work is calculated as the average number of hours dedicated by women to unpaid care work and domestic tasks divided by the average number of hours dedicated by men to the same tasks. Data are only available for 23 African countries. Global and regional averages are calculated based only on the available data.
Source: (OECD Development Centre/OECD, 2019[14]), Gender, Institutions and Development Database, https://doi.org/10.1787/ba5dbd30-en; (OECD, 2020[30]), Labour Force Statistics, https://oe.cd/ds/2Sp; and (ILO, n.d.[6]), ILOSTAT, https://ilostat.ilo.org/data.

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The unequal distribution of unpaid care and domestic work in households is the product of discriminatory social norms and traditional views of gender roles. In 2018, for instance, 77% of respondents in Tunisia declared that children will suffer when a mother works for pay outside the home. The data on these social norms reveal the deeply entrenched and gender-differentiated social expectations faced by women and men. Women's paid labour is not viewed as favourably as men's because paid work is a fundamental aspect of masculine identity (OECD, 2021[31]). Indeed, in order to be considered "real" men, men are often expected to be breadwinners and financial providers for their families. Conversely, caring for family members and the home is a primary social expectation of women. By confining women to domestic tasks, these rigid social norms and restrictive masculinities have a profound impact on women's participation in the labour market.

The characteristics of women's employment – low participation, high informality and jobs of low status – highlight their dual role as the primary caretaker of the household and a contributor to the household's income. Women in Africa – and particularly in rural areas – tend to contribute significantly to household income but primarily through informal arrangements or as a contributing family worker (ActionAid, 2017[4]). Cross-country evidence in Burkina Faso, Ghana, Mauritius, Rwanda and Zambia have shown how marriage, and thus a significant increase in women's domestic responsibilities, has a strong negative effect on women's labour characteristics. In these countries, data suggest that many married women face additional unpaid care and domestic work and as a result drop out of formal waged employment, transferring either to household enterprises as informal employees or into agriculture to work on the family's

plot (Dieterich, Huang and Thomas, 2016[29]). In general, intra-household dynamics, gender roles, and the need for women to remain flexible in order to fulfil their unpaid care and domestic responsibilities confine women to a role of secondary earner who enters and exits the workforce depending on personal or local circumstances (e.g. the COVID-19 crisis, see Box 4.1). Typically, informal employment provides women with both the ability to contribute to the household's income and allows sufficient time and commitment flexibility to fulfil the household's duties.

Perception of women's abilities and discriminatory educational norms tend to confine women to low-status jobs in specific sectors of the economy

Norms and stereotypes that associate men and women with certain inherent characteristics tend to naturally orient women's and men's labour choices towards certain sectors of the economy. Norms of restrictive masculinities dictate that a "real" man should work in sectors and jobs that are considered by society as "manly" jobs (OECD, 2021[31]). Traditions, customs and gender norms thus play a fundamental role in promoting and sustaining the social definition of tasks that are considered as adequate for either men or women. These social associations between gender and types of jobs are often rooted in what are considered masculine and feminine traits – e.g. physical strength for men and being caring for women (Buscatto and Fusulier, 2013[32]; Simpson, 2004[33]). African economies are no exception and gender segregation across economic sectors mirrors existing social stereotypes and beliefs about men's and women's traits and characteristics. Men tend to be overrepresented in "manly" sectors such as construction, mining and quarrying or transport, storage and communication, whereas women are predominant in sectors such as accommodation, wholesale and retail trade or household services.

Discriminatory norms and practices related to educational choices play a critical role. First, harmful social practices such as girl child marriage, school-related violence against girls and female genital mutilation[4] constitute strong impediments to girls' education, curtailing their future professional opportunities (Yotebieng, 2021[34]). Evidence from Uganda and Ethiopia show that girls continue to drop out of school – mostly at the secondary level – either as a result of early marriage or pregnancy (Watson, 2014[35]). In many instances, women who did not benefit from education have no choice but to take on low-status jobs, often in the informal sector or remain employed within the household, either on the family plot or in the household business. Socio-economic development is also a key factor, as households with limited resources tend to make educational choices favouring sons, primarily because the expected returns on such investments are believed to be higher than for daughters. As a result, parents are often reluctant to invest in the education of girls (UNICEF, 2016[36]). In Uganda, for instance, around 10% of the population believes that more resources should be invested in the education and care of boys (OECD Development Centre, 2015[37]).

At the same time, biases related to boys' and girls' abilities shape educational choices when accessing secondary and tertiary education, in particular regarding science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields, thereby accentuating gender-based segregation in the labour force. On the one hand, social norms, stereotypes and strong unconscious biases lead people to perceive certain fields of study as masculine and play a critical role in dictating the types of programmes in which women enrol compared with men. For instance, self-selection bias is considered a key factor in girls opting out of STEM fields (Llena-Nozal, Martin and Murtin, 2019[38]; UNESCO, 2017[39]). On the other hand, learning materials perpetuate gender stereotypes by assigning certain functions and skills to girls and boys from as early as primary or secondary education. As a consequence, women and men acquire very different sets of skills, not because of their inherent capabilities but because of unconscious and deeply entrenched biases. This, in turn, prevents women from joining fast-growing economic sectors characterised by well-paid job opportunities. For instance, in Central Africa, where poor STEM education for women is a central concern, women are 25% less likely than men to be able to use information and communication technology (ICT) tools for basic purposes, such as using simple arithmetic formulas in software (AUC/OECD, 2021[8]).

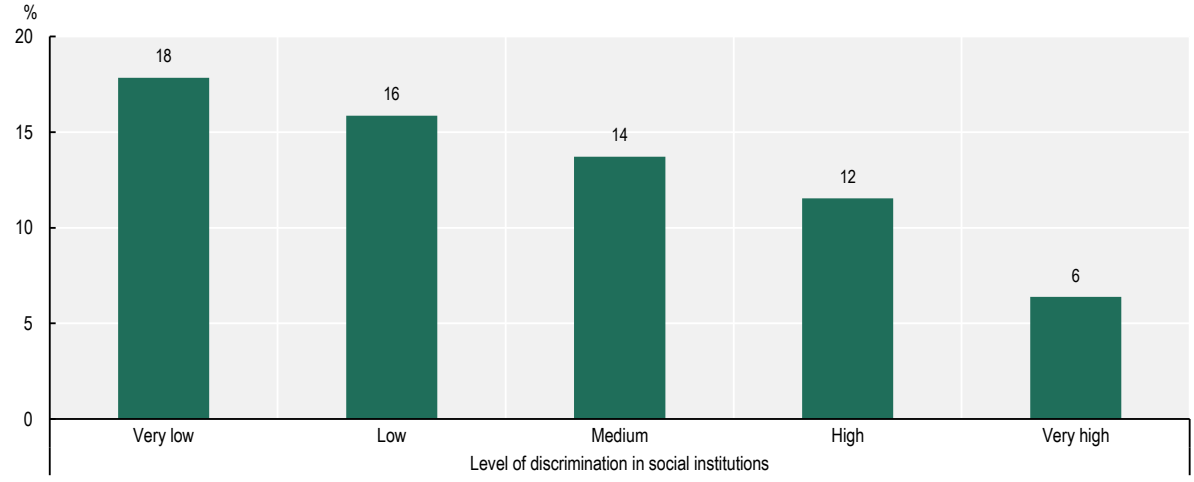
The implications for economic empowerment are far-reaching, as women in Africa seem to be largely drawn to sectors that are less profitable or where wages are lower. Analysis of firms' profitability shows that the sectors in which women traditionally work or operate a business are less profitable than those dominated by men (e.g. construction or transportation). However, in sectors traditionally dominated by men, the few women-owned businesses that operate tend to be as large and as efficient as those owned by men. In sectors traditionally dominated by women (e.g. wholesale, retail, or accommodation and food services), women-owned businesses tend to underperform men-owned ones (World Bank Group, 2019[22]). These findings suggest that (i) women entrepreneurs could benefit from moving towards men-dominated sectors; and (ii) that women operating in sectors traditionally dominated by women must face structural constraints and barriers that prevent them from achieving the same levels of profitability than men. Addressing gender segregation, structural biases and other obstacles that confine women to certain sectors is therefore essential for women to be able to access good labour opportunities. In this regard, factors such as the influence of close male role models who can act as mentors, or exposure to the sector by family and friends, have proven decisive in encouraging women to enter traditionally men-dominated sectors (World Bank Group, 2019[22]).

Men's traditional status and roles, household decision-making practices and discriminatory inheritance practices limit women's ownership of agricultural land and constrain their economic independence

Unequal ownership of and control over land between men and women is rooted in discriminatory social institutions. At the global level, results from the SIGI show that as discrimination in social institutions increases, the average share of women among owners of agricultural land decreases (Figure 4.5). Multiple underlying factors are at stake, ranging from discriminatory laws that limit women's rights to hold or control land assets to customary laws and social norms that undermine existing statutory laws.

Figure 4.5. Globally, women's ownership of agricultural land decreases as discrimination in social institutions increase

Average share of women among owners of agricultural land by levels of discrimination in social institutions as measured by the SIGI



Note: SIGI scores range from 0 to 100, with 0 indicating no discrimination and 100 indicating absolute discrimination. Countries are classified into five categories, which indicate the level of discrimination in social institutions. Categories are based on SIGI scores: very low level of discrimination (SIGI <20); low level of discrimination (SIGI 20-30); medium level of discrimination (SIGI 30-40); high level of discrimination (SIGI 40-50); and very high level of discrimination (SIGI >50).

Source: (OECD Development Centre/OECD, 2019[14]), *Gender, Institutions and Development Database*, https://doi.org/10.1787/ba5dbd30-en.

StatLink https://doi.org/10.1787/888934287604

In many African countries, legal frameworks, and particularly customary ones, contain obstacles to women's full and unhindered ownership of agricultural land. In eight African countries,[5] the law establishes the husband as the head of the family, with control and ownership over the management and administration of assets and properties, including agricultural plots and land. Beyond discriminatory civil laws, customary rules and laws in the vast majority of African countries clearly delineate men as the primary decision makers in the household with the power to administer key assets, including agricultural land. Evidence suggests that discriminatory customs, traditional practices and religious laws prevent women form inheriting, acquiring, using, managing and/or owning land (OECD, 2019[40]). These legal frameworks are rooted in the powerful social belief that men's identity is inextricably linked to the position of primary decision makers regarding important family matters, including large family assets such as land property.

At the same time, limited enforcement of existing statutory laws remains weak, favouring the prevalence of social norms and customary laws. For instance, in 2013, Kenya passed the Matrimonial Property Act which recognises spouses as equal property owners and protects women's rights to land ownership during marriage, divorce and separation (Government of Kenya, 2013[41]). Yet, lack of enforcement of the law, limited knowledge on the part of women regarding their own rights and the prevalence of customary practices continue to hamper women's access to land. Likewise, evidence from the SIGI Uganda country study, gathered in 2013, showed that despite the adoption of a Land Act in 2004, which improves women's access to land and grants them the right to manage their property, discriminatory views and practices still persist. In some districts of the country, multiple factors contribute to the denial of equal rights to land between men and women. First, the large majority of landowners are still men and decision-making powers are typically granted to them. Second, the prevalence of discriminatory attitudes means that the majority of the population disagree with women having equal access and decision-making power over agricultural land. Finally, most women who own land have no power to administer their land holdings as legislation does not prescribe co-ownership clauses (OECD Development Centre, 2015[37]).

Women's limited ownership of agricultural land in Africa stems primarily from traditions and customs that consider men to be the rightful owners. In the majority of African countries, occupation of land and the associated rights (e.g. use and decision making) stem from the ways the land is used, as well as from kinship and other social and political relationships among people using that land (Higgins and Fenrich, 2011[42]). These relationships not only often supersede civil or common law where it exists, but also constitute a challenge for policy makers when it comes to adapting them to civil or common law. Consequently, for the most part, customary laws are the primary determinant of who owns, manages, inherits and has access to land. Traditional and customary views, transmitted from generation to generation, are rooted in the assumption that men undertake the bulk of agricultural work and grant them ownership of the land on this basis. Evidence from Ghana shows that systems of customary land tenure are typically organised in a patrilineal manner: women customarily do not have the right to inherit family land, but can obtain use rights through their husbands and son (Lambrecht and Karoff, 2020[43]).

Social practices governing household assets in marriage and inheritance also prevent women's ownership of land. There are many examples of cases in which the administration of household finances is customarily transferred to the husband following marriage. At the same time, the social consequences of marriage reinforce discriminatory customs and views that land should belong to men. In many African countries, women traditionally leave their family upon marriage and join the family of the husband. As such, any asset she might own would be lost to the family of her clan. It therefore becomes crucial to ensure that land stays in the family through inheritance and preferences for sons. In other words, women's ability to inherit assets is intrinsically linked to customary practices which favour boys' inheritance rights over girls'. The consequences for women themselves are severe as they are often left with very few assets in cases of divorce or the death of the husband.

Discriminatory social norms and expectations that constrain women's employment and level of income may also perpetuate their limited access to land assets over the long term. Individuals obtain access to assets through purchase, inheritance or state intervention (Kabeer, 2009[2]): in each of these three

channels, evidence shows that strongly embedded discriminatory social norms and practices prevent women from accessing assets on an equal footing with men. For instance, views of women's and men's roles in the household and broader society, and social norms that expect men to be the principal breadwinner, may undermine women's access to work, promotions and equal remuneration for labour of equal value. Even when women work and contribute to the household's income – as is mostly the case in African economies – discriminatory practices tend to curtail women's decision-making power and control over household finances (OECD, 2021[31]). These forces, in turn, allow very few women to have the necessary resources to purchase assets on their own, further reinforcing men's economic dominance.

Even when state interventions are designed to correct ownership imbalances, social norms and biases may undermine their effect. Addressing the structural barriers preventing women from owning and making decisions regarding agricultural land is essential for their empowerment. Evidence from Malawi, Mali and Tanzania suggest that the ownership of agricultural land has a positive impact on women's ability to make decisions on non-agricultural choices such as household expenditure or investment in the human capital of the household such as education, health and nutrition (Mishra and Sam, 2016[44]; Doss et al., 2014[45]). Ownership of immovable property (land or a house) may also lower the risk of marital violence compared to the situation of women without property (Yokying and Lambrecht, 2020[46]). Therefore, in many African countries, where agriculture is women's main economic activity, policies that enhance land rights equity and favour the formalisation of land ownership through land titling have the potential to increase women's empowerment and associated positive effects on welfare. Yet, the privatisation and formalisation of land ownership comes with policy challenges and may replicate or aggravate existing imbalances (Box 4.3).

Box 4.3. Privatisation and formalisation of land in Africa: Benefits and risks

Formalising or privatising land – an often-cited solution to unequal land ownership rates – may entail both benefits and risks for women's economic empowerment. When moving from customary to formal land ownership rights, pitfalls regarding women's access, use and ownership of the land may arise. In Africa, access to land is often based on user rights and not individual ownership. Most women gain these user rights through men (i.e. through marriage or from their father or son). Due to their complexity, customary laws might not be easily translatable into statutory law or may provoke consequences that can aggravate women's current situation (Djurfeldt, 2019[47]; Higgins and Fenrich, 2011[42]).

Benefits associated with privatisation and formalisation of land

- By recognising and formalising existing rights, land titling grants the security of tenure, providing the legal landowner with legal protection against land-grabbing practices or unlawful claims.
- Land titling encourages productive investment by guaranteeing that the legal landowner reaps the benefits of the resources invested.
- Formalising landownership provides the landowner with the necessary legal rights to engage the land as collateral, providing them with access to institutional credit.

Risks associated with privatisation and formalisation of land

- Marginal groups, including women, may lose land use rights they previously enjoyed under traditional regimes. There is also a risk that access to common goods, such as water, will be lost under privatisation of land.
- Titling reforms may benefit the wealthier and/or educated more due to their better understanding of the processes. This knowledge can be used to their advantage, amplifying existing inequalities.

- Social norms stigmatising women's land ownership could result in land being acquired, formalised or registered under the name of the husband, eroding the purpose of the policy reform.

While many customary laws are often discriminatory and not equitable, conventional models of land formalisation carry with them the risk of aggravating an already inferior situation for women. The systematisation of joint land ownership by husband and wife, particularly in the context of formalisation of customary ownership, could be a possible way forward to avoid negative repercussions and to promote women's economic empowerment (Meinzen-Dick and Mwangi, 2009[48]).

Various discriminatory social norms and biases related to access to markets, finance, training and networks hamper women's entrepreneurship in Africa

Although African women are more likely to be entrepreneurs than men, they face more operational constraints, which limit the profitability of their businesses and related growth opportunities. Specific market conditions and strategic choices (e.g. in which sector to operate) hinder the performance of women-led businesses:

- Women choose to enter economic sectors in which they are already overrepresented and that are likely to be less profitable.
- Women own less assets and have less capital to invest into their businesses.
- Women display less confidence and willingness to compete.
- Women are more likely to operate in the informal economy.
- Women are less likely to adopt advanced business practices.

These differences are strongly shaped by discriminatory social norms and practices and, ultimately, perpetuate the lower performance rate and profitability of women-led businesses in Africa. Evidence from a number of African countries[6] show that, on average, women-led companies have monthly profits that are 34% lower than those run by men (World Bank Group, 2019[22]).

Horizontal segregation plays an important role and mirrors existing social stereotypes and beliefs about men's and women's traits and characteristics. Women-owned enterprises are primarily concentrated in the retail sector and tend to be less evident in the transport, manufacturing and construction sectors. This has a profound impact on the profitability of women-led businesses as the latter sectors, which are dominated by men-owned companies, tend to be more profitable (Alibhai et al., 2017[49]; Campos et al., 2015[50]). Evidence points towards a lack of required skills to join certain sectors that are dominated by men, such as the ICT sector (Buehren and Van Salisbury, 2017[51]; Campos et al., 2015[50]). These difficulties reflect distinct educational choices that stem from gender stereotypes and discriminatory attitudes related to boys' and girls' cognitive abilities.

Strong social norms that view men as better business managers than women – and their internalisation by women themselves – also constrain women's entrepreneurship. For instance, in Burkina Faso, nearly 20% of the population (and 12% of women) think that a woman cannot manage a business as well as a man (OECD Development Centre, 2018[52]). Likewise, among entrepreneurs in Ghana, women are 14% less likely than men to think they would make a good leader (World Bank Group, 2019[22]). These negative attitudes have at least two major consequences: they participate in shaping women's lack of confidence in their own abilities as entrepreneurs, which may prevent them from taking certain risks (e.g. competing in a sector dominated by men); and they undermine their status, curtailing their access to business opportunities and resources (e.g. loans, information, networks, etc.).

Access to financing is critical for the success of any business. In Africa, both men and women face structural difficulties in accessing credit and developing businesses. However, a wide stream of research

suggests that women face higher constraints than men and that discriminatory social institutions play a role in shaping these constraints (World Bank Group, 2019[22]). In particular, social norms and discrimination exert an influence on both demand and supply-side factors, the former through self-selection biases, and the latter through lack of collateral, discriminatory practices from loan providers and limited personal social networks.

On the demand side, research suggests that women in Africa remove themselves from the credit market because of a low self-perception of creditworthiness. Drawing on data from Enterprise Surveys, the African Development Bank shows that in Africa, 6.5% of women-managed firms reported not applying for new loans or credit lines, because they presumed that their application would not be approved, compared to 3.5% of men-managed firms. In North Africa, the share of women-led businesses that did not apply for a loan or a credit line because of low perceived creditworthiness reached 9.3%, compared to 3.2% for men-led companies (Morsy, El-Shal and Woldemichael, 2019[53]). Because women's self-selection bias does not appear to be related to any intrinsic characteristics of the firms managed, the findings suggest that structural and deeply entrenched factors are at play. Notable among these are lack of financial literacy, discriminatory practices from lending institutions, and biases that view men as better business leaders and managers than women.

On the supply side, women's lower ownership of valuable assets, lower income and high job informality constrain their access to finance by limiting the ability to satisfy requirements to obtain a loan (e.g. collateral or a steady income). As outlined in the previous section, social norms and customs limiting women's access to assets – due to inheritance practices favouring men or lack of necessary resources to acquire assets – create a situation whereby women in Africa cannot provide as much collateral as men and therefore enjoy lower access to credit (Beck and de la Torre, 2007[54]). Moreover, in countries where collateral and bankruptcy laws that protect the rights of borrowers and lenders are weaker, the consequences are even more dramatic for women. To mitigate the risk, lenders tend to require more collateral and to establish more stringent credit conditions, which results in the partial exclusion of women from the credit market (Morsy and Youssef, 2017[55]; Beck and de la Torre, 2007[54]).

While studies suggest that men entrepreneurs display greater technical skills than their women entrepreneurs, particularly in terms of financial skills, the underlying reasons may be tied to discriminatory social norms related to gender roles. The role of strong cultural factors and stereotypes related to intra-household specialisation is particularly important, as biases linked to gender roles within the household dictate that men should hold primary or exclusive responsibility for financial matters. Women's low financial literacy rates also stem from explicit and implicit barriers to working outside the home, accessing credit or holding property (Hung, Yoong and Brown, 2012[56]). For instance, biases in school curricula combined with lack of programmes aimed at raising financial awareness among girls at school perpetuate the idea that financial matters are a prerogative of boys and men.

Finally, opportunities for developing management and entrepreneurial skills, both formally and informally, are greater for men than for women, underscoring the wider access enjoyed by men to networks and mentorship. In Africa, firms owned by men are more likely to offer training programmes than those owned by women (World Bank Group, 2019[22]). More importantly, beyond formal training, informal training through network and kinship relationships is essential to achieve entrepreneurial success, in particular when women try to cross over to men-dominated and more profitable sectors. Yet, as noted earlier, evidence suggest that in Africa, one of the largest barriers to women's entry into sectors dominated by men is the absence of a close male[7] role model working in this sector who can serve as a mentor (Arias, Evans and Santos, 2019[57]).

Policy recommendations to overcome discriminatory social institutions constraining women's economic empowerment in Africa

Improve women's access to the labour market and to quality jobs

- Improve women's and girls' education to provide them with the necessary skills to access better jobs:
  - Put in place retention measures for girls dropping out of school (e.g. by facilitating the re-entry of pregnant adolescent girls into the school system).
  - Establish sensitisation campaigns against girl child marriage inside and outside of schools to address girls' dropout rate at the secondary level.
  - Create programmes to provide girls with access to secondary school facilities, particularly in rural and remote areas (e.g. through safe transportation schemes between households and schools, subsidised safe housing programmes or the creation of public boarding secondary schools opened to girls).
  - Invest further in girls' secondary and upper-level quality education.
- Address gender norms and structural biases that contribute to horizontal segregation and prevent women from entering certain sectors:
  - Establish academic orientation sessions and individualised coaching at school to encourage girls and women to join STEM fields at the university level.
  - Reform school material to eliminate gender stereotypes, for instance by introducing specific modules dedicated to comprehensive sexual and reproductive health, human and child rights, and gender equality.
  - Develop vocational training programmes.
- Measure, recognise, and start reducing and redistributing women's disproportionate share of unpaid care and domestic work:
  - Develop the capacities of National Statistical Offices and provide training on the design and deployment of time-use surveys.
  - Improve measurement of unpaid care and domestic work by systematically embedding time-use surveys in nationally representative surveys used by National Statistical Offices.
  - Leverage infrastructure development projects to provide communities with enhanced access to basic services – particularly water and electricity – in order to reduce women's and girls' share of unpaid care and domestic work.
    - In particular, ensure that a gender perspective is integrated into infrastructure projects from the outset and that women are represented at decision-making levels.

Improve women's access to assets and favour women's entrepreneurship

- Strengthen women's capacities and position in agriculture:
  - Establish collaboration schemes for women in agriculture to ensure women can gain access to larger markets and are positioned to take advantage of intra-regional trade.
  - Design training programmes for women farmers that explain how to take advantage of intra-regional trade and the processes to follow to sell products in international markets.

- Improve women's financial literacy:
  - Develop financial literacy through dedicated training programmes and workshops targeted at schools and women entrepreneurs.
  - Integrate compulsory financial education modules into school curricula.
- Stimulate women's entrepreneurship early on and support women entrepreneurs:
  - Establish career guidance sessions in schools, and identify mentors and champions who can work with schools to inform youth about profitability and opportunities in specific business sectors.
  - Set aside public procurement contracts for women-led businesses, especially in sectors where women are underrepresented such as construction, mining and quarrying, etc.
  - Establish training programmes for women entrepreneurs that aim to overcome unconscious self-defeating biases. Include in this training information about entrepreneurial opportunities in sectors traditionally dominated by men and sessions on profitability and existing opportunities in non-traditional sectors (e.g. construction, mining or transportation).
  - Develop mentorship programmes and peer-support groups for women entrepreneurs with the objective of developing valuable business networks.
- Improve women's access to finance:
  - Introduce women-specific solutions for improving credit access, for example through public credit guarantee schemes or lower collateral requirements for women-owned SMEs.
- Address traditional norms of restrictive masculinities that constrain women's economic empowerment and transform them into gender-equitable ones:
  - Develop communication campaigns with communities to inform and sensitise boys and men of the benefits of women's economic empowerment for the whole community.
  - Establish training programmes targeted at religious and community leaders and aimed at sensitising them to the value of increasing women's access to productive and financial resources within communities.

Notes

[1] In Mauritania, between 2014 and 2017, the share of women aged 15 years and above with a mobile money account decreased from 7% to 4% (World Bank, 2017[15]).

[2] Gabon, Ghana, Malawi, Namibia, Senegal, Togo, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

[3] Benin, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Ghana, Malawi, Mozambique, Nigeria, South Africa, Togo and Uganda.

[4] Female genital mutilation (FGM) can hinder girls' education primarily because of the complications endured by girls – health issues, pain and distress – which can compromise performance in school and lead to absenteeism and drop out. Other negatives impacts may include the high cost of the ceremony, which can encourage parents to stop paying school fees, or the fact that girls are often considered fit for marriage and are immediately betrothed after the mutilation.

[5] Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, Eswatini, Guinea-Bissau, Republic of the Congo, Uganda and Sudan.

[6] Benin, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Ghana, Malawi, Mozambique, Nigeria, South Africa, Togo and Uganda.

[7] In Uganda, women who had male role models in their youth (e.g. fathers or politicians) were 20% to 28% more likely to cross over to a men-dominated sector than women who did not have such male role models (World Bank Group, 2019[22]).

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Annex 4.A. Key indicators for women's economic empowerment in Africa

Annex Table 4.A.1. Key indicators for women's economic empowerment in Africa

Indicator		Women	Men
Acces to labour market			
Labour force participation rate (adult 15+)		54%	73%
Female-to-male ratio of time spent on unpaid care and domestic work		4.1	
Share of the population which agrees that men should have more rights to a job than women when jobs are scarce		42%	
Share of the population which agrees that that it is better for a family if a woman has the main responsibility for taking care of the home and children, rather than a man		55%	
Share of the population which agrees that when a mother works for pay, children suffer		53%	
Share of the population who disagrees that it is perfectly acceptable for any woman in the family to have a paid job outside the home, if she wants one		18%	
Characterics of employment			
Informal employment rate		90%	83%
Status of employment	Employees	21%	36%
	Employers	1%	4%
	Own-account workers	53%	51%
	Contributing family workers	25%	9%
Share of women and men by economic sectors (ISIC Level 2)	Construction	5%	95%
	Transport, storage and communication	10%	90%
	Mining and quarrying	16%	84%
	Utilities	22%	78%
	Public administration and defence; compulsory social security	22%	78%
	Real estate, business and administrative activities	30%	70%
	Education	43%	57%
	Manufacturing	44%	56%
	Financial and insurance activities	44%	56%
	Agriculture, forestry and fishing	45%	55%
	Human health and social work activities	53%	47%
	Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles	55%	45%
	Other services	58%	42%
	Accommodation and food service activities	64%	36%
Ownership of agricultural land and assets			
Ownership rate of agricultural land		12%	87%
Ownership rate of houses		33%	47%
Ownership rate of mobile phones		73%	83%
Share of the population declaring that they never use the Internet		65%	55%
Share of the population who disagrees that women should have the same rights as men to own and inherit land		23%	
Entrepreneurship			
Ownership rate of bank accounts at a formal institution		26%	38%
[Sub-Saharan Africa only] Share of the population that borrowed from a financial institution		12%	9%
[Sub-Saharan Africa only] Share of the population that borrowed from family or friends		27%	24%

Source: (ILO, n.d.[6]); (World Bank, n.d.[12]); (OECD Development Centre/OECD, 2019[14]); (Afrobarometer, 2019[58]); (Inglehart et al., 2014[59]).

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5 Women's political voice, leadership and agency

This chapter focuses on women's political voice, leadership and agency in Africa. It provides an overview of the political representation and participation of women both at local and national levels, as well as their engagement and leadership in conflict settings and peacebuilding efforts. The chapter also highlights the impact of formal and informal laws, social norms and practices on women's political voice, leadership and agency, specifically within the public sphere. It analyses how such norms – including traditional gender roles, sexist discourse and political gender-based violence – prevent women from accessing information and participating safely in electoral and political processes. Based on this analysis, the chapter provides policy recommendations for women's political empowerment and increased agency in all spheres of public life.

Since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action[1] in 1995, women's involvement in wider social life in Africa has expanded significantly. However, persistent gaps remain in women's representation at all levels of decision making (AfDB and UNECA, 2020[1]). These gaps are rooted in discriminatory laws, social norms and customary practices that continue to hinder women's political voice, leadership and agency. Women constitute approximately half of the population, and thus their engagement in public and political life is a prerequisite for representative governance. Moreover, growing evidence suggests that women's participation in decision making improves governance as well as political processes (Pikramenou and Mahajan, 2019[2]; AfDB and UNECA, 2020[1]; OECD, 2014[3]). The importance of women's participation in this sphere is recognised in international agreements such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Convention on the Political Rights of Women, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as well as in the Maputo Protocol which calls on states to promote women's equal participation in political life, specifically in elections and at all levels of electoral processes (see Annex A) (African Union, 2003[4]).

The present chapter is divided into two main sections. The first section looks at outcome-based indicators related to women's political voice, leadership and agency in Africa. The section provides a broad overview of the situation of African women, specifically in reference to their political representation, participation and role in peace and security processes. The second section explores the underlying factors that explain the inequalities observed between women and men in terms of political representation and participation. This section uncovers the role played by discriminatory social institutions and, specifically, discriminatory social norms and attitudes in explaining women's underrepresentation in political positions at all levels. It also examines women's limited political voice as citizens, insecurity in the face of politically motivated gender-based violence, limited access to resources and information, and restricted civil liberties. A table summarising the key indicators for women's political voice, leadership and agency in Africa can be found in Annex 5.A at the end of the chapter.

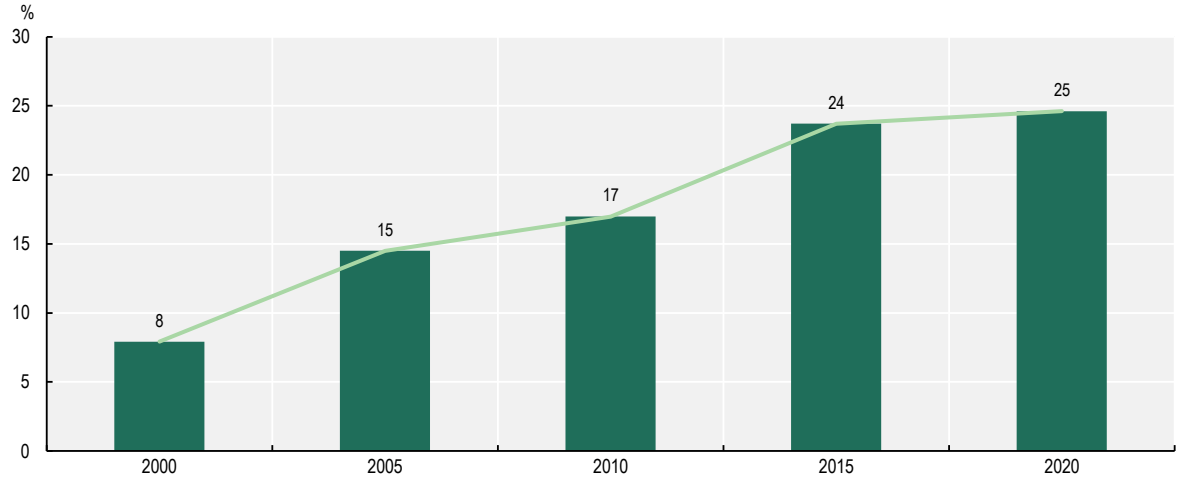
What is the situation regarding women's public and political leadership in Africa?

Representation of women in political positions has increased since 2000, but remains low

Since 2000, the representation of women in politics has increased globally with specific gains in Africa. For example, the number of seats held by women in lower houses of parliaments worldwide increased from 12% to 26% between 2000 and 2021, while the number of women holding seats in lower houses of parliaments in Africa rose from 8% to 25% over the same period (IPU, 2000[5]; IPU Parline, 2021[6]). However, despite this impressive 17 percentage point increase, progress in Africa has slowed over the last five years as a result of numerous factors, including discriminatory social institutions (Figure 5.1). This aggregate figure also hides considerable variation among the continent's sub-regions. In 2021, Southern Africa is the sub-region with the highest share of women in its single/lower houses (32%), followed closely by East Africa (31%). Just below the continental average of 25% is North Africa (24%), followed by Central Africa (18%) and West Africa (16%). There is even greater variation in women's level of representation at the country level, ranging from 61% in Rwanda to 6% in Nigeria. In upper houses of parliament, inequalities in women's representation are even greater than those in lower houses. For example, in 2021, women held just 20% of the seats in upper houses of parliament in Africa. Among the 23 countries[2] with upper houses of parliament, the proportion of seats held by women ranges from 44% in Zimbabwe to just 3% in Liberia (IPU Parline, 2021[6]).

Figure 5.1. Progress in increasing women's representation in Africa's parliaments has stalled since 2015

Percentage of seats held by women in single/lower houses of parliament



Source: (IPU, 2000[5]); (IPU, 2005[7]); (IPU, 2010[8]); (IPU, 2015[9]); (IPU Parline, 2021[6]) Women in National Parliament – Statistical Archive, http://archive.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif-arc.htm.

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In 2018, women held 29% of positions in local government in sub-Saharan Africa compared to 71% for men (UN Statistics, 2021[10]). Women's representation in these posts ranged from 67% in Tunisia to 4% in Ghana (UN Women, n.d.[11]). Similarly, women accounted for just 19% of mayors of capital cities in Africa (IDEA and Gender Links, 2021[12]). Central Africa is the sub-region with the highest share of women mayors of capital cities at 33%, followed by Southern Africa (30%), West Africa (20%), East Africa (7%) and North Africa (0%) (IDEA and Gender Links, 2021[12]). Women are also underrepresented in Africa's election management bodies, holding 28% of these posts in countries that have such bodies.[3] In Southern Africa, women have the highest level of representation in election management bodies at 41%, followed by East Africa (35%), North Africa (25%), West Africa (24%) and Central Africa (22%) (IDEA and Gender Links, 2021[12]). Election management bodies can play a significant role in facilitating or hindering women's meaningful political participation as these bodies' responsibilities include disseminating information on elections, determining voters' eligibility, receiving and validating nominations and conducting polling, as well as counting and tabulating votes. In the context of elections during the COVID-19 pandemic, these bodies have been instrumental in ensuring that elections continue within the framework of national health and safety guidelines.

Women's underrepresentation is most acute in executive and ministerial positions. Only 7% of those who serve in executive positions – president, vice president and prime minister – are women (IDEA and Gender Links, 2021[12]). In terms of ministerial positions, the share held by women varies significantly among the 53 countries[4] with available data, ranging from 54% in Rwanda and 50% in Guinea-Bissau to 7% in Tunisia, Equatorial Guinea and Lesotho in 2020 (IPU/UN Women, 2020[13]). Despite some progress, ministerial positions, like occupations and sectors in the labour force (see Chapter 4), remain segregated along gender lines, with women often assigned to lead "softer" portfolios on gender, children's issues and education, while men dominate portfolios overseeing national defence, foreign affairs and finance (Krook and O'Brien, 2012[14]; Tripp, 2013[15]).

Gender gaps in political participation vary in size across the region

While the 1990s brought significant change to many of Africa's political systems, good governance and democratisation remain uneven (African Union, 2019[16]). In order to strengthen governance, the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (2007) calls on states to hold regular, free, fair and transparent elections (see Annex A). In so doing, African countries are encouraged to take to steps to ensure that all of their citizens have a meaningful political voice, encompassing the freedoms and practice of active engagement in public and political life as voters, citizens and participants in political processes. While performance is relatively good in this regard, there is a need to address discriminatory social institutions that hinder women's decision-making power and access to tools and resources, in order to strengthen their political voice, placing it on an equal footing with that of men. Such room for improvement is evident in the gender gaps in voting for national elections, attendance to rallies and campaign events, work for political campaigns, discussion of politics with friends and family, and other activities that constitute political participation.

Across the region, both women and men engage in political participation in the form of voting. On average, 66% of African women and 70% of African men reported voting in their countries' most recent national elections (Afrobarometer, 2016-18[17]). At the sub-regional level, East Africa has the highest proportion of women who report voting in the most recent national election (70%), but also presents the largest gender gap (seven percentage points). The share of women who voted is similarly high in West Africa (69%), which is followed by Southern Africa (64%), Central Africa (63%) and North Africa (50%). Sub-regional averages, however, hide significant variations across countries. Sierra Leone is home to the highest percentage of respondents who reported voting in the last national elections – 90% of men and 88% of women. In Morocco, only 42% of women reported voting, but the percentage of men who reported doing the same was similarly low at 46%. Gender gaps in voting also vary in Africa. In five countries,[5] a higher percentage of women than men reported voting, and in three countries[6] there was no gender gap (Afrobarometer, 2016-18[17]).

Beyond voting, there are many ways in which individuals may engage in the political process. These include working for a political campaign, attending political rallies or contacting their representatives to share ideas or knowledge of problems. A smaller share of women than men in Africa engaged in these activities. The gender gap in working for a candidate or political party ranged from 12 percentage points in West Africa to five percentage points in North Africa and Southern Africa. At the national level, 54% of women in Sao Tome and Principe reported working for a candidate or party, while less than 3% of women in Tunisia reported the same (Afrobarometer, 2016-18[17]). Similarly, the percentage of men who reported attending a campaign rally was ten percentage points higher than the share of women who reported doing the same. Finally, women in all of the 36 countries with data were more likely than men to report never having contacted a member of parliament (MP) to discuss issues or ideas (Afrobarometer, 2016-18[17]).

In Africa, women hold diverse, informal, leadership roles (Poltera, 2019[18]). While data cannot capture the full scope of this picture, information on attendance at community meetings and discussions about politics with family and friends may serve as an imperfect proxy. In all of the five sub-regions, a higher share of men than women reported attending a community meeting, with the gender gap ranging from five percentage points in Southern Africa to 15 percentage points in West Africa (Afrobarometer, 2016-18[17]). Among the same respondents, a greater percentage of women than men indicated that they would attend a community meeting if given the opportunity. This proportion was as high as 20% of women in Liberia and 14% in Burkina Faso (Afrobarometer, 2016-18[17]). A greater share of women than men reported never having discussed political matters with family or friends in all of the 36 countries with data. At the continental level, 46% of women and 30% of men reported never discussing politics with family or friends (Afrobarometer, 2016-18[17]).

More work is needed to increase women's active involvement in peace and security processes

The gendered dimensions of peace and security are of particular significance in Africa, given the contemporary and historical importance of conflicts across the region. Conflicts in North and West Africa have intensified over the past decade, spilling across national borders and increasing in violence, with civilians often targeted especially in rural and border areas (OECD/SWAC, 2021[19]). Terrorism and violent extremism are also on the rise, affecting the whole continent from the Sahel, Lake Chad Basin and the Horn of Africa to West Africa's coastal states and Central and Southern Africa (Faleg and Mustasilta, 2021[20]). Women are among the first to suffer from such conflicts, notably from gender-based violence, sexual violence and kidnapping (Walther, 2020[21]). They also represent a significant proportion of refugees. There are 8.2 million internally displaced women and girls in sub-Saharan Africa, accounting for 40% of the global total (Bell et al., 2021[22]). Given that fragile and conflict-affected contexts undergo deep political and social changes during transitions from conflict, peace negotiations, political transitions or constitution-making processes, they also provide windows of opportunity to address gender inequalities, empower women and girls, and to integrate women's rights fully into newly formed institutional landscapes (Loudon, Goemans and Koester, 2021[23]). It is therefore crucial to empower women and girls to take an active role in these processes (OECD, 2020[24]).

While regional commitments[7] to the Women, Peace and Security agenda are relatively well developed, insufficient commitments at the national level reflect a need to further promote women's meaningful participation in peace and security processes, a key pillar of the above agenda. As of 2021, 29 of Africa's 54 countries have enacted at least one National Action Plan for the implementation of UNSCR 1325. These action plans are thus essential because they demonstrate national commitments and actions to link government policies on security with gender priorities. For example, the development of Mali's National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 in 2019 involved a collaboration with UN Women and a comprehensive consultation process with a variety of stakeholders including women's rights organisations (Lorentzen, 2021[25]) (for more on such processes, see Box 5.1). However, while the adoption of a National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 may be considered an outcome reflecting the mobilisation of political will and resources for its development and implementation, the content of these action plans also matters. In practical terms, the impact of these plans is hindered by a lack of specific budgeting, systematic monitoring procedures, and co-ordination among government bodies and civil society organisations (UN Women, 2015[26]).

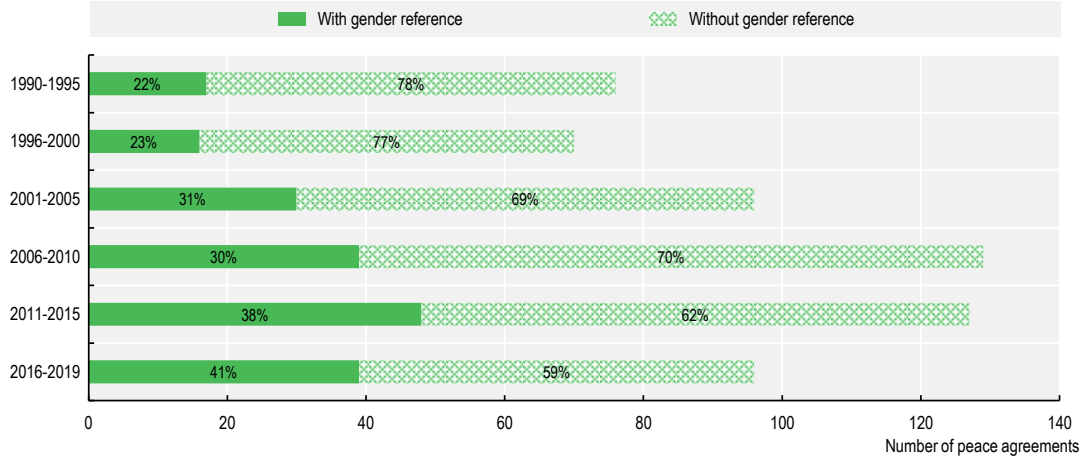
Box 5.1. Civil society organisations play a key role in promoting women's political voice, leadership and agency in Africa

The political liberalisation processes that unfolded in the 1990s were accompanied by a proliferation of women's rights organisations, which played a crucial role in constitutional, legal and cultural changes in favour of women's rights, and political participation in particular (Abdennebi-Abderrahim, n.d.[27]). Today, civil society and women's rights organisations continue to promote women's political participation and to catalyse the women, peace and security agenda (OECD, 2020[24]). Many organisations provide capacity-building services such as training and networking opportunities for women involved in politics, while simultaneously facilitating voter registration. They also undertake crucial work to foster democratic processes and reinforce good governance through human rights advocacy and involvement in electoral accountability efforts (IDEA and Gender Links, 2021[12]). In Southern Africa, for example, a number of civil society organisations collect, analyse and disseminate data on women's political participation, a process that is invaluable to efforts designed to promote accountability and raise awareness. Yet, in many cases both women's rights and civil society organisations face obstacles such as lack of freedom of speech and/or association, many of which have been amplified in the context of the recent pandemic and government measures (CIPESA, 2020[28]).

Over the last three decades a growing share of peace agreements concluded in Africa have acknowledged issues related to women, girls and/or gender-related considerations. Yet, only 174 out of the 611 peace agreements that have been concluded between 1990 and 2019 in the region include issues related to women, girls and/or gender (Bell et al., 2021[22]) (Figure 5.2). For example, out of 12 peace agreements concluded in the Central African Republic between 2018 and 2019, five make reference to gender considerations. A peace agreement signed in Bangui in 2019 ("*Accord politique pour la paix et la réconciliation en République centrafricaine*") includes, as part of its implementation mechanism, the participation of civil society, including specifically women (MINUSCA, n.d.[29]). Gender considerations can be integrated into peace agreements in a number of ways. A notable example is the Sudan Peace Agreement ("The Juba Agreement"), which features gender-sensitive language and various provisions for the promotion of gender equality, including recognition by signatories of "the importance of fair and effective representation of women at all levels of power and decision-making positions, at a rate of not less than 40%" (Transitional Government of Sudan, 2020[30]). The inclusion of gender-related provisions such as these can play a significant role in cementing women's role in governance and in maintaining peace. Indeed, countries with a peace accord that accounts for women's rights adopt electoral quotas more than five times faster than countries with no peace accords (Anderson and Swiss, 2014[31]).

Figure 5.2. Since 1990, a growing share of all peace agreements on conflicts concluded in Africa include reference to gender

Number of peace agreements in Africa with and without reference to gender, by periods of time and share for each period



Note: Reference to gender includes mentions of girls, lactating women, widows, mothers, sexual violence and gender-based violence, UN Security Council Resolution 1325 or CEDAW.
Source: (Bell et al., 2021[22]), PA-X Peace Agreements Database, www.peaceagreements.org/wsearch.

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How do discriminatory social institutions constrain women's political voice, leadership and agency in Africa?

Deeply entrenched discriminatory social institutions are at the root of gender inequalities in political representation and participation in electoral processes as well as peace and security efforts. These social institutions include laws, social norms and customary practices that govern women's and men's roles as leaders, citizens and stakeholders in governance and decision-making processes. The effect on legal frameworks is assessed in Chapter 2; this section sheds light on discriminatory social norms and practices that directly and indirectly hinder women's engagement in political processes as well as processes related to peace and security. Specifically, it addresses social norms around leadership, norms and practices regarding decision making at the household level and, finally, the pervasive practice of political violence.

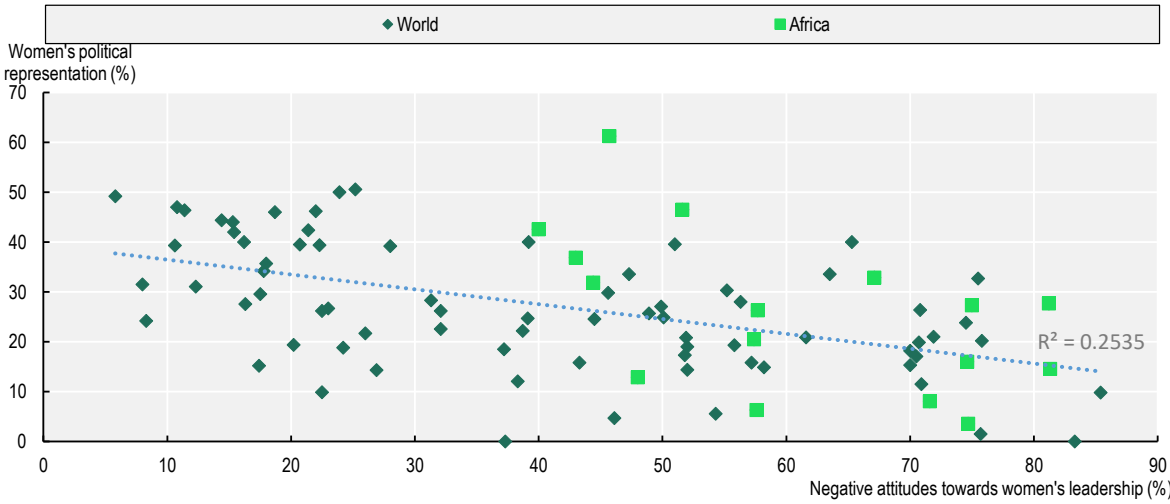
Traditional gender roles and gendered conceptions of leadership hinder women's political leadership

Deeply rooted traditional gender norms limit women's engagement in public and political life both at the global level and in Africa. Traditional gender norms assign men the role of household heads, including responsibility for supporting the family financially, often through paid work (OECD, 2021[32]). Conversely, these traditional gender norms assign women roles within the household as caretakers and domestic workers, often with limited decision-making power compared to men. As such, traditional gender norms clearly establish the public and political sphere as the domain of men, and send a clear message that women's reproductive and care roles take priority over their civic engagement (Kivoi, 2014[33]; Mlambo and Kapingura, 2019[34]). These social norms, internalised by society as a whole, guide social conceptions of public leadership, which has important implications for women's representation in leadership roles.

Socially valued conceptions of leadership often prioritise masculine leadership styles over those more often exhibited by women (OECD, 2021[32]; Lumby and Azaola, 2013[35]). Gender differences in leadership style do not originate from any biological differences, but rather from the processes by which girls and boys as well as women and men are socialised (OECD, 2021[32]). While men and boys are often rewarded for toughness and aggressive competitiveness, this is not the case for women and girls. As societies often expect their leaders to be competitive and tough with the capacity to confront situations of conflict, such highly masculinised conceptions of leadership lead a significant percentage of people to believe that men make better political leaders than women, and should be preferred in elections (Oduol, 2011[36]). Such discriminatory attitudes negatively correlate with women's political representation (Figure 5.3). In Africa, this belief is held by 28% of the population, and at the sub-regional level prevalence of this attitude ranges from 40% in West Africa to 24% in Central Africa (Afrobarometer, 2016-18[17]). Furthermore, proverbs in certain African countries, such as "a man is the head of a woman" or "a team of ox is never led by females, otherwise the oxen will fall into a ditch'' reveal deeply rooted conceptions of leadership as a characteristic only exhibited by men (IDEA and Gender Links, 2021[12]). These social norms make it more difficult for women to be elected, as voters may believe these stereotypes (Pikramenou and Mahajan, 2019[2]; OECD, 2019[37]). Furthermore, political parties will not field women candidates for winnable seats if they believe they cannot win (Oduol, 2011[36]) (Box 5.2).

Figure 5.3. Discriminatory attitudes towards women's political leadership are linked to underrepresentation of women

Correlation between negative attitudes towards women's political representation and women's representation in single/lower houses of parliaments



Note: Negative attitudes towards women's political representation are measured as the share of the population declaring that men make better political leaders than women. Data are included for 16 African countries: Algeria, Burkina Faso, Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, Libya, Mali, Morocco, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa, Tanzania, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.
Source: (IPU Parline, 2021[38]), Monthly ranking of women in national parliaments, https://data.ipu.org/women-ranking?month=9&year=2021; (OECD, 2019[39]), Gender, Institutions and Development Database (GID-DB), https://oe.cd/ds/GIDDB2019; (Haerpfer et al., 2020[40]), World Values Survey: Round Seven – Country-Pooled Datafile, http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSDocumentationWV7.jsp.

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Attitudes that distinguish leadership as a masculine trait also discourage and prevent women from assuming leadership roles. On the one hand, women may consider leadership to be an essentially masculine trait, leading them to doubt their own abilities and qualifications and as a result impose limits on themselves (Lumby and Azaola, 2013[35]). On the other hand, as a result of socialisation, women tend to avoid competitive environments such as political campaigns (Milazzo, Goldstein and Markus, 2019[41]). In both cases, discriminatory social norms are an important driver of women's underrepresentation among candidates for public and political office. These same norms have a similar impact on women's entrepreneurship and employment (see Chapter 4 for more details).

Box 5.2. Electoral systems, temporary special measures and women's political voice

Discriminatory social institutions undermine women's political voice in political and electoral systems

In broad terms, there are three kinds of electoral system, each of which has its own set of implications for women's political representation (Abdennebi-Abderrahim, n.d.[27]).

- In **plurality systems**, the candidate with the highest number of votes wins. Under this system, voters choose the candidates, and by extension the parties, which they would like to see represent their constituency (Tremblay, 2007[42]). Plurality systems entail a particular focus on

candidates, rather than parties, implying that women candidates under this system may face greater scrutiny and lower chances of being elected than under other systems (IDEA and Gender Links, 2021[12]).

- Under **proportional representation** (PR), the electorate votes for political parties rather than individual candidates. Candidates are then allocated the seats won by the party by their position on a party list. In practice, PR systems have yielded higher levels of representation of women (Abdennebi-Abderrahim, n.d.[27]; IDEA and Gender Links, 2021[12]). However, an important element of the PR system from a gender perspective is the manner in which party lists are constructed. For example, if women candidates occupy positions at the end of lists, it is unlikely that they will be allocated seats.
- **Mixed systems** combine elements of both PR and plurality systems. Typically, this means that an initial set of candidates is elected using the plurality approach, while the remaining seats are filled using party lists. However, there are multiple variations of this process (IDEA and Gender Links, 2021[12]).

The specific features of temporary special measures can determine their success or failure in enhancing women's political representation

Electoral systems play a fundamental role in the use and effectiveness of **temporary special measures** such as quotas to promote women's political representation (Tremblay, 2007[42]). In general, there are two types of quotas: those for allocation of seats and those for candidates. The former set aside a share of seats for women, while the latter require political parties to put forth a share of women candidates. Each type of quota can be used in any of the three political systems described above, but is subject to its own benefits and drawbacks (Table 5.1).

Table 5.1. Benefits and drawbacks of quota types

	Positive aspects	Negative aspects
Reserved seats	Guarantees a certain level of representation within elected bodies	Perceived as unfair or discriminatory against men
Reserved candidature	Widely accepted	Does not necessarily guarantee a certain level of representation in elected bodes

Source: (IDEA and Gender Links, 2021[12]), Women's Political Participation: Africa Barometer 2021, https://www.idea.int/sites/default/files/publications/womens-political-participation-africa-barometer-2021.pdf.

Finally, the status of temporary special measures – voluntary or compulsory – is another factor in their effectiveness. Voluntary quotas are adopted by political parties that commit to fielding a certain percentage of women candidates and are typically more effective in PR and mixed systems than in plurality systems. In practice, some voluntary quotas have proven very effective, particularly in Southern Africa, where women account for at least 40% of MPs in Mozambique, Namibia, and South Africa (IPU Parline, 2021[6]). While voluntary quotas can have an impact, they are subject to at least two drawbacks: first, in the absence of public accountability, political parties are not beholden to these commitments and may choose not to follow them; and second, if political parties with quotas lose seats, women lose seats (Sadie, 2021[43]). In short, voluntary political party quotas may not be a sustainable measure to promote women's representation.

Compulsory quotas are enshrined in legislation, and in some cases, constitutions. Due to their legal status, legislated quotas are lasting and are not subject to the commitment or will of political parties. Many post-conflict countries in the region have adopted this approach to temporary special measures, with notable impacts, for example in Rwanda, which has the highest level of representation of women among MPs in the world (Anderson and Swiss, 2014[31]). In practice, legislated quotas can be effective;

however, in some countries gaps in implementation result from an absence of enforcement mechanisms and complementary policies, inadequate political will or a lack of clarity in the wording of the legislation/provision. In some countries, such as Eswatini, no enforcement mechanisms exist to penalise failure to meet legislated or constitutional quotas. In other countries, such as Mali and Niger, candidates may be rejected by the Constitutional Court in order to ensure quotas are met. The electoral management body of Mauritania also has this power (IDEA and Gender Links, 2021[12]).

Discriminatory social norms promoting unequal decision-making power at home limit women's opportunities for meaningful political participation

In the family sphere, discriminatory social institutions are particularly strong and challenging to address (OECD, 2019[44]). At the global level and in Africa, men are traditionally the heads of the household, a position which entails significant sway, if not the final say, over decisions concerning both the household and its members (Spindler et al., 2019[45]; Voices4Change, 2015[46]). In Africa, only 25% of women report being the head of household, while the percentage for men is 70% (Afrobarometer, 2016-18[17]). Furthermore, 45% of women report that their husband is the head of household, while only 2% of men identified their wife as the head (Afrobarometer, 2016-18[17]). Although household decision making is a complex process, the unequal influence of men and women in these decisions is a core factor contributing to inequalities in both private and public life. A lack of decision-making power over resources and how they are used as well as over women's own time and movement can seriously impede women's ability to participate in community governance, political processes, civil society organisations and more.

Restrictions on women's access to financial resources seriously undermine their ability to run successful political campaigns. In many African countries, political campaigns have high associated costs, meaning that access to and ability to mobilise financial resources is an important determining factor in women's ability to run for political office (IDEA and Gender Links, 2021[12]). One channel through which individuals may mobilise financial resources is accessing credit at a financial institution. However, legal and customary restrictions on women's ownership of land and property prevent them from accessing credit through many formal financial institutions that require collateral (Kivoi, 2014[33]) (see Chapter 4). Individuals also may fund political campaigns through the use of personal or household financial resources; however, women often lack decision-making power over how these assets are used. While funding a campaign is not considered a purchase, data on decision making over household purchases may offer insights into this area. In the eight African countries with available data for 2017-18, men appear to be the main decision makers for such financial matters. Indeed, 32% of women in Zambia and 77% of women in Mali reported that their husband is the decision maker for major household purchases (ICF, n.d.[47]). Furthermore, the fact that access to finance is a prerequisite for launching a political campaign favours socio-economically privileged women, while further marginalising poor women from political decision making (Pikramenou and Mahajan, 2019[2]).

The demands of unpaid care and domestic work which disproportionately fall on women can deprive them of the time and opportunity to participate fully in political life (Steady, 2011[48]; OECD, 2014[3]). In Africa, women spend over four times more time than men on unpaid care and domestic work (OECD, 2019[39]). The driving force behind such unequal responsibilities for unpaid care and domestic work between men and women is social norms. As a consequence, women lack time to devote to community organising, campaigning and even voting. In 26 of the 37 African countries with data, a greater share of women than men reported not voting because they did not have sufficient time to do so (Afrobarometer, 2016-18[17]). Even when women do participate in political life, they are forced to balance this activity with household and family responsibilities, in many cases without the support of their partner and family, a restriction that does not apply to their male counterparts.

Political violence and sexist discourse actively discourage women's participation in politics

Discriminatory social norms and the associated sexist discourse constitute a significant barrier to women's participation in politics. Sexist discourse focuses on gender stereotypes that portray women negatively and argue that they should be excluded from the political arena. This discourse is grounded in the view that women belong to the private sphere and should stay at home and take care of the family. Sexist discourse can promote political violence which at its core aims to deter women's participation in political and decision-making processes. Politically motivated gender-based violence can take the form of physical, sexual as well as verbal and psychological violence, and functions to amplify women's insecurity in the public space, diminishing their self-esteem and deterring them from pursuing public and political leadership (Krook, 2017[49]). Working with men and boys, in particular to achieve a better understanding of masculinities in fragile and conflict-affected settings, has been recognised as an enabler for changing gendered power dynamics, and is deemed as important as working with women and girls (OECD, 2019[50]).

Political violence is a serious issue in the region. Large shares of women (50%) and men (47%) in Africa fear being victims of political intimidation and violence. Indeed, fear of political violence is widespread in some countries – in Kenya, Uganda, and Zimbabwe more than 70% of women feared becoming a victim of political intimidation or violence (Afrobarometer, 2016-18[17]). Moreover, survey data from the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission reveal that young people and women were most affected by political violence, and 58% of all people who did not participate in elections cited violence as the primary reason (ZEC, 2017[51]). While political violence affects an entire population, during electoral campaigns it tends to be directed towards independent women candidates. In Egypt, for example, violent methods were used to disrupt rallies, intimidate female candidates or defame their character (OECD, 2018[52]). Such forms of violence underline the importance of support from political parties, which can minimise personal attacks and give women a platform that can grant a degree of protection.

Gender-based political violence takes place not only in person, but increasingly online. With the same aims at its core as offline attacks, online violence includes trolling, sexualised and gendered insults and threats, as well as disinformation, which can include the spread of false or inaccurate information and inappropriate images of women political leaders and public figures (Di Meco, 2020[53]). For example, in Zimbabwe a study found that from 2013 to 2018, 60% of violent discourse and related content in the online political space was directed at women (International Foundation for Electoral Systems, 2018[54]). Furthermore, in Uganda, high-level women political figures were more likely to be targets of online harassment than their male counterparts. Indeed, 18% of these women experienced online sexual violence compared to 8% of men. The same study showed that such treatment led these women to be less active on social media platforms, which is of particular concern given the increasing importance of these channels as a campaign tool (Pollicy, 2021[55]). Online-based political violence thus threatens women's ability to benefit equally from the potential of information and communication technologies (ICTs) as a tool of political participation (Box 5.3).

Box 5.3. Access to ICTs and women's political voice

ICTs have taken on an increasingly important role in Africa's political processes in the context of growing digitalisation and health crises requiring social distancing practices

As digitalisation increases and online spaces emerge as fora for political discussions, campaigning and information sharing, access to ICTs is becoming increasingly crucial. During the COVID-19 pandemic, ICTs have also played a vital role in enabling people to stay connected and access information critical to their participation in election and political processes, which went ahead in spite of the health crisis and associated social distancing measures (IDEA, 2021[56]). This was particularly the case in countries such as Benin, where physical campaign activities were suspended, and the dissemination of information on campaign issues and platforms shifted to media and online channels (Asplund and Akinduro, 2020[57]).

However, persistent digital divides across the continent prevent women from benefiting from ICTs in the same manner as their male counterparts. In Africa, 65% of women never use the Internet, with the share of women reporting non-usage reaching 90% or higher in four countries,[8] (Afrobarometer, 2016-18[17]). In addition, among youth – the age group with the highest internet usage rate – the share of women who use the Internet regularly (30%) was nearly 15 percentage points lower than the share of men (44%) (AUC/OECD, 2021[58]). As such, the digital divide and associated barriers to women's ability to access ICTs serve to further marginalise women's political voice.

Policy recommendations to overcome discriminatory social institutions limiting women's political empowerment

Support women's political representation at all levels

- Consider the enactment of quotas and/or temporary special measures with enforcement mechanisms to increase women's representation in politics at the local and national levels.

  The Constitution of Rwanda grants 30% of posts in decision-making bodies to women, and a number of supporting laws outline the implementation procedures to ensure these quotas are met, for example at the district council level (Government of Rwanda, 2015[59]; Government of Rwanda, 2010[60]).

- Enact legislation that creates financial incentives and financial support mechanisms for gender balance on party lists.

  For example, the laws of Guinea, Mali and Mauritania include financial incentives for political parties that elect women candidates (IDEA and Gender Links, 2021[12]).

- Provide information, networking, mentoring and training for aspiring women leaders on electoral and political processes, candidacy procedures, access to media, campaign finance and assembling a strong network of supporters, in order to build their confidence and capacity to run for elected office.
- Strengthen accountability and oversight mechanisms for policies and strategies to promote gender equality in decision making in line with the 2015 OECD Recommendation of the Council on Gender Equality in Public Life (OECD, 2016[61]).

- Develop and implement programmes aimed at addressing gendered divisions of unpaid care and domestic work, and support the development of infrastructure that can reduce the time required for care and domestic work-related tasks.
- Develop and circulate rosters of women qualified for appointed positions to facilitate the identification and promotion of women leaders.

> *The Compendium of Women's Skills of Côte d'Ivoire ("Compendium des Compétences Féminines de Côte d'Ivoire") was developed at the request of the President in order to facilitate the identification of qualified women for leadership positions. It currently includes 12 000 women and the share of women in the government has increased significantly since the creation of the Compendium (17% in 2010 to 25% in 2016 and 21% in 2017) (Government of Côte d'Ivoire, n.d.[62]).*

- Work with the media and other key stakeholders – including men and boys – to eliminate sexist discourse, unfair practices and gender-based political violence, by enacting and upholding gender-sensitive broadcasting standards. This work should strive to improve awareness of the importance of gender-balanced political participation through the promotion of positive examples of women leaders and campaigns.

> *Lesotho's Gender and Development Policy 2018-2030 includes working with media and ICTs to promote the "involvement and representation of women and men, boys and girls in order to ensure gender sensitive reporting" as a key priority. It outlines 12 specific actions to address this priority, including building the capacity of the media to engage in gender-responsive reporting through specific trainings, and creating and enforcing regulations on eliminating "degrading and violent portrayals of girls, women and other groups" (Government of Lesotho, 2018[63]).*
>
> *Burkina Faso has adopted several laws to better regulate how women are portrayed in advertising and to make violations punishable under the Penal Code, in view of reducing gender bias and negative views towards women and girls in the media (FEMNET, 2019[64]).*

Promote women's full and equal political participation

- Strengthen legislation by defining and prohibiting online harassment, and adapting laws on gender-based violence and violence against women to include political violence. In order to support the implementation of laws in this area, develop inter-ministerial policies that create a context for co-ordination of among the police and other relevant authorities.

> *There are multiple examples of legislation that prohibit political violence, although there are not yet any legal frameworks in the region that explicitly acknowledge the gendered dimensions of this violence. For example, in Zimbabwe, the Electoral Act (2018) creates the responsibilities for political parties to take measures against politically-motivated violence and creates a special police position tasked with overseeing investigations of political violence (Government of Zimbabwe, 2018[65]).*

- Work with ICT providers to improve access for women and girls to ICTs, especially given their importance for accessing governance-related information and services.
- Develop programmes promoting digital literacy that specifically target women and girls from a young age, with a view to narrowing the digital divide.
- Create awareness-raising and public education campaigns on gender-equal roles in the household, related specifically to joint decision making, the allocation of household tasks, and masculinities that are supportive of women's engagement in the public and political sphere.
- Invest in gender-disaggregated data on mobile and Internet access and use, including during the COVID-19 pandemic, with a view to informing policy measures to address digital gaps.
- Strengthen gender- and age-disaggregated data collection efforts on political participation and representation.

Improve the meaningful participation of women in peace and security processes

- Enhance collaborations with various actors to address the main drivers of inequalities and fragility in line with the 2019 OECD DAC Recommendation on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus (OECD, 2021[66]).
- Support the development and enhancement of conflict prevention efforts and survivor/victim-centred responses and support mechanisms in alignment with the OECD DAC Recommendations on Ending Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment (SEAH) (OECD, 2019[67]).
- Promote and enforce women's leadership in peace and security through the development and adoption of National Action Plans to implement UNSCR 1325.

> *In 2017, Nigeria launched its revised National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 which enabled the development of a training manual in 2018, which aims to strengthen the skills of women community leaders, traditional leaders and women peace mentors in peacebuilding processes (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2019[68]).*

- Ensure the comprehensiveness of National Action Plans by integrating specific and measurable targets, as well as a long-term vision that is gender-transformative, clear structures of responsibility and accountability (with greater implementation power granted to civil society organisations) and budgetary commitments to implement UNSCR 1325.

> *Mali launched its National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 in 2019, which included a comprehensive process of multi-stakeholder consultations. Furthermore, the Plan recognises women not only as victims of conflict but also as builders of peace (Lorentzen, 2021[25]).*
>
> *Liberia's revised National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 for 2019-2023 includes women as active agents in peace and security issues in Liberia, and includes a detailed monitoring and implementation plan with an allocated budget: output 5.5, for example, refers to "Annual government budgets to implement NAP activities are allocated using a gender-responsive budgeting approach" (Government of Liberia, 2019[69]).*

- Ensure that sufficient funding is allocated to the promotion of women's roles in peacebuilding.

> *Angola has dedicated 15% of its national budget for the integration of a gender perspective in peace and security issues, with an emphasis on women's empowerment and equality" (República de Angola, 2019[70]).*

- Consider signing the Women, Peace & Security and Humanitarian Action (WPS-HA) Compact, which calls on governments and other signatories to take voluntary actions to promote women's meaningful participation in peace processes, among others aims (UN Women, 2021[71]).

Notes

[1] The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) together form the basis of a global agenda for women's rights. For more information on the contents of these texts, see Chapter 2 and Annex A.

[2] The countries are Algeria, Burundi, Cameroon, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Gabon, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Morocco, Namibia, Nigeria, Rwanda, Somalia, South Africa, South Sudan and Zimbabwe.

[3] 41 African countries have election management bodies and data on their composition.

[4] No data are available for Libya.

[5] The countries are Botswana, Cabo Verde, Lesotho, Niger and South Africa.

[6] The countries are Algeria, Egypt and Eswatini.

[7] Regional action plans on United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 exist in the Great Lakes Region and the Economic Community of Central African States. Moreover, the African Union has developed a continental results framework for reporting on and monitoring the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda, and the Southern African Development Community has put in place a regional strategy on Women Peace and Security.

[8] The countries are Niger, Benin, Madagascar and Mali.

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Annex 5.A. Key indicators for women's political voice, leadership and agency in Africa

Annex Table 5.A.1. Key indicators for women's political voice, leadership and agency in Africa

Indicator	Women	Men
Representation in public and political offices		
Representation in parliaments (lower/single house)	25%	75%
Representation in parliaments (upper house)	20%	80%
Representation in local government	20%	80%
Representation in political party leadership	11%	89%
Representation as mayors in capital cities	19%	81%
Representation in top executive positions	7%	93%
Representation in electoral monitoring bodies	28%	72%
Political violence		
Share of the population that reports being a victim/survivor of gender-based political violence	*No data available*	
Share of the population that reports being a victim of political intimidation or violence during election campaigns	50%	47%
Share of the population that reported personally fearing violence at a political event in the past two years	30%	32%
Participation in public and political life		
Share of the population that reported having voted in the most recent national election	66%	70%
Share of the population that reported having attended a campaign rally in the last national election	32%	43%
Share of the population that reported having attended a community meeting in the past year	51%	63%
Share of the population that reported having worked for a candidate or party in the last national election	22%	25%
Share of the population that reported having contacted a Member of Parliament about an important problem or to give their own views at least once in the past year	8%	14%
Share of the population that reported having discussed political matters with friends or family occasionally or frequently	53%	69%
Peace and security		
Peace agreements that include issues related to women, girls and gender concluded since 1990	174 of 611	
Countries that have developed and adopted at least one national action plan on UN Security Council Resolution 1325	29 of 54	

Note: Representation in political party leadership analyses the top three positions in ruling and opposition parties. Executive positions include president, vice president and prime minister. The figure on peace agreements includes agreements concluded where the country or jurisdiction in which the conflict originated was an African country.

Source: (IPU Parline, 2021[6]), Monthly ranking of women in national parliaments; (IDEA and Gender Links, 2021[12]), Africa Barometer; (UN Women, n.d.[11]), Thematic Area Dashboard; (UNODC, 2018[72]), Court personnel; (UNODC, 2018[73]), Prosecution personnel; (Afrobarometer, 2016-18[17]), Afrobarometer Data Round 7; (Bell et al., 2021[22]), PA-X Peace Agreements Database; (WILPF, n.d.[74]), National Action Plans on Women, Peace and Security Database.

StatLink https://doi.org/10.1787/888934287680

Annex A. International and regional standards on women's rights

International and regional recognition of women's rights in the family sphere

Child marriage is recognised in international legal instruments as a serious violation of a child's human rights.

- The Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages (1962) establishes that all States Parties should take "legislative action to specify a minimum age of marriage" (Arts. 1, 2 and 3) (United Nations, 1962[1]).
- The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) (1979) states that "the betrothal and the marriage of a child shall have no legal effect" (Art. 16 (2)) (United Nations, 1979[2]).
- The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development aims to "eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage" under Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) target 5.3 (United Nations, 2016[3]).
- The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child states that "child marriage and the betrothal of girls and boys shall be prohibited", and that the minimum age for marriage shall be legally set at 18 years. It also states as compulsory the registration of all marriages in an official registry (Art. 21 (2)) (African Union, 1990[4]).
- The Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa ("The Maputo Protocol") (2003) declares that "the minimum age of marriage for women shall be 18 years" (Art. IV (b)) and that "no marriage shall take place without free and full consent of both parties" (Art. VI (a)) (African Union, 2003[5]).

The right to gender equality in the family sphere is enshrined in international treaties and benefits from a wide international consensus.

- The CEDAW (1979) affirms women's and men's equal rights and responsibilities as parents (Art. 16 (c)) and acknowledges that women have the same rights and responsibilities as men concerning guardianship, wardship and trusteeship of children (Art. 16 (g)) (United Nations, 1979[2]).
- The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) promotes the sharing of equal responsibility for the family between men and women and considers the critical role of equality in their well-being and that of their families (Art. 15) (Fourth World Conference on Women, 1995[6]).
- Target 5.4 of the SDGs (2015) advocates "the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family" and highlights the need to "recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work" (United Nations, 2016[3]).
- The African Charter on Human and People's Rights (1981) calls on State parties to ensure "the elimination of every discrimination against women" (Art.18 (3)) (African Union, 1981[7]).

- The Maputo Protocol (2003) states that both women and men "shall jointly contribute to safeguarding the interests of the family" (Art. IV (i)) (African Union, 2003[5]).

Although women's entitlement to equality on and after divorce is not considered a human right, it has been acknowledged by the CEDAW.

- The CEDAW (1979) calls on States Parties to eliminate discrimination against women when entering into and during marriage, and at its dissolution (Art. 16 (1)) (United Nations, 1979[2]).
- The Maputo Protocol (2003) promotes equal treatment and rights for men and women in the case of separation, divorce or annulment of marriage, including the equitable sharing of joint property (Art. VII) (African Union, 2003[5])

A link has been recognised between women's restricted inheritance rights and incidence of poverty.

- The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) calls on governments to undertake legislative and administrative reforms to give women and girls full rights to the inheritance of land and other property (para. 60 (f)), and to review national inheritance tax systems to eliminate any existing bias against women (para. 165 (f)) (Fourth World Conference on Women, 1995[6]).
- General Recommendation No. 29 of Article 16 of the CEDAW (2013) establishes the principle of equal treatment of surviving female and male spouses, and prohibits the disinheritance of the surviving spouse (para. 53) (United Nations, 2013[8]).
- Target 5.A of the SDGs (2015) calls on all governments to "undertake reforms to give women equal rights to … inheritance" (United Nations, 2016[3]).

International and regional recognition of women's right to physical integrity

Violence against women is widely recognised as a fundamental rights violation.

- The Maputo Protocol (2003) calls on State Parties to take effective measures to protect women from all forms of violence, and to eradicate the latter (Arts. III, IV). Special attention is paid to the protection of elderly women (Art. XXII) and women with disabilities (Art. XXIII) (African Union, 2003[5]).
- CEDAW General Recommendation No. 19 obliges States Parties to "ensure that laws against family violence and abuse, rape, sexual assault and other gender-based violence give adequate protection to all women, and respect their integrity and dignity", and to provide "appropriate protective and support services" to victims (United Nations, 1992[9]).

Female genital mutilation is internationally recognised as a harmful practice and a violation of women's and girls' human rights.

- The CEDAW, in particular General Recommendation No. 14 (1990), calls on States Parties to "take appropriate and effective measures with a view to eradicating the practice of female circumcision" (United Nations, 1990[10]).
- The Maputo Protocol (2003) requires State Parties to "prohibit and condemn all forms of harmful practices" (Art. V), including the prohibition of all forms of female genital mutilation (Art. V (b)) (African Union, 2003[5]).

States have an obligation to eliminate discriminatory practices leading to the phenomenon of missing women.

- The CEDAW (1979) requires States Parties to "modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women, with a view to achieving the elimination of prejudices, customs and all other practices which are based on the idea of the inferiority or superiority of either of the sexes" (Art. 5) (United Nations, 1979[2]).
- The African Charter on Human and People's Rights (1981) declares "Human beings are inviolable. Every human being shall be entitled to respect for his life and the integrity of his person. No one may be arbitrarily deprived of this right." (Art. 4) (African Union, 1981[7]).

Women's sexual and reproductive health and rights are enshrined in international agreements, despite their controversial status in Africa.

- The CEDAW (1979) calls on States Parties to ensure, on the basis of equality of men and women, "the same rights to decide freely and responsibly on the number and spacing of their children and to have access to the information, education and means to enable them to exercise these rights" (Art. 16), and to take all "appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the field of health care in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, access to health care services, including those related to family planning" (Art. 12) (United Nations, 1979[2]).
- The Maputo Protocol (2003) requires State Parties to promote and respect women's right to health, including sexual and reproductive health. The protocol highlights women's right to control fertility, including to choose any contraception method or form of self-protection regarding sexually transmitted infections, for example. State Parties shall take action by providing "adequate, affordable and accessible health services", particularly to women in rural areas (Art. XIV) (African Union, 2003[5])

International and regional recognition of women's right to access productive and financial resources

Women's equal access to, use of and control over land is grounded in core international human rights instruments.

- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) recognises the right to property for all individuals (Art. 2) (United Nations, 1948[11]).
- The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1976) guarantees equality between women and men (Art. 3) (United Nations, 1966[12]).
- The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1976) calls on States Parties "to ensure the equal right of men and women to the enjoyment of all economic, social and cultural rights" (Art. 3) (United Nations, 1966[12]).
- The CEDAW (1979) acknowledges that "States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in rural areas in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, that they participate in and benefit from rural development" (Art. 14.2). Furthermore, the CEDAW Committee considers "women's rights to land, natural resources, as well as fisheries as fundamental human rights" (United Nations, 1979[2]).
- The International Labour Organization's (ILO's) Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169) states that "the rights of ownership and possession of the peoples concerned over the lands which they traditionally occupy shall be recognised" (Art. 14.1) (ILO, 1989[13]).

- The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) calls on governments to "ensure women's equal access to economic resources, including land" and "to formulate and implement policies and programmes that provide access to and control of land" (para. 58 (n)) (Fourth World Conference on Women, 1995[6]).
- The Habitat Agenda (1996) commits governments to providing "legal security of tenure and equal access to land to all people, including women and those living in poverty", and to undertaking "legislative and administrative reforms to give women full and equal access to economic resources, including the right to inheritance and to ownership of land" (para. 40 (b)) (United Nations, 1996[14]).
- The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development recognises women's secure access to land as a key pillar of women's economic empowerment. The international community has committed to securing, enforcing and monitoring progress on women's land rights in order to achieve the SDGs by including land-specific SDG indicators (1.4.2 and 5.a.1) (United Nations, 1979[2]).

Numerous international and regional instruments guarantee the right of women to own property and non-land assets.

- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) establishes the right of everyone to own property regardless of sex (Arts. 17.1 and 17.2) (United Nations, 1948[11]).
- The African Charter on Human and People's Rights recognises that the right to property shall be guaranteed to everyone (Art. 14) (African Union, 1981[7]).
- The CEDAW (1979) explicitly calls on States Parties to take all appropriate measures to ensure "the same rights for both spouses in respect of the ownership, acquisition, management, administration, enjoyment and disposition of property" (Art. 16.1 (h)) (United Nations, 1979[2]).
- The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) call on national and international non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and women's groups to protect women's right to full and equal access to economic resources, including the right to inherit land and other property (para. 60) (Fourth World Conference on Women, 1995[6]).
- The Maputo Protocol (2003) establishes women's right to sustainable development. In this context, State Parties shall promote "women's access to and control over productive resources such as land and guarantee their right to property" (African Union, 2003[5]).

Women's access to formal financial services is enshrined in a number of international treaties.

- The CEDAW (1979) calls on States Parties "to take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in other areas of economic and social life in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, the same rights, in particular: the right to bank loans, mortgages and other forms of financial credit" (Art. 13 (b)) (United Nations, 1979[2]).
- The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) states that governments should "promote and support women's self-employment and the development of small enterprises, and strengthen women's access to credit and capital on appropriate terms (equal to those of men through the scaling up of institutions dedicated to promoting women's entrepreneurship, including, as appropriate, non-traditional and mutual credit schemes, as well as innovative linkages with financial institutions" (para. 166 (a)) (Fourth World Conference on Women, 1995[6]).
- The CEDAW Committee, in its General Recommendation No. 25 (2004), notes that States Parties should implement special temporary measures where necessary in the areas of credit and loans, as well as legal awareness. Such measures should be directed at women who are subject to multiple forms of discrimination, including rural women (United Nations, 2004[15]).

- The Maputo Protocol (2003) establishes women's right to sustainable development. In this context, State Parties shall promote women's access to financial services such as credit, but also training or skills development (African Union, 2003[5]).

States have international and regional legal obligations to protect women's workplace rights.

- The CEDAW (1979) (Art. 11) calls on States Parties to "take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the field of employment in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, the same rights, in particular:

  a The right to work as an inalienable right of all human beings;

  b The right to the same employment opportunities, including the application of the same criteria for selection in matters of employment;

  c The right to free choice of profession and employment, the right to promotion, job security and all benefits and conditions of service, and the right to receive vocational training and retraining, including apprenticeships, advanced vocational training and recurrent training;

  d The right to equal remuneration, including benefits, and to equal treatment in respect of work of equal value, as well as equality of treatment in the evaluation of the quality of work" (United Nations, 1979[2]).
- The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) underlines the need to take appropriate measures in consideration of women's reproductive role and functions and "eliminate discriminatory practices by employers […] such as the denial of employment and dismissal due to pregnancy or breastfeeding, or requiring proof of contraceptive use, and take effective measures to ensure that pregnant women, women on maternity leave or women re-entering the labour market after childbearing are not discriminated against" (para. 165 (c)) (Fourth World Conference on Women, 1995[6]).
- The African Charter on Human and People's Rights (1981) establishes the right of every individual to "work under equitable and satisfactory conditions, and [to] receive equal pay for equal work. (African Union, 1981[7])
- Core ILO Conventions establish key labour standards that promote effective equality between women and men in employment:
  - The Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100) (ILO, 1951[16])
  - The Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111) (ILO, 1958[17])
  - The Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention, 1981 (No. 156) (ILO, 1981[18])
  - The Maternity Protection Convention, 2000 (No. 183) (ILO, 2000[19])
  - The Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189) (ILO, 2011[20]).
- The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2015) recognises the importance of "achieving full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, and equal work for work of equal value" in target 8.5 (United Nations, 2016[21]).

International and regional recognition of women's rights regarding civil liberties

The right to a nationality is mandatory under a number of international and regional agreements.

- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) states that "everyone has the right to a nationality" and that "no one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his nationality nor denied the right to change his nationality" (Art. 15) (United Nations, 1948[11]).
- The Convention on the Nationality of Married Women (1957) specifies that "neither the celebration nor the dissolution of a marriage […] shall automatically affect the nationality of the wife" (Art. 1) (United Nations, 1957[22]).
- The CEDAW (1979) explicitly calls on States Parties to "grant women equal rights with men to acquire, change or retain their nationality", as well as to "grant women equal rights with men with respect to the nationality of their children" (Art. 9) (United Nations, 1979[2]).
- The Maputo Protocol (2003) establishes that in the case of marriage, a women has the "right to retain her nationality or to acquire the nationality of her husband" (Art. IV (g)). State parties are required to enact legislative measures that will also guarantee equal rights to men and women regarding the nationality of their children (Art. VI) (African Union, 2003[5]).
- Resolution 32/7 on the right to a nationality (women's equal nationality rights in law and in practice) adopted by the Human Rights Council (2016) urges States to "adopt and implement nationality legislation consistent with their obligations under international law, including with respect to the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and girls in nationality-related matters" (para. 3) (Human Rights Council, 2016[23]).

Equal access to publicly elected bodies and balanced representation of men and women in public life have been acknowledged by the international and regional community.

- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) states that "everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country" and "to equal access to public service in his country" (Art. 21) (United Nations, 1948[11]).
- The Convention on the Political Rights of Women (1952) establishes that women shall be "entitled to vote in all elections", "eligible for election to all publicly elected bodies" and "entitled to hold public office and to exercise all public functions" on equal terms with men (Arts. 1, 2 and 3) (United Nations, 1953[24]).
- The CEDAW (1979) calls on States Parties to "take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the political and public life of the country" (Art. 7). General Recommendation No. 23 (1997) encourages State parties' "use of temporary special measures in order to give full effect to articles 7 and 8" or equality of participation. The measures can range from amended electoral procedures to the setup of numerical goals or quotas for public positions. (United Nations, 1979[2]) (United Nations, 1997[25]).
- The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) lists women in power and decision-making positions among its 12 Strategic Objectives. Specifically, it instructs States to "take measures that encourage political parties to integrate women in elective and non-elective public positions in the same proportion and at the same level as men" (Strategic Objective G.1.b) (Fourth World Conference on Women, 1995[6]).
- The Maputo Protocol (2003) calls on State Parties to promote women's equal participation in political life by taking the required (legislative) measures. Specifically, women shall participate equally in elections, be equally represented in all levels of electoral processes, and be equal partners with men to develop and implement State policies (Art. IX) (African Union, 2003[5]).

- UN General Assembly Resolution 58/142 on Women and political participation (2003) urges State Parties to eliminate laws, regulations and practices that limit women's participation in the political process at all levels, on equal terms with men. It also requires States to take measures for and to promote the goal of gender balance in public positions (para. 1 (a, b, d, e)) (United Nations, 2003[26]). This requirement was reaffirmed in 2011 (A/RES/66/130), which again urged State Parties to take effective action to ensure women's equal political participation (United Nations, 2011[27]).
- The African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (2007) requires State Parties to "recognize popular participation through universal suffrage as the inalienable right of the people" (Art. 4 (2)) (African Union, 2007[28]).
- Resolution 66/130 on women and political participation adopted by the General Assembly (2011) calls on States to "enhance the political participation of women" (para. 3) (United Nations, 2011[29]).
- SDG target 5.5 explicitly calls on States to "ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life" (United Nations, 2016[3]).

Freedom of movement is a universal human right recognised in the following instruments:

- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) states that "everyone has the right to freedom of movement" and "to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country" (Art. 13) (United Nations, 1948[11]).
- The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966) reaffirms that everyone shall "have the right to liberty of movement and freedom to choose his residence" and "be free to leave any country" (Art. 12). (United Nations, 1966[12]).
- The CEDAW (1979) calls on States Parties to "accord to men and women the same rights with regards to the law relating to the movement of persons and the freedom to choose their residence and domicile" (Art. 15) (United Nations, 1979[2]).
- The African Charter on Human and People's Rights (1981) recognises every individual's right to "freedom of movement and residence within the borders of a State provided he abides by the law", as well as to leave and return to his country (Art. 12) (African Union, 1981[7]).
- The necessity to "provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces" (SDG target 11.7) and to "significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere" (SDG target 16.1) has been integrated into the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (United Nations, 2016[30]; United Nations, 2016[31]).

The right of access to justice and equality between men and women in this regard is guaranteed in the following international instruments:

- The CEDAW (1979) calls on States Parties to "accord to women, in civil matters, a legal capacity identical to that of men and the same opportunities to exercise that capacity" (Art. 15). Its General recommendation No. 33 on women's access to justice (2015) recalls the "obligations of State Parties to ensure that women have access to justice" (United Nations, 1979[2]).
- The African Charter on Human and People's Rights (1981) recognises that every individual shall be equal before and entitled to equal protection under the law (Art. 3) (African Union, 1981[7]).
- The Maputo Protocol (2003) calls on State Parties to take all appropriate measures to ensure that women and men enjoy "the right to are equal protection and benefit of the law" (Art. VIII) (African Union, 2003[5]). SDG target 16.3 aims to "promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all" (United Nations, 2016[31]).

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United Nations (1948), *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/ (accessed on 20 May 2020). [11]

Annex B. Social Institutions and Gender Index methodology

The Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) covers four dimensions, spanning the major socio-economic areas that affect the entire lifetimes of women and girls

- The "Discrimination in the family" dimension captures social institutions that limit women's decision-making power and undervalue their status in the household and the family.
- The "Restricted physical integrity" dimension captures social institutions that increase women's and girls' vulnerability to multiple forms of violence and limit their control over their bodies and reproductive autonomy.
- The "Restricted access to productive and financial resources" dimension captures women's restricted access to and control over critical productive and economic resources and assets.
- The "Restricted civil liberties" dimension captures discriminatory social institutions restricting women's access to, and participation and voice in, the public and social spheres.

Figure A B.1. The composition of the SIGI 2019



Source: OECD (n.d.), Social Institutions and Gender Index, www.genderindex.org.

Each dimension comprises four indicators. In theory, each indicator builds on a combination of three variables. The first variable aims to measure the level of discrimination in formal and informal laws, while the second and the third variables aim to measure the level of discrimination in social norms and practices, respectively. The variables used as proxies for each indicator depend on data availability, reliability and country coverage. For example, some variables are not available at all (e.g. information on the social acceptance of discriminatory inheritance practices), while others are only available for a few countries (e.g. time spent on unpaid care work).

Consequently, discrepancies exist between the theoretical framework and the variables included in the SIGI 2019. Overall, the SIGI framework builds on 27 core variables:

- 14 categorical variables describe the level of discrimination in legal frameworks (available for all SIGI indicators but two: Missing women and Female genital mutilation). These variables are based on 144 questions out of the 312 used to draft the SIGI country profiles.
- 3 attitudinal variables describe the level of discrimination in social norms.
- 10 variables on prevalence rates describe the level of discrimination in practices.

Aggregation and construction of the index

The variables, indicators, dimensions and, ultimately, the SIGI are constructed according to the steps below.

Step 1: Building the Gender, Institutions and Development Database

Quantitative variables: Truncating data at the equality benchmark and inverting the scale

Quantitative data are collected and harmonised to ensure comparability across countries/territories. Data sources vary according to the country/territory and the variable. For example, the prevalence of child marriage among girls is collected through the UN World Marriage Database, while the proportion of women members of parliament is based on the Inter-Parliamentary Union database.

All the SIGI components (variables, indicators, dimensions and index) range from 0, indicating no discrimination, to 100, indicating absolute discrimination:

- For some variables, equality is reached at 0.5 instead of 1. Equality in political representation, for example, is achieved when 50% of MPs are women. Therefore, countries/territories where 50% or more of their MPs are female have a score of 0.
- For some other variables, the scale from no discrimination to absolute discrimination may be inverted to fit with the 0-100 scale.

Qualitative variables: Assigning a score

The qualitative legal information detailed in the SIGI country profiles is quantified using a coding manual based on a five-level scale (0, 25, 50, 75 and 100) (Table A B.1).

Table A B.1. Scoring methodology for legal variables

Legal frameworks	Score assigned
The legal framework provides women with the same rights as men, with no exceptions, and applies to all groups of women. There are no customary, religious or traditional practices or laws that discriminate against women.	0
The legal framework provides women with the same rights as men, with no exceptions, and applies to all groups of women. However, some customary, religious or traditional practices or laws do discriminate against women.	25
The legal framework provides women with the same rights as men. However, it foresees exceptions, or does not apply to all groups of women.	50
The legal framework restricts some women's rights.	75
The legal framework fully discriminates against women's rights.	1

Source: OECD (n.d.), Social Institutions and Gender Index, www.genderindex.org.

Step 2: Building the indicators

The variables that comprise each indicator are aggregated using the SIGI aggregation formula.

Some indicators are based on one variable, while others are based on several. In the latter case, the indicator is calculated only if all variables are assigned a value.

For example, for the "Violence against women" (VAW) indicator, the aggregation is:

$$VAW = \ln\left(\frac{1}{3}e^{Laws\ on\ VAW} + \frac{1}{3}e^{Attitudes\ towards\ domestic\ violence} + \frac{1}{3}e^{Prevalence\ of\ domestic\ violence}\right)$$

Step 3: Building the dimensions

The indicators that comprise each dimension are aggregated using the SIGI aggregation formula.

The dimensions aim to provide a summary measure of each area of discrimination. The dimension is calculated only if all indicators are assigned a value.

For example, for the dimension "Discrimination in the family" (DF), the aggregation is:

$$DF = \ln\left(\frac{1}{4}e^{Child\ marriage} + \frac{1}{4}e^{Household\ responsibilities} + \frac{1}{4}e^{Inheritance} + \frac{1}{4}e^{Divorce}\right)$$

Step 4: Building the SIGI

The SIGI is calculated only if all dimensions are assigned a value using the same aggregation formula.

$$SIGI = \ln\left(\frac{1}{4}e^{DF} + \frac{1}{4}e^{RPI} + \frac{1}{4}e^{RAPFR} + \frac{1}{4}e^{RCL}\right)$$

Definition of the variables

Table A B.2. Variables used in the analysis and the construction of the SIGI 2019

Variable	Coding	Sources
DISCRIMINATION IN THE FAMILY		
Child marriage		
Laws on child marriage (S) Whether the same minimum legal age for marriage applies to both women and men	0: The law guarantees the same minimum legal age for marriage at 18 years for both women and men, without legal exceptions regarding consent or for some groups of women. Customary, religious or traditional practices or laws do not encourage child marriage among girls.	SIGI country profiles

	0.25: The minimum legal age for marriage might be different for men and women, but they must be at least 18 years old, without legal exceptions regarding consent or for some groups of women. Some customary, religious or traditional practices or laws encourage child marriage among girls.	
	0.5: The minimum legal age for marriage might be different for men and women, but is over the age of 18 years. However, legal exceptions exist concerning consent and/or some groups of women.	
	0.75: The law allows child marriage for both women and men, or there is no minimum legal age for marriage for either women or men.	
	1: The law allows child marriage for women but not for men.	
Prevalence of child marriage among girls (S) Percentage of girls aged 15-19 years who have been or are still married, divorced, widowed or in an informal union	0-100%	UN World Marriage Data (2017)
Prevalence of child marriage among boys Percentage of boys aged 15-19 years who have been or are still married, divorced, widowed or in an informal union	0-100%	UN World Marriage Data (2017)
Household responsibilities		
Laws governing household responsibilities (S) Whether women and men have the same legal rights, decision-making abilities and responsibilities within the household	0: Women enjoy the same legal rights and decision-making freedoms and responsibilities within the household as men, without legal exceptions for any groups of women. Customary, religious or traditional practices or laws do not discriminate against women's legal rights.	SIGI country profiles
	0.25: Women enjoy the same legal rights and decision-making freedoms and responsibilities within the household as men, without legal exceptions for any groups of women. However, customary, religious or traditional practices or laws discriminate against women's legal rights.	
	0.5: Not all groups of women enjoy the same legal rights and decision-making freedoms and responsibilities within the household as men, or there is no law regulating household headship.	
	0.75: Women do not enjoy the same legal rights as men to be recognised as the head of household or to have parental authority.	
	1: Women do not enjoy the same legal rights as men to be recognised as the head of household and to have parental authority.	
Attitude towards housewives Percentage of the population aged over 18 years that thinks that "Being a housewife is just as fulfilling as working for pay"	0-100%	International Social Survey Programme World Values Survey
Attitude towards women earning money Percentage of the population aged over 18 years that agrees or agrees strongly with the statement: "If a woman earns more money than her husband, it is almost certain to cause problems"	0-100%	International Social Survey Programme World Values Survey
Attitude towards working mothers (*) Percentage of the population aged over 18 years that agrees or agrees strongly with the statement: "When a mother works for pay, the children suffer"	0-100%	International Social Survey Programme World Values Survey
Women's and men's share of unpaid care work responsibility (*) Female-to-male ratio of time spent on unpaid, domestic, care and volunteer work in a 24-hour period		Various sources[1]

Women's contribution to unpaid care work Women's average time spent (in hours) on unpaid domestic, care and voluntary work in a 24-hour period		Various sources[1]
Men's contribution to unpaid care work Men's average time spent (in hours) on unpaid domestic, care and voluntary work in a 24-hour period		Various sources[1]
Inheritance		
Laws on inheritance (S) Whether women and men have the same legal rights to inherit land and non-land assets	0: Widows and daughters enjoy the same rights as widowers and sons to inherit land and non-land assets. This applies to all groups of women. Customary, religious or traditional practices or laws do not discriminate against women's inheritance rights.	SIGI country profiles
	0.25: Widows and daughters enjoy the same rights as widowers and sons to inherit land and non-land assets. This applies to all groups of women. However, there are some customary, religious or traditional practices or laws that discriminate against women's inheritance rights.	
	0.5: Widows and daughters enjoy the same rights as widowers and sons to inherit land and non-land assets. However, this does not apply to all groups of women.	
	0.75: Widows or daughters do not enjoy the same rights as widowers and sons to inherit land and/or non-land assets.	
	1: Neither widows nor daughters enjoy rights to inherit land and/or non-land assets.	
Divorce		
Laws on divorce (S) Whether women and men have the same legal rights to initiate divorce, with the same grounds and evidential requirements for divorce or annulment	0: Women have both the same rights to initiate divorce and the same requirements to finalise divorce or annulment as men, without negative repercussions on their parental authority. This applies to all groups of women. Customary, religious or traditional practices or laws do not discriminate against women regarding divorce or their parental authority after divorce.	SIGI country profiles
	0.25: Women have both the same rights to initiate divorce and the same requirements to finalise divorce or annulment as men, without negative repercussions on their parental authority. This applies to all groups of women. However, there are some customary, religious or traditional practices or laws that discriminate against women regarding divorce and/or their parental authority after divorce.	
	0.5: Women have both the same rights to initiate divorce and the same requirements to finalise divorce or annulment as men, without negative repercussions on their parental authority. However, this does not apply to all groups of women.	
	0.75: Women do not have the same rights regarding divorce as men: either their rights to initiate divorce and/or their requirements to finalise divorce or annulment are unequal, or their parental authority after divorce is restricted.	
	1: Women do not have the same rights regarding divorce as men: their rights to initiate divorce and/or the requirements to finalise divorce or annulment are unequal, and their parental authority after divorce is restricted.	
RESTRICTED PHYSICAL INTEGRITY		
Violence against women		
Laws on violence against women (S) Whether the legal framework protects women from violence – including intimate partner violence, rape and sexual harassment – without legal exceptions and through a comprehensive approach	0: The legal framework protects women from violence – including intimate partner violence, rape and sexual harassment – without any legal exceptions and through a comprehensive approach.	SIGI country profiles
	0.25: The legal framework protects women from violence – including intimate partner violence, rape and sexual harassment – without any legal exceptions. However, the approach is not comprehensive.	

	0.5: The legal framework protects women from violence, including intimate partner violence, rape and sexual harassment. However, there are some legal exceptions.	
	0.75: The legal framework protects women from some forms of violence, including intimate partner violence, rape, or sexual harassment, but not all.	
	1: The legal framework does not protect women from any form of violence: whether intimate partner violence, rape or sexual harassment.	
Attitude towards domestic violence (S) Percentage of women aged 15-49 years who consider a husband to be justified in hitting or beating his wife for at least one of the specified reasons: if his wife burns food, argues with him, goes out without telling him, neglects the children, or refuses to engage in sexual intercourse with him	0-100%	Pan American Health Organization (2014) UNICEF global databases (2017) World Health Organization World Values Survey (2005-16)
Lifetime prevalence of domestic violence (S) Percentage of women who have suffered intimate partner physical and/or sexual violence during their lifetime	0-100%	Various sources[2]
Prevalence of domestic violence in the last 12 months Percentage of women who have suffered intimate partner physical and/or sexual violence in the previous 12 months	0-100%	Various sources[2]
Female genital mutilation		
Attitude towards female genital mutilation (S) Percentage of women aged 15-49 years who have heard about female genital mutilation and think the practice should continue	0-100%	UNICEF Global Databases (2017)
Prevalence of female genital mutilation (S) Percentage of women aged 15-49 years who have undergone female genital mutilation	0-100%	UNICEF Global Databases (2017)
Missing women		
Missing women (S) Sex ratio among 0-4-year-olds (number of males per 100 females)	105-116	UNDP World Population Prospects (2017)
Reproductive autonomy		
Laws on reproductive autonomy (S) Whether the legal framework protects women's sexual and reproductive health and rights	0: The legal framework protects women's reproductive health and rights in the case of unintended pregnancy, without conditions.	SIGI country profiles
	0.25: The legal framework protects women's reproductive health and rights in the case of unintended pregnancy, but imposes conditions.	
	0.5: The legal framework only protects women's reproductive health and rights in the case of unintended pregnancy with some conditions.	
	0.75: The legal framework only protects women's reproductive health and rights in the case of unintended pregnancy under strict conditions.	
	1: The legal framework does not protect women's reproductive health or rights in the case of unintended pregnancy.	
Access to family planning (S) Prevalence of unmet need for family planning – percentage of currently married or in-union women of reproductive age (15-49 years) who want to cease or delay childbearing but are not using any method of contraception	0-100%	United Nations Population Fund (2017) United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2018)

RESTRICTED ACCESS TO PRODUCTIVE AND FINANCIAL RESOURCES		
Secure access to land assets		
Laws on access to land assets (S) Whether women and men have the same legal rights and secure access to land assets	0: Women and men have the same legal rights and secure access to land assets, without legal exceptions. This applies to all groups of women. Customary, religious or traditional practices or laws do not discriminate against women exercising their legal rights.	SIGI country profiles
	0.25: Women and men have the same legal rights and secure access to land assets, without legal exceptions. This applies to all groups of women. However, some customary, religious or traditional practices or laws discriminate against women exercising their legal rights.	
	0.5: Women and men have the same legal rights and secure access to land assets. However, this does not apply to all groups of women.	
	0.75: Women and men have the same legal rights to own land assets, but not to use, make decisions about and/or use land assets as collateral.	
	1: Women do not have the same legal rights as men to own land assets.	
Access to land ownership (*) Percentage of men in the total number of agricultural holders	0-100%	Demographic and Health Surveys
Secure access to non-land assets		
Laws on access to non-land assets (S) Whether women and men have the same legal rights and secure access to non-land assets	0: Women and men have the same legal rights and secure access to non-land assets, without legal exceptions. This applies to all groups of women. Customary, religious or traditional practices or laws do not discriminate against women exercising their legal rights.	SIGI country profiles
	0.25: Women and men have the same legal rights and secure access to non-land assets, without legal exceptions. This applies to all groups of women. However, some customary, religious or traditional practices or laws discriminate against women exercising their legal rights.	
	0.5: Women and men have the same legal rights and secure access to non-land assets. However, this does not apply to all groups of women.	
	0.75: Women and men have the same legal rights to own non-land assets, but not to use, make decisions about and/or use non-land assets as collateral.	
	1: Women do not have the same legal rights as men to own non-land assets.	
Access to house ownership (*) Percentage of men in the total number of people who own a house alone	0-100%	Demographic and Health Surveys
Secure access to formal financial services		
Laws on access to formal financial services (S) Whether women and men have the same legal rights to open a bank account and obtain credit at a formal financial institution	0: Women and men have the same rights to open a bank account and obtain credit at a formal financial institution, without legal exceptions. This applies to all groups of women. Customary, religious or traditional practices or laws do not discriminate against women exercising their legal rights.	SIGI country profiles
	0.25: Women and men have the same rights to open a bank account and obtain credit at a formal financial institution, without legal exceptions. This applies to all groups of women. However, some customary, religious or traditional practices or laws discriminate against women exercising their legal rights.	
	0.5: Women and men have the same rights to open a bank account and obtain credit at a formal financial institution. However, this does not apply to all groups of women.	
	0.75: Women and men have the same rights to open a bank account at a formal financial institution. However, women do not have the same rights as men to obtain credit.	

	1: Women do not have the same rights as men to open a bank account at a formal financial institution.	
Access to bank account services (S) Percentage of women in the total population aged 15 years and over who have an account at a financial institution (by themselves or together with someone else)	0-100%	Global Findex database
Access to financial loans Percentage of women in the total population aged 15 years and over who borrowed any money from a financial institution in the past 12 months	0-100%	Global Findex database
Access to credit card services Percentage of women in the total population aged 15 years and over who own a credit card	0-100%	Global Findex database
Workplace rights		
Laws on workplace rights (S) Whether women and men have the same legal rights and opportunities in the workplace	0: The legal framework guarantees equality between women and men in the workplace. Parental leave is available to mothers and fathers and the law protects women's rights during pregnancy and maternity/parental leave. Customary, religious or traditional practices or laws do not discriminate against women in their legal right to enter certain professions, choose a profession and register a business.	SIGI country profiles
	0.25: The legal framework guarantees equality between women and men in the workplace. Parental leave is available to mothers and fathers and the law protects women's rights during pregnancy and maternity/parental leave. However, there is evidence of customary, religious or traditional practices or laws that discriminate against women who exercise their legal right to enter certain professions, choose a profession or register a business.	
	0.5: The legal framework guarantees equality between women and men in the workplace. Parental leave is available to mothers and fathers and the law protects women's rights during pregnancy and maternity/parental leave. However, this does not apply to all groups of women.	
	0.75: The legal framework guarantees equality between women and men in the workplace. However, parental leave is not available to mothers and fathers and/or the law does not protect women's rights during pregnancy and maternity/parental leave.	
	1: The legal framework does not guarantee equality between women and men in the workplace.	
Attitudes towards working women (S) Percentage of the population that disagrees with the statement: "It is perfectly acceptable for any woman in your family to have a paid job outside the home if she wants to"	0-100%	International Labour Organization and Gallup Inc. (2017) Latinobarometer World Values Survey
Representation in managerial positions (S) Percentage of women in the total population employed in management	0-100%	International Labour Organization
RESTRICTED CIVIL LIBERTIES		
Citizenship rights		
Laws on citizenship rights (S) Whether women and men have the same citizenship rights and ability to exercise their rights	0: Women and men have the same rights to acquire, change and retain their nationality, and to confer their nationality on their spouse and children, without legal exceptions. This applies to all groups of women. Customary, religious or traditional practices or laws do not restrict these rights.	SIGI country profiles
	0.25: Women and men have the same rights to acquire, change and retain their nationality and to confer their nationality on their spouse and children, without legal exceptions. This applies to all groups of	

	women. However, some discriminatory customary, religious or traditional practices or laws restrict these rights.	
	0.5: Women have the same rights as men to acquire, change and retain their nationality and to confer their nationality on their spouse and children. However, this does not apply to all groups of women.	
	0.75: Women and men have the same rights to acquire, change and retain their nationality. However, women face legal restrictions on their rights to confer their nationality on their husband and/or children.	
	1: Women and men do not have the same rights to acquire, change or retain their nationality.	
Freedom of movement		
Laws on freedom of movement (S) Whether women and men have the same rights to apply for national identity cards (if applicable) and passports and to travel outside the country	0: Women and men have the same rights to apply for national identity cards (if applicable) and passports, and to travel outside the country, without legal exceptions. This applies to all groups of women. Customary, religious or traditional practices or laws do not discriminate against these rights.	SIGI country profiles
	0.25: Women and men have the same rights to apply for national identity cards (if applicable) and passports, and to travel outside the country, without legal exceptions. This applies to all groups of women. However, some customary, religious or traditional practices or laws discriminate against women exercising these rights.	
	0.5: Women and men have the same rights to apply for national identity cards (if applicable) and passports, and to travel outside the country. However, this does not apply to all groups of women.	
	0.75: Women do not have the same rights as men either to apply for national identity cards (if applicable) or passports or to travel outside the country.	
	1: Women do not have the same rights as men to apply for national identity cards (if applicable) or passports, and to travel outside the country.	
Security feeling (S) Percentage of women in the total number of people who declare not feeling safe walking alone at night in the city or area where they live	Rescaled to 0-100%	Gallup World Poll (2017)
Political voice		
Laws on political voice (S) Whether the legal framework promotes women's equal political representation	0: Women and men have the same rights to vote and to hold public and political office in the legislative and executive branches of government. There are special measures to promote women's political participation at the national or subnational levels. Customary, religious or traditional practices or laws do not restrict these rights.	SIGI country profiles
	0.25: Women and men have the same rights to vote and to hold public and political office in the legislative and executive branches of government. There are special measures to promote women's political participation at the national or subnational levels. However, some discriminatory customary, religious or traditional practices or laws restrict these rights.	
	0.5: Women and men have the same rights to vote and to hold public and political office in the legislative and executive branches of government. There are no legal quotas or special measures or incentives for political parties to promote women's political participation.	
	0.75: Women and men have the same rights to vote. However, women face discrimination regarding their right to hold public and political office in the legislative and executive branches of government.	
	1: Women and men do not have the same rights to vote.	
Political representation (S) Percentage of women in the total number of	0-100%	Inter-Parliamentary Union (2018)

representatives of the lower or single house of parliament		
Attitude towards women's political leadership (*) Percentage of the population that agrees with the statement: "On the whole, men make better political leaders than women do"	0-100%	World Values Survey
Access to justice		
Laws on access to justice (S) Whether women and men have the same rights to provide testimony in court, to hold public or political office in the judiciary, and to sue	0: A woman's testimony holds the same evidentiary weight as that of a man in all types of court cases, and women have the same rights as men to hold public or political office in the judiciary, and to sue. Customary, religious or traditional practices or laws do not discriminate against women's legal right to provide testimony in court, or to be a judge, advocate or other court officer, or to sue.	SIGI country profiles
	0.25: A woman's testimony holds the same evidentiary weight as a that of a man in all types of court cases, and women have the same rights as men to hold public or political office in the judiciary, and to sue. Women's testimony carries the same evidentiary weight as men's in customary/religious courts/tribunals. However, some customary, religious or traditional practices or laws discriminate against women in their legal right to provide testimony in court, or to be a judge, advocate or other court officer, or to sue.	
	0.5: A woman's testimony holds the same evidentiary weight as a that of a man in all types of court cases and women have the same rights as men to sue. However, women do not have the same rights as men to hold public or political office in the judiciary.	
	0.75: Women and men have the same rights to sue. However, a woman's testimony does not hold the same evidentiary weight as a that of a man in all types of court cases.	
	1: Women and men do not have the same rights to sue.	
Confidence in the judicial system and courts (S) Percentage of women in the total number of people who declare not having confidence in the judicial system and courts of their country	0-100%	Gallup World Poll (2017)

Notes: **(S)** Variables included in the computation of the SIGI. **(*)** Variables not included in the computation of the SIGI but stored in the Gender, Institutions and Development Database.
Source: OECD (n.d.), Social Institutions and Gender Index, www.genderindex.org.

Questions used to calculate the SIGI scores

The SIGI country profiles are derived from a questionnaire on gender-related legal frameworks – both formal and traditional/cultural – in the countries and territories covered. The questions are mainly divided into two groups: legal framework (formal laws) and *de facto* (customary, religious or traditional practices or laws). While most of the questions have "Yes" or "No" answers, two of them have numeric values (i.e. the questions on the minimum legal age for marriage for women and men). The list of questions is presented in Table A B.3.

Table A B.3. SIGI questionnaire

DISCRIMINATION IN THE FAMILY	
Child marriage	
Legal framework	What is the legal age of marriage for women?
	What is the legal age of marriage for men?
	Is the legal age of marriage the same for women and men?
	Are there legal exceptions to the legal age of marriage that allow women and men under the legal age of marriage to marry with the consent of: a. Parent b. Guardian c. Judge d. The court e. Other authority. Please indicate which authority is concerned.
	Does the legal age of marriage apply to all groups of women?
De facto	Are there customary, religious or traditional practices or laws that allow or encourage early marriage of girls?
Household responsibilities	
Legal framework	Does the law provide women with the same rights as men to be recognised as the head of household?
	Does the law provide women with the same rights as men to be the legal guardians of their children during marriage?
	Does the law provide women with the same rights as men to be legal guardians of their children in informal unions?
	Regarding women's legal rights to be recognised as the head of household, does the law apply to all groups of women?
De facto	Are there customary, religious or traditional practices or laws that discriminate against women's legal right to be recognised as the head of household?
	Are there customary, religious or traditional practices or laws that discriminate against women's legal right to be the legal guardians of their children?
	Are there customary, religious or traditional practices or laws that discriminate against women's legal right to choose where to live?
Divorce	
Legal framework	Does the law provide women with the same rights as men to initiate divorce?
	Do women have the same requirements as men to finalise a divorce or annulment?
	Does the law provide women with the same rights as men to be the legal guardians of their children after divorce?
	Regarding divorce, does the law apply to all groups of women?
De facto	Are there customary, religious or traditional practices or laws that discriminate against women's legal rights to initiate divorce?
	Are there customary, religious or traditional practices or laws that discriminate against women's legal right to be the legal guardians of their children after divorce?
Inheritance	
Legal framework	Does the law provide daughters with the same rights as sons to inherit land?
	Does the law provide daughters with the same rights as sons to inherit non-land assets?
	Does the law provide female surviving spouses with the same rights as male surviving spouses to inherit land?
	Does the law provide female surviving spouses with the same rights as male surviving spouses to inherit non-land assets?
	Regarding inheritance rights of daughters, does the law apply to all groups of women?
	Regarding inheritance rights of female surviving spouses, does the law apply to all groups of women?
De facto	Are there customary, religious or traditional practices or laws that discriminate against daughters' legal rights to inherit?
	Are there customary, religious or traditional practices or laws that discriminate against female surviving spouses' legal rights to inherit?
RESTRICTED PHYSICAL INTEGRITY	
Violence against women	
National legal framework on violence against women	
	Does the law provide for a comprehensive approach to address violence against women with specific provisions for: a. Investigation, prosecution and punishment of the perpetrator b. Protection and support services for victims/survivors
	Has legislation provided for the removal of provisions which reduce penalties in the case of so-called honour crimes?
Laws addressing domestic violence	
Legal framework	Is domestic violence a criminal offence?
	Does domestic violence legislation cover the following abuse:

	a. Physical? b. Sexual? c. Psychological? d. Economic?
De facto	Are there any exceptions included in the customary, religious or traditional practices or laws that reduce penalties for domestic violence?
Laws addressing rape	
Legal framework	Is rape a criminal offence?
	Does the legal definition of rape include marital rape?
	Does the law repeal discriminatory practices such as reduced sentences or escaping punishment if the perpetrator marries the victim?
Laws addressing sexual harassment	
Legal framework	Does the legal framework provide legal protection from sexual harassment?
	Does the law on sexual harassment include criminal penalties?
	Does the definition of sexual harassment cover: a. The workplace? b. Educational establishments? c. Sporting establishments? d. Public places? e. Cyber harassment or cyber stalking?
Reproductive autonomy	
Legal framework	Is abortion legal?
	Are there any conditions on legal abortion? a. No restrictions on reasons for abortion b. To preserve the mental health of the woman c. Due to rape, statutory rape or incest d. To preserve the physical health of the woman e. Due to foetal inviability f. To save the woman's life
RESTRICTED ACCESS TO PRODUCTIVE AND FINANCIAL RESOURCES	
Secure access to land assets	
Legal framework	Regarding land, does the law provide married women with the same rights as married men to: a Own b Use c Make decisions d Use as collateral
	Regarding land, does the law provide unmarried women with the same rights as unmarried men to: a Own b Use c Make decisions d Use as collateral
	Regarding land, does the law apply to all groups of women?
De facto	Are there customary, religious or traditional practices or laws that discriminate against women's legal rights regarding land to own, use, make decisions and use as collateral?
Secure access to non-land assets	
Legal framework	Regarding property and other non-land assets, does the law provide married women with the same rights as married men to: a Own b Use c Make decisions d Use as collateral
	Regarding property and other non-land assets, does the law provide unmarried women with the same rights as unmarried men to: a Own b Use c Make decisions d Use as collateral
	Regarding property and other non-land assets, does the law apply to all groups of women?
De facto	Are there customary, religious or traditional practices or laws that discriminate against women's legal rights regarding non-land assets to own, use, make decisions and use as collateral?

Secure access to formal financial services	
Legal framework	Does the law provide married women with the same rights as married men to open a bank account at a formal financial institution?
	Does the law require married women to obtain the signature and authority of their husband/guardian to open a bank account at a formal financial institution?
	Does the law provide married women with the same rights as married men to obtain credit?
	Does the law provide unmarried women with the same rights as unmarried men to obtain credit?
	Regarding access to formal financial services, does the law apply to all groups of women?
De facto	Are there customary, religious or traditional practices or laws that discriminate against women's legal right to open a bank account?
	Are there customary, religious or traditional practices or laws that discriminate against women's legal right to obtain credit?
Workplace rights	
Legal framework	Does the law mandate non-discrimination on the basis of sex in employment?
	Does the law mandate equal remuneration for work of equal value?
	Does the law prohibit women from entering certain professions?
	Does the law allow women to work the same night hours as men?
	Does the law mandate paid maternity leave?
	Does the law mandate paid paternity leave?
	Does the law mandate parental leave?
	Does the law require women to have permission from their husband or legal guardian to: a. Choose a profession/occupation or work b. Register a business
	Regarding women's legal right to choose a profession/occupation or work, and/or to register a business, does the law apply to all groups of women?
De facto	Are there customary, religious or traditional practices or laws that discriminate against women's legal right to enter certain professions?
	Are there customary, religious or traditional practices or laws that require women to have permission from their husband or legal guardian to: a. Choose a profession/occupation or work b. Register a business
RESTRICTED CIVIL LIBERTIES	
Citizenship rights	
Legal framework	Does the law provide married women with the same rights as married men to acquire nationality?
	Does the law provide unmarried women with the same rights as unmarried men to acquire nationality?
	Does the law provide married women with the same rights as married men to change their nationality?
	Does the law provide unmarried women with the same rights as unmarried men to change their nationality?
	Does the law provide married women with the same rights as married men to retain their nationality?
	Does the law provide unmarried women with the same rights as unmarried men to retain their nationality?
	Does the law provide married women with the same rights as married men to confer nationality on their spouse?
	Does the law provide married women with the same rights as married men to confer nationality on their children?
	Does the law provide unmarried women with the same rights as unmarried men to confer nationality on their children?
	Regarding women's nationality rights, does the law apply to all groups of women?
De facto	Are there discriminatory customary, religious or traditional practices or laws that discriminate against women's legal rights to acquire, change or retain their nationality?
	Are there discriminatory customary, religious or traditional practices or laws that discriminate against women's legal rights to confer nationality on their spouse and/or children?
Freedom of movement	
Legal framework	Does the law provide married women with the same rights as married men to apply for identity cards?
	Does the law provide unmarried women with the same rights as unmarried men to apply for identity cards?
	Does the law provide married women with the same rights as married men to apply for passports?
	Does the law provide unmarried women with the same rights as unmarried men to apply for passports?
	Regarding identity cards and/or passports, does the law apply to all groups of women?
	Does the law provide married women with the same rights as married men to travel outside the country?
	Does the law provide unmarried women with the same rights as unmarried men to travel outside the country?
De facto	Are there customary, religious or traditional practices or laws that discriminate against women's rights to apply for identity cards or passports?

Political voice	
Legal framework	Does the law provide married women with the same rights as married men to vote?
	Does the law provide unmarried women with the same rights as unmarried men to vote?
	Does the law provide women with the same rights as men to hold public and political office in the: a. Legislature? b. Executive?
Enforcement, monitoring and promotion	Do legal quotas exist to promote women's political participation at the national level?
	Do legal quotas exist to promote women's political participation at the local level? For the respective country, please define local level.
	Does the law provide for special measures other than quotas to promote women's political participation at the national level?
	Does the law provide for special measures other than quotas to promote women's political participation at the local level? For the respective country, please define local level.
	Are there incentives for political parties to include women on candidate lists for national elections?
	Are there incentives for political parties to include women on candidate lists for local elections?
De facto	Are there customary, religious or traditional practices or laws that discriminate against women's legal right to vote?
	Are there customary, religious or traditional practices or laws that discriminate against women's legal right to hold public office?
Access to justice	
Legal framework	Does the law provide women with the same rights as men to hold public and political office in the judiciary?
	Does the law provide married women with the same rights as married men to sue?
	Does the law provide unmarried women with the same rights as unmarried men to sue?
	Does a married woman's testimony carry the same evidentiary weight in court as a married man's in all types of court cases such as: a. Civil b. Criminal c. Family court d. Tribunal
	Does an unmarried woman's testimony carry the same evidentiary weight in court as an unmarried man's in all types of court cases such as: a. Civil b. Criminal c. Family court d. Tribunal
De facto	Are there customary, religious or traditional practices or laws that discriminate against women's legal right to sue?
	Does a woman's testimony carry the same evidentiary weight in customary/religious courts/tribunals as that of a man?
	Are there customary, religious or traditional practices or laws that discriminate against women in terms of providing testimony in court?
	Are there customary, religious or traditional practices or laws that discriminate against women's legal right to be judges, advocates or other court officers?

Notes:

[1] ActionAID (2013), Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (2013), Cabo Verde National Institute of Statistics (2012), ECLAC (2010), ECLAC (2016), General Statistics Office of Viet Nam (2014-15), Instituto Nacional de Estadistica y Censos – Costa Rica, National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda (2013-14), National Statistics, Republic of China (Chinese Taipei) (2000), OECD SIGI Burkina Faso country study (2018), OXFAM (2017), République de Guinée (2002-03), Statistics Sierra Leone (2003-04), Timor-Leste Ministry of Finance (2007), Troisième enquête Camerounaise auprès des ménages, UNSD time use data portal (2016), Zimbabwe 2014 LFS.

[2] ActionAID (2013), Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (2013), Cabo Verde National Institute of Statistics (2012), ECLAC (2010), ECLAC (2016), General Statistics Office of Viet Nam (2014-15), Instituto Nacional de Estadistica y Censos – Costa Rica, National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda (2013-14), National Statistics, Republic of China (Chinese Taipei) (2000), OECD SIGI Burkina Faso country study (2018), OXFAM (2017), République de Guinée (2002-03), Statistics Sierra Leone (2003-04), Timor-Leste Ministry of Finance (2007), Troisième enquête Camerounaise auprès des ménages, UNSD time use data portal (2016), Zimbabwe 2014 LFS.

Source: OECD (n.d.), Social Institutions and Gender Index, www.genderindex.org.

Social Institutions and Gender Index

SIGI 2021 Regional Report for Africa

The *SIGI 2021 Regional Report for Africa* provides regional analysis on how discriminatory social institutions, such as formal and informal laws, social norms and practices, continue to constrain women's empowerment and restrict their access to opportunities and rights. It gives new evidence on the impact of these discriminatory social institutions on three key dimensions of women's empowerment across the region: their physical integrity, their economic situation and their political voice, leadership and agency. The report provides regional as well as thematic policy recommendations that aim to transform gender norms, promote women's empowerment and build a truly inclusive society, especially in the current context of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.



PRINT ISBN 978-92-64-53202-1
PDF ISBN 978-92-64-43148-5

