

Gender  
Index 2024

# AFGHANISTAN



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# INTRODUCTION

The Afghanistan Gender Index measures the current status of women's empowerment and gender parity in Afghanistan against eight Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) indicators. This index adopts and contextualizes the twin indices, developed by UN Women and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and consists of the Women's Empowerment Index (WEI) and the Global Gender Parity Index (GGPI). The current situation in Afghanistan of systematic and institutionalized gender inequality highlights the importance of ongoing and comprehensive assessments of progress (or regress) in achieving gender equality. With targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its accompanying SDGs only five years away, Afghanistan risks falling catastrophically far behind global efforts towards gender equality and women's empowerment.

The Afghanistan Gender Index analyses the following key dimensions of gender equality: 1) life and good health; 2) education, skills-building and knowledge; 3) labour and financial inclusion; 4) participation in decision-making; and 5) freedom from violence. The 11 indicators within these dimensions, of which eight are SDG indicators, help assess gender equality and women's empowerment, and gauge women's power and freedoms to make choices and pursue opportunities and provides a comprehensive understanding of the situation in Afghanistan.

Afghanistan's de facto authorities (DFA) have introduced a tightly woven patchwork of decrees dismantling institutional protections for women's rights and targeting the fundamental freedoms of women and girls. Some of the newer decrees introduced, such as the Law on the Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice (made public in August 2024) and the ban on women attending medical institutes (December 2024), were introduced subsequent to data collection for this report in March 2024 and have had a major impact on the status of women and gender equality more broadly in the country.

This report enables comparisons of the situation of women and girls over time. Afghanistan's scores across these development indicators are unfortunately predicted to continuously spiral downward until the women's rights crisis is addressed, demonstrating how equality between women and men is a critical element of a nation's development.

## Methodology

The Afghanistan Gender Index was developed using mixed methods. Six of the 11 twin indices indicator were updated through primary data collection,

namely: the secondary school completion rate; young women not in education, employment or training; the labour force participation rate; account ownership at a financial institution or mobile money service provider; share of seats in parliament; and share of seats in local government. The age brackets of some indicators deviate from global indicators due to limitations in collecting data from women below 18 years of age including protection and safety concerns in the current context.

Data could not be collected to update five indicators, namely: healthy life expectancy; demand for family planning satisfied through modern methods of contraception; the adolescent birth rate; share of managerial positions held by women; and ever-partnered women subject to physical and/or sexual violence. It was deemed unsafe or not possible to collect data to measure these five indicators. Instead, a desk review was undertaken to identify the latest data available for relevant indicators. Measurement of each of the 11 indicators is supplemented by detailed analysis, based on primary data collected by UN Women, to outline progress and regression on gender equality, highlighting systemic barriers and opportunities.

Nationwide primary data collection was conducted between 25 February and 18 March 2024, reaching 2,155 individuals (1,066 women and 1,089 men) through door-to-door surveys in eight provinces representing the eight regions of Afghanistan. Within each province, four districts were selected, one urban and three rural. Within each district, two villages were selected along with eight households in each through a random walk approach utilizing the right-hand rule. Data were collected using Open Data Kit, a mobile-based data collection platform.

# MEASURING GENDER EQUALITY IN AFGHANISTAN

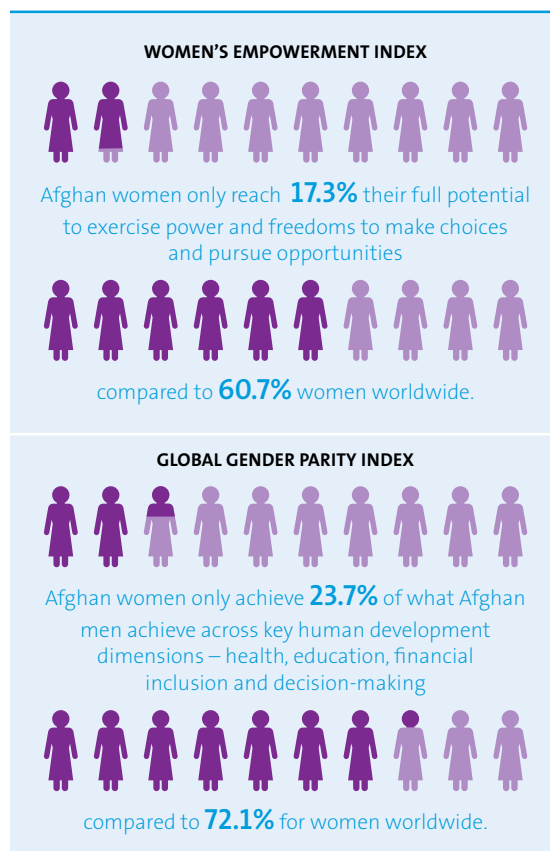
Afghanistan is experiencing a dramatic decline in the enabling conditions required to make progress on gender equality and women's empowerment. Severe challenges and systemic barriers curtail women's rights and freedoms, leading to a widening gender gap and an overall deterioration in conditions for women.

As part of an effort to monitor gender equality globally, UN Women and UNDP jointly developed the Women's Empowerment Index and Global Gender Parity Index in 2023. These twin indices measure the extent to which women in different countries can access and exercise their rights and opportunities compared to men.<sup>7</sup> The indices aim to guide national and international policy action, research and advocacy on the empowerment of all women and girls and gender equality.

Before August 2021, Afghanistan already scored extremely low on global gender equality indices.<sup>8</sup> This report measuring Afghanistan's progress provides a critical benchmark to guide efforts towards global SDG targets on gender equality.

The report presents findings from the first application of these twin indices in Afghanistan. It reveals the multilayered inequalities that Afghan women experience. The data generated offer a baseline to identify progress and setbacks on gender equality, providing a resource to guide policymakers and fuel advocacy.

Over time, reliable longitudinal data will be indispensable for understanding trends, crafting responsive interventions and holding governing bodies – whether legitimate or de facto – accountable for their actions towards women and girls. Sustained monitoring would help to keep gender equality issues at the forefront of the global agenda and prevent further erosion of the rights and freedoms of Afghan women and girls. It can be used to measure any future progress in the country in relation to gender equality and women's empowerment.



7. UN Women and UNDP, 2023. [The paths to equal: Twin indices on women's empowerment and gender equality](#). New York: UN Women. Accessed on 4 March 2025.

8. In 2022, with some indicator scores pre-Taliban takeover in August 2021 remaining, Afghanistan scored 0.665 on the [UNDP Gender Inequality Index](#), placing it 162/166; and 0.622 on the [UNDP Gender Development Index](#), placing it 182/182. In 2023, Afghanistan scored 0.286 on the [Georgetown Women, Peace and Security Index](#), placing it 177/177.

## Afghanistan's score in the twin indices

The WEI assesses women's power and freedoms to make choices and pursue opportunities, incorporating a dimension on violence against women and girls. In 2024, according to UN Women's calculation, Afghanistan scored 0.173, indicating that Afghan women, on average, reach just 17.3 per cent of their full potential to exercise these powers and freedoms.

The deficit in Afghan women's empowerment stands at a staggering 82.7 per cent. The global average WEI score, in comparison, indicates that, on average, women worldwide achieve 60.7 per cent of their full potential.

The GGPI assesses disparities between women and men on four dimensions of human development – health, education, financial inclusion and decision-making. In 2024, Afghanistan scored 0.237, indicating that Afghan women only achieve 23.7 per cent of what Afghan men achieve across key human development dimensions, meaning that the gender gap in Afghanistan is 76.3 per cent. Conversely, on average, women worldwide achieve 72.1 per cent of what men achieve across these same dimensions.

Afghanistan's score situates it among the lowest-scoring countries globally on almost every dimension measured by the twin indices. Due to the DFA's systematic and institutional assault on human rights, particularly women's rights, the country's score had not been measured since August 2021 yet the situation under each indicator has likely grown worse under DFA rule. Despite some limitations to compiling updated scores for all indicators due to the lack of gender data, comparative measurement and analysis offer at least some critical insights into the plight of Afghan women.

The unprecedented hostility of the DFA to gender equality means that some indicators register as zero, including indicators on the representation of women in parliament (proxied by the de facto Cabinet) and local government. This points to alarmingly regressive trends. Dimensions of the indices relating to gender-based violence, the prevalence of modern contraception and the adolescent birth rate could not be updated due to cultural sensitivities and DFA restrictions on data collection. Existing data (from 2018 to 2024) measuring these indicators were supplemented by analysis from data collected in 2024 by UN Women. Labour, financial inclusion and education, and skill-building and knowledge were measured through an adapted methodology that painted a bleak picture, suggesting the situation will only deteriorate under the current restrictions.

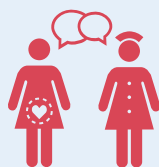
## Challenges and opportunities for gender research in Afghanistan

The adaptation of the WEI and GGPI to Afghanistan involved contextualizing global SDG indicators to reflect the unique challenges faced by Afghan women. Researching and monitoring the status of women and gender equality in Afghanistan is particularly difficult amid restrictions impacting every sphere of women's lives. Further complexity comes from ongoing political instability and safety concerns. Data collection required significant sensitivity and flexibility. The difficulty of conducting reliable data collection limits a full assessment of the impact of DFA policies on women and girls. Where data are available, however, they show a stark regression on gender equality.



# VISUALIZING THE TWIN INDICES AND INDICATORS

This graph visualizes each outcome indicator under the WEI and GPPI and how the indices are interrelated. While some indicators overlap (purple), there are complementarities in the dimension for life and good health and freedom of violence.



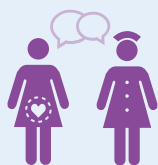
Life and good health

Women of reproductive age whose need for family planning is satisfied with modern methods (percentage aged 15-49) [MMC] **SDG 3.7.1**



Freedom from violence

Ever-partnered women and girls subjected to physical and/or sexual violence by a current or former intimate partner in the previous 12 months (percentage aged 15-49) [IPV] **SDG 5.2.1**



Life and good health

Adolescent birth rate (births per 1,000 women percentage aged 15-49) [ABR] **SDG 3.7.2**



Education, skill-building, and knowledge

Population with completed secondary education or higher (percentage aged 18 and older, by sex) [CSE] **SDG 4.1.2**

Youth not in education, employment or training (percentage aged 18-29) [NEET] **SDG 8.6.1**



Labour and financial inclusion

Labour force participation rate among prime-working-age individuals who are living in a household comprising a couple and at least one child under age 6 (percentage aged 18-59, by sex) [LFPRCW] **related to SDG 5.4**

Account ownership at a financial institution or with a mobile money service provider (percentage of population aged 18 and older, by sex) [FINACNT] **SDG 8.10.2**

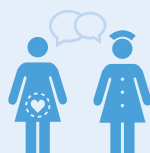


Participation in decision-making

Share of seats held in parliament (percentage, by sex) [PR] **SDG 5.5.1**

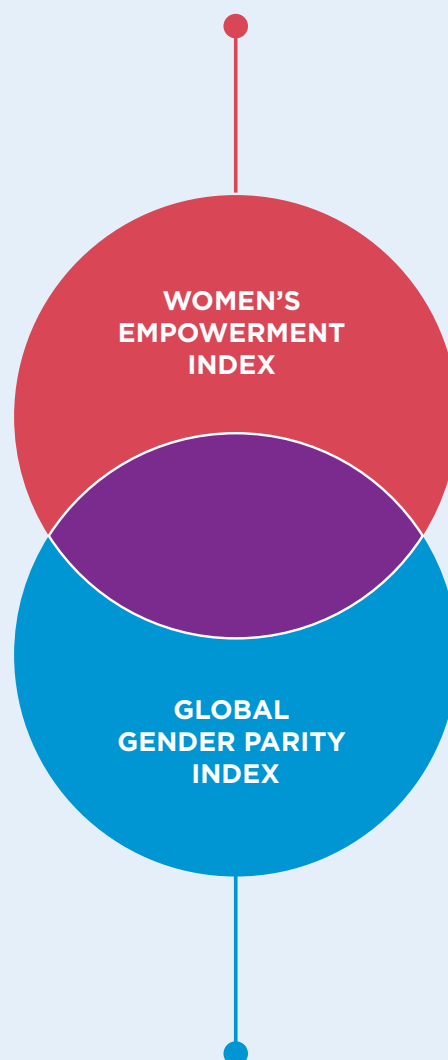
Shares of seats held in local government (percentage, by sex) [LG] **SDG 5.5.1**

Shares of managerial positions held (percentage, by sex) [TMNG] **SDG 5.5.2**



Life and good health

Fraction of life expectancy at birth spent in good health (percentage, by sex) [HALE/LE] **related to SDG 3.7**



# LIFE AND GOOD HEALTH



**Healthy life expectancy** (SDG 3.7) in Afghanistan currently stands at 84.1 per cent for women and 86.4 per cent for men, according to data collected by WHO in 2024. Factors contributing to the slender gap in healthy life expectancy include systemic and social barriers that degrade women's health, such as inadequate infrastructure, bans on training new women health workers and gender-based discrimination in services. A **high adolescent birth rate** (SDG 3.7.2) – currently projected at 62 for every 1,000 women aged 15–19, higher than the global average of 41.3<sup>14</sup> – is driven by child marriage and early childbearing and thrusts girls prematurely into adult roles and limits empowerment. Low access to modern means of contraception impedes women's ability to manage reproductive health and family planning; less than half of Afghan **women with a need for family planning have access to modern contraception** (SDG 3.7.1). Increasing obstacles to women's quality of life and access to healthcare foretell the likely widening gender gap in terms of life spent in good health.

**SDG 3.7:** By 2030, ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive healthcare services, including for family planning, information and education, and the integration of reproductive health into national strategies and programmes.



In 2024, **48.7%** of Afghan women satisfied their demand for **family planning with modern methods**.<sup>16</sup>



In 2021, **life spent in good health** as a proportion of life expectancy at birth was **84.1%** for women



and **86.4%** for men.<sup>15</sup>



In 2024, the **adolescent birth rate** is projected to be **62 for every 1,000** women and girls aged 15–19 in Afghanistan.<sup>17</sup>

14. WHO. 2023. [Global Data Observatory](#). Accessed on 17 March 2025.

15. WHO. [Global Health Observatory](#). Accessed on 3 March 2025. This indicator could not be measured by door-to-door surveys conducted during data collection for the present report.

16. UNDESA. 2022. [Model-based Estimates and Projections of Family Planning Indicators 2022](#). New York: United Nations Population Division. Data could not be collected for this indicator during door-to-door surveys due to the highly sensitive nature of the topic. SDG indicator 5.6.1 measures the proportion of women aged 15–49 who make their own informed decisions regarding sexual relations, contraceptive use and reproductive healthcare. See UNDESA. 2022. [World Family Planning 2022](#). New York: United Nations. UN Women. 2024. Afghanistan Gender Index data.

17. UNFPA (United Nations Population Fund). [UNFPA Afghanistan: Data Overview](#). Accessed on 28 July 2024.

# EDUCATION, SKILL-BUILDING AND KNOWLEDGE



DFA bans on education for women and girls beyond primary school have instituted a path where the overall **secondary school completion rate** for the female population above age 18 years (related to SDG 4.1.2) will drop to zero. Indicators for education do not take into account online or underground schooling as these – while vital for survival – are not a substitute for formal education. The systemic nature of the education ban is illustrated in the rate of **women currently not in education, employment or training** (NEET) (SDG 8.6.1), which in 2024 is almost four times higher than the rate for men (78 per cent compared to 20 per cent, respectively).<sup>84</sup> These findings highlight a gender gap in education and livelihoods that is expected to widen as women are increasingly excluded from opportunities to build skills and acquire knowledge essential to participating in the economy. The latest ban on women attending medical institutes illustrates that the pathway in Afghanistan involves increasing restrictions to education, not improvement.

**SDG 4.1:** By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship.

**SDG 8.6:** By 2030, substantially reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training.



In 2024, among women aged 18–29, **77.6%** are currently **not in education, employment or training**



The figure for men is **20.2%**.<sup>86</sup>



In 2024, **11.8%** of women over the age of 18 **completed secondary education** or higher.

However, under the DFA, **0%** of Afghan girls and young women are allowed to complete secondary education in the years to come



compared to **28.9%** of men in 2024.<sup>85</sup>

84. UN Women. 2024. Afghanistan Gender Index data.

85. This included girls who had completed grades 12, 13, 14 and 15, undergraduate or postgraduate degrees. Ibid.

86. Ibid.

# LABOUR AND FINANCIAL INCLUSION



Afghan women's **participation in the labour force** (related to SDG 5.4) in 2024 is markedly lower than that of men (24 per cent compared to 89 per cent, respectively). Women who do work often occupy lower-paid, less secure positions, often in informal sectors. DFA decrees and long-standing societal norms have banned women's employment in specific sectors (e.g., NGOs, the United Nations and beauty salons) and restricted their access to employment and entrepreneurial opportunities. This economic marginalization is reflected in measurements of economic independence and economic access. Afghan women have limited access to financial resources, such as bank accounts and mobile money services, which are crucial for economic autonomy and resilience. In 2024, only 6.8 per cent of women had a **personal or joint bank account or had used a mobile money service** (SDG 8.10.2), compared to 20.1 per cent of men.<sup>130</sup>

**SDG 5.4:** By 2030, recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies, and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate.

**SDG 8.10:** By 2030, strengthen the capacity of domestic financial institutions to encourage and to expand access to banking, insurance and financial services for all.



In 2024, **6.8%** of women has a **personal or joint account**, or had **used a mobile money service**



compared to **20.1%** of men.<sup>132</sup>



In 2024, **24.2%** of women are **participating in the workforce**



compared to **88.9%** men.<sup>131</sup>

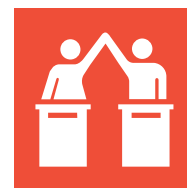
130. UN Women. 2024. Afghanistan Gender Index data.

131. This value is estimated using data from the UN Women survey, which does not necessarily comply with a standard labour force survey, the sample not necessarily being representative of the real distribution of employment in the population [see Annex III in the full report]. These figures provide an indicative update to the labour force participation rate previously measured in 2021 by the International Labour Organization which showed 23.3 per cent of women over the age of 15 years participating in the labour force, compared to 77 per cent of men.

132. UN Women. 2024. Afghanistan Gender Index data.



# PARTICIPATION IN DECISION-MAKING



Afghanistan now scores zero on two indicators (under target SDG 5.5.1) – the **proportion of seats held by women in local government** (global average of 35.5 per cent) and the **proportion held in the national parliament** (global average of 26.3 per cent). The latter is measured in the current context based on positions in the de facto Cabinet, where 100 per cent of such positions are held by men. Informal ways that women seek to meet the DFA and create pathways for participation are vital entry points in a context hostile to women’s leadership, but are not considered a substitute for formal participation. Longstanding inequity between men and women in significant leadership roles in the economy, particularly in managerial and decision-making positions in both the public and private sectors, has been compounded by over three years of decrees and practices aimed at disempowering women in the public sphere. In 2024, it is estimated that the share of **managerial positions held by women** (SDG 5.5.2) in Afghanistan has significantly decreased, compared to 2020, where women held 5.9 per cent of managerial positions. Women’s lack of formal representation silences their voices and denies them any opportunity to shape policies and seize opportunities to improve their lives and communities. It further removes women leaders as visible indicators of the societal acceptance of women as politically or economically powerful and as role models for girls and other women.

**SDG 5.5:** By 2030, ensure women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic, and public life.



In 2020, **5.9%** of **managerial positions** were held by women.<sup>196</sup>

Although data were not collected by UN Women’s survey in 2024, this has likely decreased further, given concerted DFA efforts to remove women from decision making across all sectors, nationwide.

The national parliament in Afghanistan was **dissolved** after the Taliban takeover.



In 2024, **0%** of de facto Cabinet or senior de facto ministry **positions held by women at the national or provincial levels**.<sup>197</sup>



In 2024, **0%** of **local government positions** are held by women.<sup>198</sup>

196. World Bank. [Afghanistan: Gender Data Portal](#). Accessed on 17 March 2025. This indicator could not be updated from the UN Women 2024 survey results as it relies on administrative records from government or other national bodies that are currently unavailable in Afghanistan. The survey results noted a much higher number (21.12 per cent), likely due to the fact that it was self-reported, allowing women entrepreneurs to self-identify as having a managerial position.

197. Salma Consulting 2024. UN Women Survey 2024. Unpublished.

198. Ibid.

# FREEDOM FROM VIOLENCE



Afghan women face **physical and sexual violence from intimate partners** at rates nearly three times higher than the global average; in 2018, 34.7 per cent reported being subject to such violence in the preceding 12 months (SDG 5.2.1), compared to 13 per cent globally. Practices such as honour killings, forced and child marriages, and the exchange of women and girls in dispute resolutions (*baad*) exacerbate gender-based violence. This severely impacts the abilities of women and girls to freely make decisions and live autonomously, affecting all dimensions of gender equality. A lack of legal protection and support systems and discriminatory policies institutionalized by the DFA make women's and girls' vulnerability to gender-based violence and its consequences even worse.

**SDG 5.2:** By 2030, eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation.



In 2018, **34.7%** of Afghan women reported being subject to **intimate partner physical and/or sexual violence** in the preceding 12 months.<sup>257</sup>

257. UNDESA. [UNSDG Database](#). Accessed on 13 June 2025.

DIMENSION	INDICATORS	SDG INDICATOR	DATA SOURCE	YEAR	WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT INDEX	GLOBAL GENDER PARITY INDEX	
						FEMALE	MALE
OVERALL SCORE					0.173	0.237	
LIFE AND GOOD HEALTH	Fraction of life expectancy at birth spent in good health (percentage, by sex [HALE/LE])	related to 3.7	WHO 2024. The Global Health Observatory. <sup>1</sup>	2021		84.1	86.4
	Women of reproductive age whose need for family planning is satisfied with modern methods (percentage aged 15–49) [MMC]	3.7.1	UNDESA Model-based Estimates and Projections of Family Planning Indicators 2022. <sup>2</sup>	2024	48.7		
	Adolescent birth rate (births per 1,000 women aged 15–19) [ABR]	3.7.2	UNFPA 2024. UNFPA Afghanistan Data Overview. <sup>3</sup>	2024	62.0		
EDUCATION, SKILL-BUILDING AND KNOWLEDGE	Population with completed secondary education or higher (percentage aged 18 and older, by sex) [CSE]*	4.1.2	UN Women. 2024. Afghanistan Gender Index data	2024	11.8	11.8	28.9^
	Youth not in education, employment or training (percentage aged 18–29, by sex) [NEET]*	8.6.1	UN Women. 2024. Afghanistan Gender Index data	2024	77.6	77.6	20.2
LABOUR AND FINANCIAL INCLUSION	Labour force participation rate among prime- working-age individuals who are living in a household comprising a couple and at least one child under age 6 (percentage aged 18–59, by sex) [LFPRCW]*	related to 5.4	UN Women. 2024. Afghanistan Gender Index data	2024	24.2	24.2	88.9
	Account ownership at a financial institution or with a mobile money service provider (percentage of population aged 18 and older, by sex) [FINACNT]*	8.10.2	UN Women. 2024. Afghanistan Gender Index data	2024	6.8	6.8	20.1
PARTICIPATION IN DECISION-MAKING	Share of managerial positions held (percentage, by sex) [TMNG]	5.5.2	UNSDG. World Bank. Gender Portal. <sup>4</sup>	2020	5.9	5.9	94.1
	Share of seats held in parliament (percentage, by sex) [PR]	5.5.1	UN Women. 2024. Afghanistan Gender Index data	2024	0	0	100
	Share of seats held in local government (percentage, by sex) [LG]	5.5.1	UN Women. 2024. Afghanistan Gender Index data	2024	0	0	100
FREEDOM FROM VIOLENCE	Ever- partnered women and girls subjected to physical and/or sexual violence by a current or former intimate partner in the previous 12 months (percentage aged 15–49) [IPV]	5.2.1	UNDESA. UNSDG Database. <sup>5</sup>	2018	34.7		

1. WHO. [Global Health Observatory](#). Accessed on 3 March 2025.

2. UNDESA. 2022. [Model-based Estimates and Projections of Family Planning Indicators 2022](#). New York: United Nations Population Division.

3. UNFPA. [UNFPA Afghanistan: Data Overview](#). Accessed on 28 July 2024.

4. World Bank. [Afghanistan: Gender Data Portal](#). Accessed on 17 March 2025.

5. UNDESA. [UNSDG Database](#). Accessed on 13 June 2025.

\* Indicator age bracket adjusted from SDG indicator.

^ The original estimate computed from the survey data was 31.6. However, it has not passed a test of plausibility and was downward adjusted. See Annex II in full report for methodology.

**UN Women is the UN organization dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women. A global champion for women and girls, UN Women was established to accelerate progress on meeting their needs worldwide.**

UN Women supports UN Member States as they set global standards for achieving gender equality, and works with governments and civil society to design laws, policies, programmes and services needed to ensure that the standards are effectively implemented and truly benefit women and girls worldwide. It works globally to make the vision of the Sustainable Development Goals a reality for women and girls and stands behind women's equal participation in all aspects of life, focusing on four strategic priorities: Women lead, participate in and benefit equally from governance systems; Women have income security, decent work and economic autonomy; All women and girls live a life free from all forms of violence; Women and girls contribute to and have greater influence in building sustainable peace and resilience, and benefit equally from the prevention of natural disasters and conflicts and humanitarian action. UN Women also coordinates and promotes the UN system's work in advancing gender equality.



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