

Women's Rights in Review 30 Years After Beijing



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Produced by: Research and Data Section, UN-Women

Substantive editor: Gretchen Luchsinger

Copy-editor: Tina Johnson

French translation: Angeline Hadman

Spanish translation: Ramón Olivares Sanz

Designer: The Visual Agency

Foreword photo: © UN-Women/Ryan Brown

Feminist Voices on a Feminist Future photos:

Lydia Alpízar Durán: © Coyotas Narradoras Audiovisuales

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Foreword



Sima Bahous

Executive Director of UN-Women

Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations

While we have not yet known a world of full equality for all women and girls, the global community collectively imagined it in the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. This pivotal agreement, endorsed by 189 governments, outlined the steps needed to achieve gender equality and remains a lasting testament to multilateral solidarity and commitment.

We understand today, as they did then, that a gender equal world is both possible and within our reach – if we act decisively. Although gender inequality is one of the most pressing challenges of our time, it also presents an unparalleled opportunity to transform societies. The thirtieth anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action in 2025 offers a chance to reflect on progress and accelerate action. At UN-Women, we have seized this opportunity to engage with our partners, drawing on their experiences to inform the next phase of our efforts.

The most comprehensive global stocktaking of progress on the Beijing Platform for Action to date, summarized in this report, demonstrates the platform’s ongoing relevance. Contributions from 159 United Nations Member States, and broad participation in regional reviews, confirm that gender equality is crucial to the realization of the global Sustainable Development Goals.

Informed by these findings, and the urgent need for bold action, UN-Women has developed the Beijing+30 Action Agenda. At its heart lies the “6+1” – six key actions to advance gender equality: bridging the digital gender gap; placing women at the heart of sustainable economic development; ending violence against women; advancing women’s leadership in decision-making; increasing accountability in peace security and humanitarian action; and striving for climate justice. The “+1” reflects the critical inclusion of youth in these efforts. By embedding youth across all six actions, we multiply their impact and ensure that today’s decisions shape tomorrow’s world.

Recent international agreements, such as the Pact for the Future, reaffirm the Beijing Platform for Action’s call to respect human rights and gender equality. Governments have committed to dismantling the legal, social and economic barriers that hinder women and girls’ equality. Thirty years on, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action remains a beacon of hope and an urgent appeal for action. It also challenges us to renew our commitment, hold ourselves accountable and urgently increase investment.

This is our roadmap to a gender-equal world for ALL women and girls, one founded on rights, equality and empowerment.



Although gender inequality is one of the most pressing challenges of our time, it also presents an unparalleled opportunity to transform societies.



Introduction

In 1995, 189 governments unanimously adopted the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. It became the most comprehensive and visionary agenda ever for gender equality and the human rights of all women and girls, holding the key to more peaceful, prosperous and inclusive societies for everyone.

The Beijing Platform for Action was adopted at a time of hope and solidarity, when democratic and human rights institutions were strengthening, and social movements were resurgent and on the march for rights and justice. Its thirtieth anniversary, however, takes place in a year in which the world faces severe challenges: fragile economies, the climate emergency, unprecedented levels of armed conflict and humanitarian crises, democratic erosion and backlash against gender equality.

Against this backdrop, this anniversary offers an opportunity to take stock. Under the aegis of the United Nations Secretary-General, the world's most comprehensive [review of progress and barriers to gender equality](#) took place, drawing on global, regional and national reviews of 159 countries.

The following summary presents highlights of what has been achieved and learned as well as what urgently needs to be done next.

PIVOTAL STEPS AND MAJOR STUMBLING BLOCKS

The review affirms that in the past five years, countries have taken many steps forward on gender equality and women's rights and empowerment. Some 88 per cent have passed laws and established services to eliminate violence against women and girls. Most have banned discrimination in employment, and 44 per cent are improving the quality of education, training and life-long

learning for women and girls. More countries than ever are considering the impact of environmental degradation on women and girls and reflecting gender equality in plans for climate action.

Yet gender discrimination remains deeply embedded in the structures of economies and societies. This sustains wide and unjust gaps in power and resources, imposing a chronic constraint on progress on women's rights. The weakening of democratic institutions has gone hand in hand with backlash on gender equality. Anti-rights actors are actively undermining long-standing consensus on key women's rights issues. Where they cannot roll back legal and policy gains altogether, they seek to block or slow their implementation. Almost one quarter of countries reported that backlash on gender equality is hampering implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action.

A WORLD IN CRISIS WEIGHS ON PROGRESS

COVID-19 worsened gender disparities, and conflicts reporting that it disrupted implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. Conflicts and other forms of complex crisis have only intensified since then, with more women living in close proximity to conflict now than ever before. The climate emergency continues to grow, with 54 per cent of countries describing it as a barrier to further progress. In tandem, political polarization makes the risk and reality of gender backlash increasingly acute, while civil society is under mounting pressure.

Cutting across these issues is the explosive growth of digital technology, with its vast potential but largely unchecked threats, including new forms of violence against women and girls. And in a world where flows of money are counted in trillions of dollars, investments

in gender equality, regardless of the issue, fall dramatically short of what transformative changes require.

Amid many points of disruption, women and girls remain the first responders as they and their families and communities struggle to keep up. With each new crisis, women are more likely to lose jobs, face higher rates of gender-based violence and shoulder an ever-heavier burden of unpaid care work. Women who speak out as defenders of peace and human rights do so despite sharply escalating attacks against women in public life, both online and offline.

EQUALITY MUST REACH ALL WOMEN AND GIRLS

Despite obstacles, progress made on the Beijing Platform for Action proves that advances are possible in all countries and regions. National reviews have demonstrated governments' ongoing commitment and chronicled new opportunities to reach gender equality and ensure women and girls can enjoy their rights. Promising innovations are flourishing, such as integrated care systems and education for girls in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), as well as advocacy for feminist climate justice. Around the world, vibrant movements of feminists are united and determined, and a new generation of young activists is pushing for progress, including through digital activism.

Gender equality and women's empowerment, as elaborated in the Beijing Platform for Action, would have outsized, multiplier effects across societies and economies. They are the basis for a more just and equal world, as envisioned in the global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Through the platform, this understanding has taken root. Through the continued efforts of people and partners globally, it is taking off.

FIVE PRIORITIES TO MAKE FASTER GAINS AND PREPARE FOR AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE

The global progress review defined five cross-cutting recommendations fundamental to achieving the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action for all women and girls:

1. CLOSE THE ACCOUNTABILITY GAP

Fortify institutions to lead and coordinate policy action on gender equality, put gender at the centre of all policies and programmes and improve data to measure change.

2. ELEVATE WOMEN'S VOICES

Achieve equal participation and influence in decision-making at all levels, including for marginalized groups of women and girls, and open and protect spaces for women's groups to operate.

3. CLOSE THE FINANCING GAP

Make catalytic investments through national measures, such as budgets aligned with gender equality and progressive taxation, and realign global financial systems based on equity and solidarity.

4. HARNESS TECHNOLOGY

Close digital gender divides in access and benefits, ensure women and girls can lead the digital and artificial intelligence revolutions and mitigate the risks of technology-facilitated gender-based violence, privacy violations and bias.

5. SHOCK-PROOF SERVICES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Establish gender-inclusive crisis prevention and response to avoid sudden rollbacks on the rights of women and girls and prioritize gender equality in humanitarian action.

By the Numbers: Uneven Gains for Gender Equality

PROGRESS, WITH ACCELERATION NEEDED

LAWS

Between 1995 and 2024, **1,531** legal reforms around the world sought to advance gender equality.



But women still have only

64%

of the legal rights of men.¹

REPRESENTATION

The proportion of women in parliaments has more than doubled since 1995.

But, today, almost

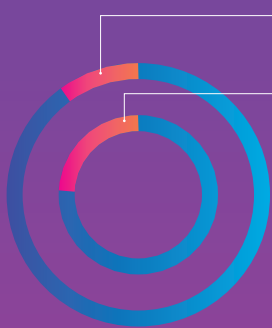
3/4

of parliamentarians are still men.



PROGRESS OVERALL, BUT SOME WOMEN AND GIRLS ARE BEING LEFT BEHIND

POVERTY



10% of women and girls live in extremely poor households.

The share climbs to **24%** among women aged 18–34, who are the most likely to have young children.⁴

EDUCATION

Girls surpass boys in upper-secondary completion rates in most regions. But sub-Saharan Africa and Central and Southern Asia lag behind;

59.5 million

adolescent girls miss out on this fundamental right.⁵

STAGNATION AND REGRESSION

CONFLICT

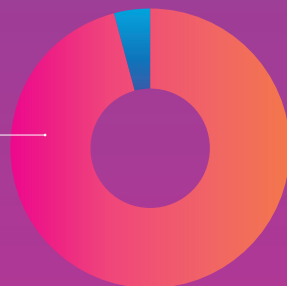
Since 2022, cases of conflict-related **sexual violence have risen**

50%

Women and girls suffer

95%

of these crimes.

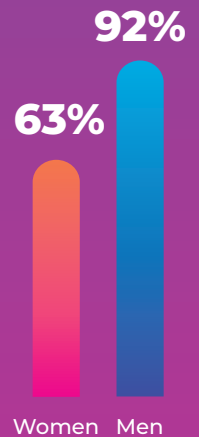


WORK

Gender gaps in work have stagnated for decades. Globally, among **people aged 25–54, 63% of women are in the labour force** compared to 92% of men. Women still do

2.5X

more unpaid care work than men.



DIGITAL

Globally, the proportion of women using the Internet increased from 50% to 65% between 2019 and 2024.

But **277 million** more men than women used the Internet in 2024.²



SOCIAL PROTECTION

The global share of women receiving at least one social protection benefit rose by one third from 2010 to 2023. Even so,

2 billion women and girls

had no social protection coverage at all in 2023.³

CHILD MARRIAGE

Between 2003 and 2023, the proportion of women married as children declined from 24% to 19%. Yet gains in averting child marriage were

3X

higher in the richest households than in the poorest ones.⁶

FAMILY PLANNING

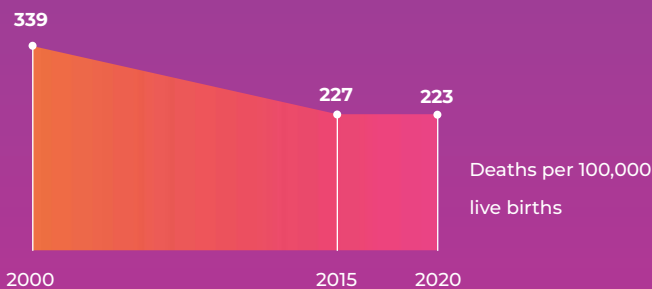
From 1995 to 2024, young women aged 15–24 witnessed the fastest increase in access to modern family planning based on demand. But, with only

2/3

of need satisfied, they still lag behind all other age groups.⁷

MATERNAL MORTALITY

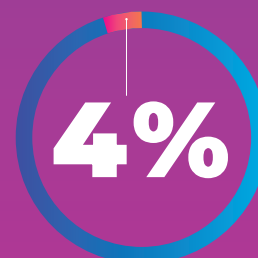
Despite declining by one third globally from 2000 to 2015, the maternal mortality ratio has remained almost unchanged since then.



FINANCING

In 2021–2022, 42% of bilateral allocable official development assistance made gender equality a policy objective. This was down from 45% in 2019–2020.

Only 4% of aid went to programmes with gender equality as the principal objective.





1. Inclusive development, shared prosperity and decent work

Gender biases are woven through economies, rich and poor. Women still earn on average one fifth less than men and, in most countries, they are more likely to work in informal, precarious jobs or as unpaid workers on family farms. Carrying a far heavier share of unpaid care work, women lose the choice to pursue new opportunities or take time for rest and self-care.

The Beijing Platform for Action recognized that gender equality needs to be integrated into economic policies and decision-making to ensure women's equal access to economic opportunities and productive assets, such as land, and a fairer distribution of paid and unpaid work. This focus is increasingly urgent in the context of climate change, biodiversity loss and new technologies.

Countries have made some progress towards women's greater inclusion in the economy. A majority have provisions to prevent sexual harassment in workplaces. There are greater efforts to enhance women's financial inclusion. A stepped-up focus on women's land rights and tenure is welcome, since gaps have imposed long-standing constraints on the livelihoods of rural women, especially in sub-Saharan Africa. Other advances include STEM education and digital literacy programmes for women and girls to ensure they can access opportunities in the digital economy.

However, economic policies have not done enough to break the structural barriers to women. Stimulus policies during the pandemic, alongside social protection and labour market responses, missed opportunities to reach women and redress gender disparities. Spiralling debt, persistent tax evasion and dwindling official development assistance have eroded resources for much-needed public investments. Greater efforts to

ensure economic policies are gender-responsive are essential if women are to seize new opportunities in low-carbon economies, a transition expected to generate 100 million new jobs by 2030, mostly in occupations currently dominated by men.

Achieving the vision of the Beijing Platform for Action

- Steering transitions to both low-carbon and high-tech economies so they fully support gender equality and correct disparities, including through equal opportunities for decent work and measures to close the digital gender gap;
- Prioritizing public investments in integrated care systems, comprising care leave policies, universal care services across the life course and the proper recognition and reward of paid caregivers;
- Improving the quality and conditions of women's work by extending labour rights and entitlements to informal workers, reducing labour market segregation and closing the gender pay gap.

Opportunity:

National systems that meet all the needs for care emerged as a priority during the pandemic. Countries in Latin America and the Caribbean adopted the 2022 Buenos Aires Commitment to make care a universal right and public good. At least 10 countries in the region have already moved in that direction. Interest is evident elsewhere too. In 2017, Cabo Verde launched a National Care System, while Singapore, a rapidly ageing society, is expanding access to care for children and the elderly, encouraging links between the two.

Innovation:

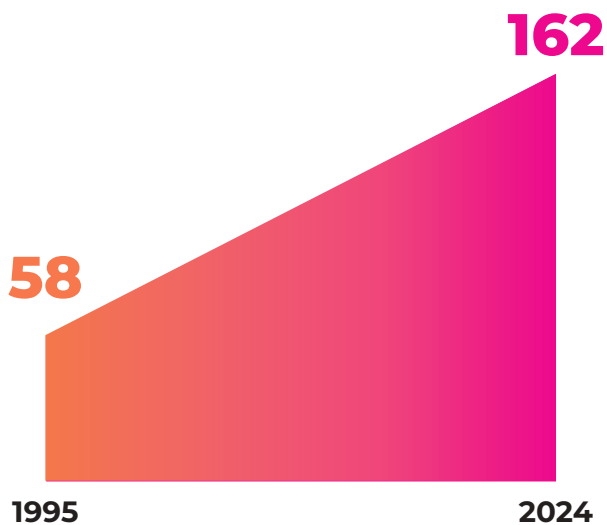
A drive to bring more women into the digital economy is reflected by 70 per cent of countries reporting measures to increase women's and girls' access to STEM and digital skills and training, up from 59 per cent in 2019. Chile, for example, has launched a National Gender Equality Policy for Science, Technology and Innovation and is leading the Regional Alliance for the Digitalization of Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, which has already resulted in digital training for 3.8 million women and economic opportunities for 1 million. Civil society also plays its part. Sisters of Code, the first female coding club in Cambodia, conducts a programme in creative computing to build skills and confidence in digital technology among girls aged 10 to 20 attending public schools.⁸

Globally,

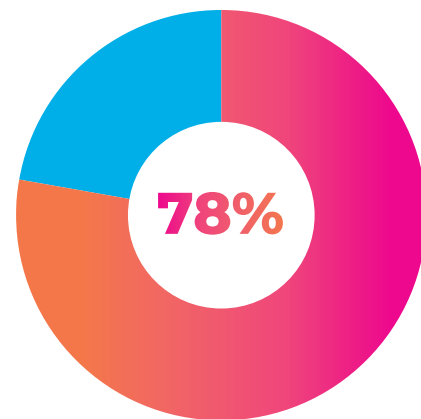
772 million

women work in the informal economy in insecure jobs that lack social protection.

Since 1995, the number of countries with laws prohibiting gender-based discrimination in employment has increased from 58 to 162.⁹



Large-scale investments in inclusive care services could generate close to 300 million jobs globally by 2035, with



of these new jobs held by women.¹⁰



2. Poverty eradication, social protection and social services

Multiple crises have slowed progress on poverty eradication. Women and girls remain among those at greatest risk of being in poverty or falling into it at some point in their lives. The Beijing Platform for Action recognized that poverty has many facets, including not only lack of income and assets but also hunger, ill health, limited access to education and poor housing, among others. It called for gender equality to be integrated into the full range of social and economic policies to ensure access for all women to resources, opportunities and public services.

Progress on implementing the Beijing Platform for Action largely depends on public services being high-quality, gender-responsive and available to all women and girls. Amid diminishing gender gaps in education, more and more countries are turning their attention to improving the transition from school to work. This offers new opportunities for women and girls in technical and vocational training and programmes to cultivate digital skills. Also encouraging are scaled-up efforts in educational settings to prevent and address harassment, bullying and violence.

Health achievements include improvements in meeting family planning needs with modern contraceptive methods and declines in births among adolescent girls, supported by comprehensive sexuality education. Yet progress has slowed in recent years, especially amid backlash against sexual and reproductive health and rights. Many women from low-income and/or rural households still struggle to access health services. Mental health conditions are a leading burden of disease for adolescents, but data remain sparse, limiting meaningful responses, especially in low- and middle-income countries.

While almost half of countries have improved social protection for working-age and older women over the past five years, gender gaps remain and benefits are often inadequate. Most countries adopted social protection innovations in response to COVID-19, but only a small share of these addressed women's economic insecurity or rising unpaid care demands, and many programmes were not institutionalized beyond the pandemic.

Achieving the vision of the Beijing Platform for Action

- Expanding public investment in gender-responsive social protection and public services;
- Creating shock-proofed and universal social protection, education and health systems that better respond to the needs of women and girls, including in crises;
- Harnessing digitalization to improve access to social protection and public services and close both digital and service gaps;
- Improving conditions and wages for front-line workers as integral to better service reach and responsiveness.

Opportunity:

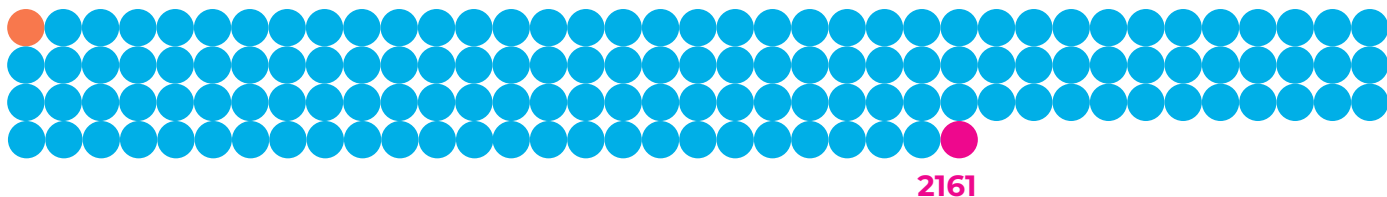
Comprehensive sexuality education empowers youth and adolescents and improves health, especially when paired with sexual and reproductive health care targeted to them. While global initiatives have driven new commitments to comprehensive sexuality education, progress among countries remains mixed, often due to legal barriers. Those making notable progress include Côte d'Ivoire, whose 2020 National Policy on Sexual, Reproductive and Child Health addresses adolescents' unique needs, and Zambia, which has strengthened community engagement and links between schools and health services.¹¹

Innovation:

"Shock-proofed" social protection responds to multiple disruptions and drivers of women's poverty and economic insecurity. It targets groups where women may be over-represented, such as informal workers, a step taken by Morocco during the pandemic. It recognizes that women's unpaid care work often increases in crises and provides childcare subsidies.¹² Coordinating social protection with services during emergencies can be more effective in preventing and responding to violence against women. For example, Lebanon has trained social protection service providers to support survivors through referrals. Digitalization is a key strategy for faster delivery during crises. It requires investments in digital public infrastructure and measures to ensure that those most in need have connectivity and the knowledge to access their entitlements.

At current rates, it will take an additional **137 years to end extreme poverty among women and girls.**

2024

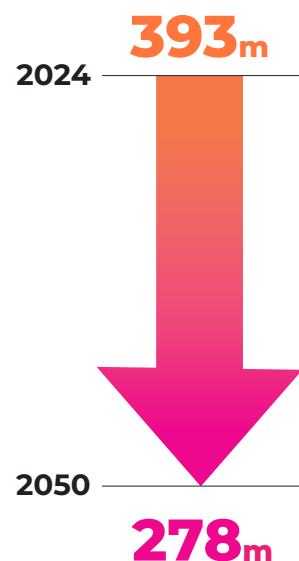


Women and girls in extremely fragile contexts are

7.7 times

more likely to live in extremely poor households than those in non-fragile contexts.

In 2024, **393 million women and girls** were living in extreme poverty. A policy package that ensures equal wages, social protection and essential services could reduce this figure by **115 million by 2050.**¹³





3. Freedom from violence, stigma and stereotypes

The pandemic of violence against women and girls, a human rights violation largely perpetrated by men, remains a pervasive, destructive force in the lives of individuals, families and entire societies. At a time when violence against women was far from mainstream policy agendas, the Beijing Platform for Action recognized the continuum of violence, abuse and harm, which takes multiple forms from rigid gender stereotyping, child marriage and sexual harassment to intimate partner violence and femicide. All have a common root cause: deeply entrenched gender inequality and discriminatory norms.

The response to violence against women and girls has yet to meet the scale of the problem, more so in an era of misogynistic backlash. Recent crises have worsened the phenomenon while digital media have fanned new forms of it, with bots multiplying the speed and scale of online violence. Generative artificial intelligence has opened additional spaces to popularize discriminatory stereotypes. Gaps remain in legal frameworks related to technology and gender discrimination in the media. Shortfalls in enforcement are among many other barriers to justice, reflected in continued low reporting of cases.

The Beijing Platform for Action defines violence against women and girls as entrenching gender inequality across all spheres of life. Indeed, of the 17 SDGs, 14 will not be achieved without its global eradication. Among States, ending violence against women and girls is now the leading priority in implementing the platform. Almost all have passed or strengthened laws to counter different forms – a historic achievement. Mounting evidence suggests that where comprehensive, rights-based laws are in place, they help reduce the rates of these crimes.

Most countries have also established new services to prevent and respond to violence against women and girls. Availability and funding are not consistent or adequate, however. An uptick in the use of prevention strategies and campaigns is also positive, although these are rarely embedded in long-term, comprehensive strategies to sustain momentum.

Achieving the vision of the Beijing Platform for Action

- Taking a whole-of-society approach by adopting, financing and implementing comprehensive national action plans to respond to all forms of violence against women and girls by providing comprehensive services and scaling up prevention and advocacy;
- Ending impunity through prompt access to support and justice for all victims and survivors;
- Closing gaps in legal protection, including in the digital realm;
- Maintaining service continuity in crises;
- Designing evidence-based, long-term prevention strategies to not only change individual behaviours but also transform social norms in families, communities, the market and the state that justify and perpetuate violence against women and girls.

Opportunity:

Greater commitment to making services responsive to all marginalized groups is evident across regions, including through tailored services for LGBTIQ+ survivors of violence. Dozens of countries report improved health service protections, including guarantees of safe access and bans on harmful practices such as conversion therapy. Closer collaboration between governments and civil society organizations to extend services for LGBTIQ+ people in, for example, Canada as well as Tuvalu, is another promising direction.

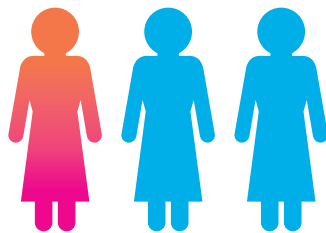
Innovation:

Countries are devising new means to stop violence unleashed by technology; 75 now have protections against sexual harassment online. Updated laws include Online Safety Acts in Australia and the United Kingdom and the European Union's AI Act, which strengthens transparency around deepfakes. Australia has also appointed an eSafety Commissioner with significant enforcement powers. Yet some countries have also faced challenges in drafting and implementing new laws, particularly in balancing rights to protection, privacy and freedom of expression. Moving forward, given the borderless nature of the digital world, enhanced international cooperation will be essential. The recently adopted Global Digital Compact provides the basis for this, with its commitment to curtailing technology-facilitated gender-based violence.

Globally, **violence against women and girls** persists at alarming rates. Across their lifetime, around

736 million

or **1 in 3 women** are subjected to **physical or sexual violence** by an intimate partner or sexual violence by a non-partner.

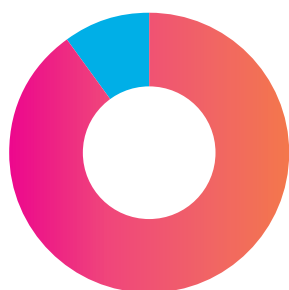


New forms of violence demand urgent attention. Across 12 countries in Europe and Central Asia,

53%
of adult women

online have **experienced** some form of **technology facilitated gender-based violence** at least once.¹⁴

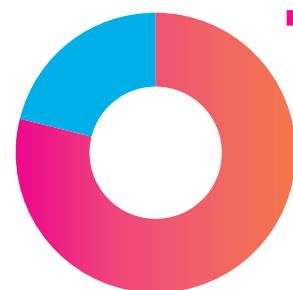
Laws and policies



90%

Since 2019, **90% of States** have reported **introducing or strengthening violence against women and girls' laws**, their implementation and enforcement, **while 79%** have set up, updated or expanded **national action plans to end violence**.

Action plans



79%

Feminist Voices on a Feminist Future

BRANISLAVA ARAĐAN

Project and Youth Ambassador Coordinator,
Women Against Violence Europe Network

» Digital spaces offer young women opportunities to learn, mobilize and connect – but they also come with risks. Online harassment can silence their voices and reinforce offline misogyny. We must bridge the gender digital divide, ensure safe digital spaces and make technology work for all.

CÉLINE BONNAIRE

Executive Director, Kering Foundation

» Transforming funding is urgent – we must increase quality, flexible funding from States, the private sector and donors to scale up survivor-centred services. We must also prioritize financing prevention strategies to put an end to the intergenerational cycle of violence.

IPUL POWASEU

Senior Programme Manager-Disability Inclusion,
Abt Global, Papua New Guinea Programme

» Effective and full participation means recognizing our voices and allowing us the agency to decide for ourselves. Women with disabilities must have a seat at the table – not as tokens but as decision-makers. Inclusion is not charity; it is a right.

PIYUMI SAMARAWEERA

Advisor – Feminist Leadership and Movements, CREA

» Enabling structurally excluded women and gender diverse people to articulate, demand and access their sexual and reproductive rights contributes to making women's human rights a reality – from the grassroots to the global sphere.

ZAHRA NADER

Journalist and Editor-in-Chief, Zan Times

» Zan is the word for woman. And Zan Times is our way of saying: this is our time – we will fight, we will speak our truth. Women journalists are critical for Afghanistan's future. If we don't report these stories, the world will miss most of what is happening, especially to women.

LYDIA ALPÍZAR DURÁN

Co-Executive Director, Iniciativa Mesoamericana
de Defensoras de Derechos Humanos

» Women human rights defenders are at the forefront of feminist and social movements. Their struggles and resistance, to shape a more just world, are so needed given today's major backlash. As we mark Beijing+30, we must ensure they have the necessary resources and protections to continue their vital work for equality and human rights.



ALEJANDRA NOHORA QUIGUANTAR

Founder, Tejiendo Pensamiento

» Indigenous women possess a deep and valuable knowledge system that is crucial for advancing climate justice. Listening to and involving them is fundamental for the defence of territory and the conservation of biodiversity.

MAMA KOITÉ DOUMBIA

President, Platform of Women Leaders of Mali

» Early marriage robs girls of their future. Working with governments and religious leaders, we challenge harmful practices, ensuring laws move from paper to reality for true gender equality.

Every day, feminists from all over the world keep the hopes of the Beijing Platform for Action alive, putting passion into action to advance the rights, equality and empowerment of all women and girls. They may face backlash, but they are not backing down. Their call is for justice and a better future for everyone.

LINDA AL OBAHI

Senior Political Affairs and Mediation Advisor, Peace Track Initiative

» In a world of instability and violence, women's equal involvement in peace processes is indispensable to achieving lasting impact. When women can meaningfully shape these processes, the outcomes are truly transformative – bringing inclusive solutions, lasting stability and a path towards sustainable peace.

ESTHER MWAURA MUIRU

Global Advocacy Director, Stand for Her Land Campaign

» Land is not just a productive resource but a determinant of heritage and identity. Women with secure land rights elevate their voice, agency and decision-making in both private and public spheres, creating a pathway for gender equality and sustainable development.

BEVERLEY PALESA DITSIE

Independent filmmaker and activist

» I attended the original Beijing conference in 1995. Representing over 50 organizations globally, I was the first openly lesbian person to demand recognition of the human rights of LGBTIQ+ people at the United Nations. Today, as we face a backlash, we must understand that ending the oppression of others is inseparable from our own quest for freedom.

YIPING CAI

Member of Executive Committee, Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era

» Reforming the global financial architecture is long overdue – public funds must be prioritized for gender justice, ensuring care work is central to economic policies. Investment in parental leave, child benefits and care services strengthens economies and societies, creating a foundation for women's rights and sustainable development.

AYSHKA NAJIB

Action Coalition Youth Lead on Feminist Action for Climate Justice and Youth Representative to Generation Equality Forum Multi-Stakeholder Leadership Group

» We need to organize politically to transform the system and take climate action across sectors from local to global. My ambition is to create a space for young people mobilizing for climate action and pressuring policymakers to be co-creators of climate justice programmes.

AHMED DAHMANI

Coordinator, Civil Coalition for Gender-Responsive Budgeting in Morocco

» Public finances are a powerful tool to transform gender equality commitments into reality. Gender-responsive budgeting ensures that resources are fairly allocated, making equality measurable and actionable. Without targeted funding, policies remain empty promises.

STEPHANIE PACHECO

2024 National Youth Poet Laureate of the United States

» Sisterhood has never failed me; it binds us together and lights our way. It is the certainty of solidarity, understanding that no conversation is complete unless it includes all of us – ensuring no one is forgotten and no name remains unsaid.





4. Participation, accountability and gender-responsive institutions

Women's equal participation in political and public life is a matter of justice and a foundation of democracy. Without it, as the Beijing Platform for Action makes clear, the goals of equality, development and peace cannot be achieved. As important are gender-responsive institutions to implement laws and policies and civil society and human rights bodies to act as vital watchdogs. High quality gender data are also essential for policies that meet women's needs as well as accountability for their implementation.

Progress on women's rights in public life continues, but at a glacial pace. Women are moving into more decision-making positions, but regardless of whether the issue is security or the environment, men still dominate. In recent years, amid backlash and shrinking civic space, virulent attacks on women politicians, journalists and human rights defenders have risen significantly and are often perpetrated online or using digital technology.

Some countries have recently defunded and undermined national gender equality machineries, hampering their work to translate women's demands into action and mainstream gender in all national and local policies. Inadequate measures to protect civic space intermingle with determined efforts to actively restrict it.

Just over half of countries have legislated gender quotas to boost women's participation in national or local legislatures. These special measures can make a rapid, tangible difference, especially where targets are ambitious, including to achieve gender parity. However, enforcement and compliance continue to lag behind. Similarly, almost all countries report integrating gender equality into national sustainable development plans, but few have established accountability mechanisms to

implement them. Further and faster progress is needed to stop violence against women in public life, improve financial monitoring through gender-responsive budgeting and expand the scope and quality of gender data.

Achieving the vision of the Beijing Platform for Action

- Revitalizing democratic institutions to make them inclusive, beginning with commitments to reaching gender parity in political participation at all levels within the near future, including through temporary special measures such as quotas;
- Building strong national gender equality machineries and opening space for civil society and feminist movements to influence and monitor change;
- Eradicating violence, harassment and abuse of women in public life, including by passing and upholding robust laws and policies to safeguard women human rights defenders and significantly scaling up funding for women's rights organizations;
- Harnessing comprehensive gender-responsive budgeting to track spending on gender equality policy priorities;
- Greater production and use of gender statistics as a basis for evidence-based policies and accountability.

Opportunity:

A gender data revolution has begun, driven by monitoring of the SDGs. Supported by the Women Count programme, global measurement is now possible for 56 per cent of SDG gender indicators, compared to 26 per cent in 2016. While technology is opening exciting new avenues to generate statistics, significant gender data gaps remain, including in critical areas such as land rights and unpaid care. Rectifying these disparities calls above all for a commitment to scale up investment.¹⁵

Innovation:

New approaches to achieving gender parity in governance can spur transformative changes. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) General Recommendation No. 40 (2024) updates guidance on special measures, including quotas. Some countries have moved towards parity across governance structures over the past five years, including in non-elected positions. Mozambique and Spain have parity in key ministerial cabinet appointments, for example. A groundbreaking 2019 constitutional reform in Mexico mandated gender parity across all levels and branches of government.¹⁶



Only 87 countries have ever had a woman leader.

Globally, women make up

23%

of cabinet members heading ministries

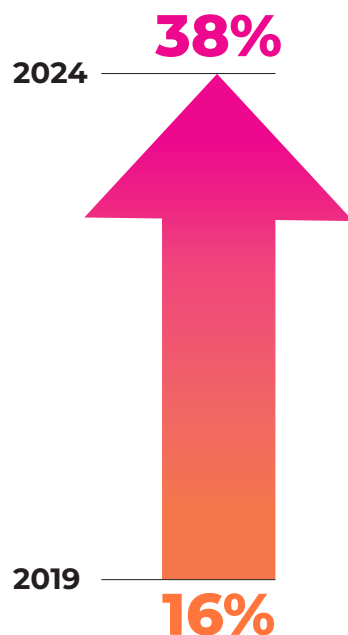
27%

of parliamentarians

36%

of local legislature positions

Amid closing civic space, in 2024, **38% of States reported measures to address violence against women in public life** – more than double the proportion in 2019.



54%

of States track the proportion of the national budget invested in gender equality, but only

26%

fully meet the criteria for systematic tracking required by the SDGs.



5. Peaceful and inclusive societies

As crises erupt on an unprecedented scale, global military spending has never been so high nor peace and security so elusive. Gender discrimination intersects with norms that justify violence and taking up arms. Creating peaceful and inclusive societies depends on resolving structural drivers of conflict such as inequality, discrimination and militarism.

In conflict and crisis-affected countries, progress on gender equality has regressed or moved forward at marginal rates. Health services to fulfil fundamental rights have increasingly come under deliberate attack. Widespread violence specifically directed against women and girls includes surging rates of conflict-related sexual violence. Thirty years after the Beijing Platform for Action identified women's participation as essential for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security, little progress has been made in including women in formal peace processes, despite evidence that peace agreements where women are signatories last longer on average. Recognizing this, the United Nations Secretary-General has committed to advocating for at least one third of participants in mediation and peace processes to be women, using quotas, targets and incentives to make progress.

A record 112 countries have adopted national action plans on women, peace and security. Yet most fall short on funding and monitoring. Inadequate follow-through on global commitments is evident in policy choices to fund the military to the detriment of public services critical to achieving gender equality.

Some positive signs come from international human rights bodies paying increasing attention to links between conflict and women's rights and taking steps

towards codifying gender apartheid as a new crime under international law. Ongoing efforts to strengthen national justice systems in crisis responses have steered growing awareness of a wider range of gender-based harms, including crimes based on sexual orientation and gender.

Achieving the vision of the Beijing Platform for Action

- Strengthening the financing and implementation of national action plans on women, peace and security while funding women's organizations directly to uphold accountability and build peace from the ground up;
- Adopting and enforcing targets and quotas to drive progress towards women's equal and meaningful participation in all aspects of peace and security and humanitarian action;
- Incorporating a broader definition of gendered crimes in conflict, to include reproductive violence and obstetric harm in international law and accountability mechanisms, to ensure justice for women and girls in conflict-affected countries.

Opportunity:

Recovery finance should work harder for gender equality. That was the conclusion of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development of Germany and UN-Women in launching the “Alliance for Gender-Responsive and Inclusive Recovery”.¹⁷ With only 0.2 per cent of assistance to Ukraine having gender equality as a principal objective, the alliance links governments, international financial institutions, United Nations entities, the European Union and civil society and private sector partners to ensure that women’s rights are prioritized.

Innovation:

New efforts are helping women human rights defenders in conflict-affected countries. In 2024, the European Court of Justice ruled that Afghan women can be given refugee status based on their gender and country of origin. Countries such as Denmark, Finland and Sweden already had similar policies.¹⁸ Other countries have increased funding to protect women human rights defenders, including through the United Nations Women’s Peace and Humanitarian Fund. The fund has supported 582 women human rights defenders in 24 crisis-affected countries, as well as provided vital funding to more than 1,300 women’s organizations since 2016.

In 2023, **global military expenditure reached** an all-time high of

\$2.44
trillion

per year, double the level in 1995.

In 2023, about

612
million

women and girls lived within 50 km of at least 1 of 170 armed conflicts, an increase of 54% since 2010.

Women's participation strengthens peace agreements, but in 2023 **women were only**

10% of negotiators

14% of mediators

27% of signatories



6. Environmental conservation, climate action and resilience-building

Unsustainable and unjust patterns of production and consumption propel environmental destruction and climate change. They also drive and amplify gender inequalities. Environmental degradation has disproportionate impacts on women and girls, pushing more of them into poverty, lowering their life expectancy, increasing food insecurity and raising the risks of gender-based violence and child marriage. Multiple and intersecting patterns of gender discrimination, from limited power in decision-making to a lack of land rights, make vulnerability even more acute. The Beijing Platform for Action recognized the critical role that women play in advancing sustainable development and called for their greater participation in policy-making on the environment.

While a transition towards sustainable development has begun, it still often operates under dominant economic and financial models that are not consistently green or just. Skyrocketing demand for lithium for green technologies, for instance, has strained water supplies and generated pollution, significantly increasing the burden of unpaid care for women in neighbouring communities as the primary providers of water and food.

The past five years have seen a notable rise in recognition of the close links between gender equality and environmental sustainability. For example, Human Rights Council resolution 48 refers to gender equality as inherent to the right to a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment; the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework sets a dedicated target for gender-responsive action on biodiversity. Moreover, a greater proportion of Member States report introducing new laws and policies on the environment that take gender equality into account.

In tandem, women's rights advocates have driven new understandings of feminist climate justice as central to gender-responsive policy and action. This approach takes up questions of law and rights, redistribution and representation, and intergenerational and gender equity. Countries are moving in this direction, if slowly. They are enhancing women's access to climate-resilient agricultural technology, for example, and adopting labour market policies so that women benefit equally from decent jobs as economies evolve.

Achieving the vision of the Beijing Platform for Action

- Centring women and girls in a global just transition that moves away from the exploitation of people and nature and towards blue, green and caring economies;
- Achieving women's equal and meaningful participation in decision-making on natural resources, disaster risks, the environment and climate action;
- Realizing women's land and resource rights and equal inheritance rights through legal reforms;
- Directing climate finance to women's organizations to support resilience, adaptation and advocacy for climate justice.

Opportunity:

Combining scientific evidence and Indigenous knowledge in climate adaptation recognizes the value of contributions made by Indigenous women and their rights to participation. In Kenya, for example, Maasai women are rehabilitating degraded landscapes and helping to recover hundreds of hectares in Amboseli National Park. In the Peruvian Andes, Quechua women employed divining to find groundwater, leading to a \$3.9 million public investment project to install solar-powered wells. States can scale up such practices by incorporating them into environmental laws and policies that are properly funded and widely implemented.

Innovation:

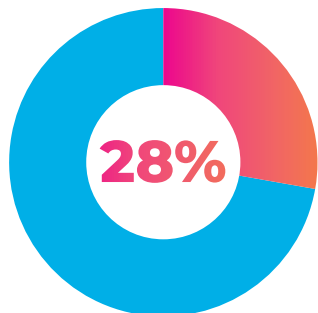
Climate litigation is a new global grass-roots movement to redress violations of the rights of people and nature. In 2023, nearly 2,200 climate cases were brought in 65 jurisdictions and international courts. Cases in Ecuador, Pakistan, Switzerland and the United States of America, for example, several brought by young women and girls, have resulted in judgments requiring the phase-out of gas flaring and compelling States to protect citizens from climate fallout. In 2025, the International Court of Justice will issue what is expected to be a landmark advisory opinion on the legal obligations of countries to protect the environment and limit climate change.

In the **worst-case climate scenario**, an additional

236 million

women and girls **could be pushed into food insecurity** by 2050.

Women's political representation is associated with stronger climate change policies, but **women are only**



of environment ministers worldwide.

53%

of Member States reported introducing or strengthening **gender-responsive laws and policies on disaster risk reduction and climate and environmental resilience**, up from

39%

in 2019.

BEIJING+30
ACTION AGENDA:
FOR **ALL** WOMEN
AND GIRLS



The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, agreed in 1995 by 189 countries, **elaborates actions under 12 critical areas for concern**. These generate gains for women and girls across all areas of their lives – and underpin achievement of the global Sustainable Development Goals.

Based on evidence from the thirtieth anniversary review of progress on the Beijing Platform for Action, including the national reports of 159 Member States, and consultation with partners, UN-Women has defined a **Beijing+30 Action Agenda**. It **comprises six key actions to make faster strides on both platform commitments and the global goals**. The actions accelerate equality by freeing women and girls from poverty and increasing their voice, choice and safety. They help close persistent gaps in implementing the platform revealed by the review, towards translating its promises into real and rapid changes in the lives of women and girls.

Each action would unite people from diverse backgrounds, across countries and regions, to move forward together. Each is meant explicitly for ALL women and girls.



Beijing+30 Actions

1

For All Women and Girls: A Digital Revolution

A notable **70% of countries are boosting science, technology, engineering, mathematics and digital skills among women and girls** but are still slow in translating education gains into better jobs.

Ensure women and girls can reap the economic benefits of the digital revolution, accessing new skills, opportunities and services, by bridging the digital gender gap and providing equal access to digital technology, financial services, markets and networks.

2

For All Women and Girls: Freedom from Poverty

Social protection programmes have grown in 79% of countries.

Disparities in access remain among the most marginalized women, however, including those in informal work. The share of countries promoting decent care jobs is trending up but slowly.

Address women's poverty by investing national budgets in social protection and high-quality public services, including in women's health, girls' education and care. These investments can also create millions of decent, green jobs.

3

For All Women and Girls: Zero Violence

*While **79% of countries have national action plans and 90% have laws to end violence against women and girls**, most do not provide nearly enough funding, enforcement or protection.*

Adopt, implement and fund legislation to end violence against women and girls and develop comprehensive national action plans, including support and coordination with community-led organizations to extend the reach of services.

Across All Actions: Adolescent Girls and Young Women

The Beijing+30 Action Agenda puts adolescent girls and youth at the heart of all its efforts as the best way to guarantee success, both today and tomorrow. This includes amplifying the voice and leadership of young women and girls, closing the last mile of girls' secondary education completion rates and ending violations of their rights, including child, early and forced marriage.

Foundations for Change

Advancing the Beijing+30 Action Agenda calls for a unified push on two core foundations: **FINANCING FOR GENDER EQUALITY** and **MOBILIZING GENDER DATA**. The United Nations estimates that \$360 billion in additional investment per year is required to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment by 2030. Progressive fiscal reform and an overhaul of the global financial architecture that creates and exacerbates global inequalities are long overdue.

4

For All Women and Girls: Full and Equal Decision- Making Power

While **52% of countries have temporary special measures to boost women's participation in politics**, limited compliance slows progress towards equal representation. It also undercuts the quality of policymaking and accountability to women and girls.

Accelerate the achievement of women's full and equal decision-making power in private and public domains and at all levels of government, including by applying temporary special measures.

5

For All Women and Girls: Peace and Security

As crises multiply, **112 countries and territories have adopted national action plans on women, peace and security**. But only 28% have increased funds to implement them, despite the devastating impacts of crises on women and girls and their proven roles in resolving them.

Drive accountability for the women, peace and security agenda and gender-responsive humanitarian action by adopting fully financed national action plans and funding the local women's organizations leading responses to crises and conflicts.

6

For All Women and Girls: Climate Justice

While **53% of countries have integrated gender in disaster and climate laws and policies**, only 34% have taken steps to ensure women's access to green jobs. This undermines the potential to build equality into transitions to sustainable development.

Prioritize the rights of women and girls, including those from rural and Indigenous communities, in the transition to environmental sustainability by centring them in climate action and the conservation of biodiversity, ensuring they can develop new skills to gain green jobs and guaranteeing their access to productive assets and land rights.

Women's organizations, an engine of change across the Beijing+30 Action Agenda, require sustainable and flexible funding to do their essential work.

Accelerated progress also depends on filling gender data gaps, generating evidence and putting it in the hands of policymakers, advocates and activists at the forefront of change.



A Strategy to Act

A three-pronged strategy will make the Beijing+30 Action Agenda a reality:

- 1** Support all governments to commit to one or two actions aligned with national priorities and develop roadmaps for Country Actions to be announced at the United Nations General Assembly High-Level Meeting on Beijing+30 in September 2025.
- 2** Collectively bolster the crucial role of civil society actors demanding gender equality and women's rights, including by providing more resources and greater civic space.
- 3** Strengthen the effectiveness of the multilateral system in delivering for women and girls by turbo-charging implementation of the Secretary-General's Gender Equality Acceleration Plan.



For sources not referenced in this summary, download the United Nations Secretary-General's *Review and Appraisal of the Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Outcomes of the Twenty-Third Special Session of the General Assembly* (E/CN.6/2025/3).

Endnotes

- ¹ World Bank 2024a and UN-Women calculations based on World Bank 2024b.
- ² ITU 2024.
- ³ UN-Women calculations based on ILO 2024.
- ⁴ UN-Women 2024a.
- ⁵ UNESCO n.d.
- ⁶ Harrison et al. 2024.
- ⁷ UN-Women calculations based on DESA, Population Division 2022 and 2024.
- ⁸ Government of Chile 2021; UNESCO 2024.
- ⁹ World Bank 2024c.
- ¹⁰ De Henau 2022.
- ¹¹ UNESCO 2024; UNFPA 2022.
- ¹² UN-Women and UNDP 2021; UN-Women 2024a.
- ¹³ Extreme poverty is defined as living on less than \$2.15 per person per day. UN-Women and DESA 2024; UN-Women and the Pardee Center for International Futures using IFs v. 7.97.
- ¹⁴ UN-Women Europe and Central Asia Regional Office 2023.
- ¹⁵ UN-Women 2022.
- ¹⁶ UN-Women 2024b; Government of Mexico 2024.
- ¹⁷ UN-Women Europe and Central Asia 2024.
- ¹⁸ Al Jazeera 2024.

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This summary report highlights findings from the United Nations Secretary-General's report on the review and appraisal of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the most comprehensive stocktaking on gender equality and women's rights available globally. In 2025, the world celebrates 30 years of achievement on the platform, a visionary 1995 plan agreed by 189 governments to achieve the equal rights of ALL women and girls.

The review reflects global, regional and national reviews of 159 countries, summarizing progress and priorities for further action. It finds that many countries have made strides on gender equality and women's empowerment, from banning discrimination in employment to adopting gender-responsive climate action plans. Innovation is accelerating progress, and opportunities are opening to scale up proven strategies. Yet gender discrimination remains deeply embedded in all economies and societies, imposing chronic constraints on the rights and hopes of women and girls.

Extensive participation in the review reflects the continued relevance and critical importance of the Beijing Platform for Action, including in reaching the global Sustainable Development Goals. Based on the findings, UN-Women has collaborated with partners to design the Beijing+30 Action Agenda. This brings people together to realize the promises of the platform *and* the global goals, reinforcing how everyone has a role to play.

New York, NY 10017, USA

unwomen.org

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