

SIGI 2019 Regional Report

**EURASIA**

# Highlights

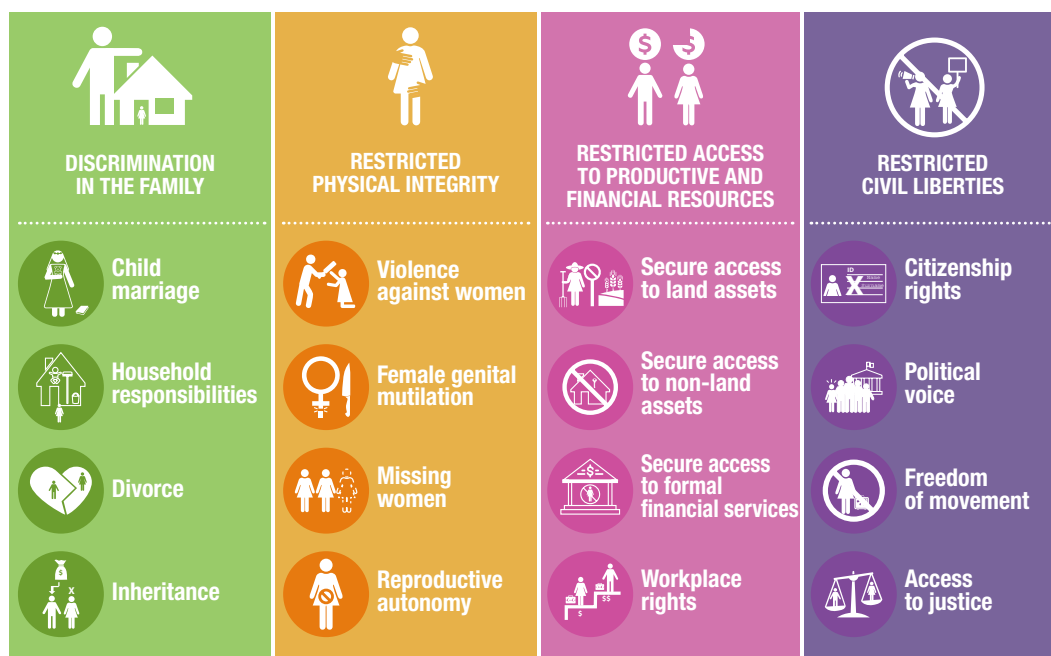


# The Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI)

Measuring and addressing gender-based discrimination in social institutions

SIGI measures how discriminatory laws, social norms and practices affect the lives of women and girls by restricting their rights and empowerment opportunities in 180 countries, including 12 Eurasian countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Republic of Moldova, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.

The SIGI covers four dimensions, spanning major socio-economic areas that affect the life course of women and girls: discrimination in the family, restricted physical integrity, restricted access to productive and financial resources, and restricted civil liberties.

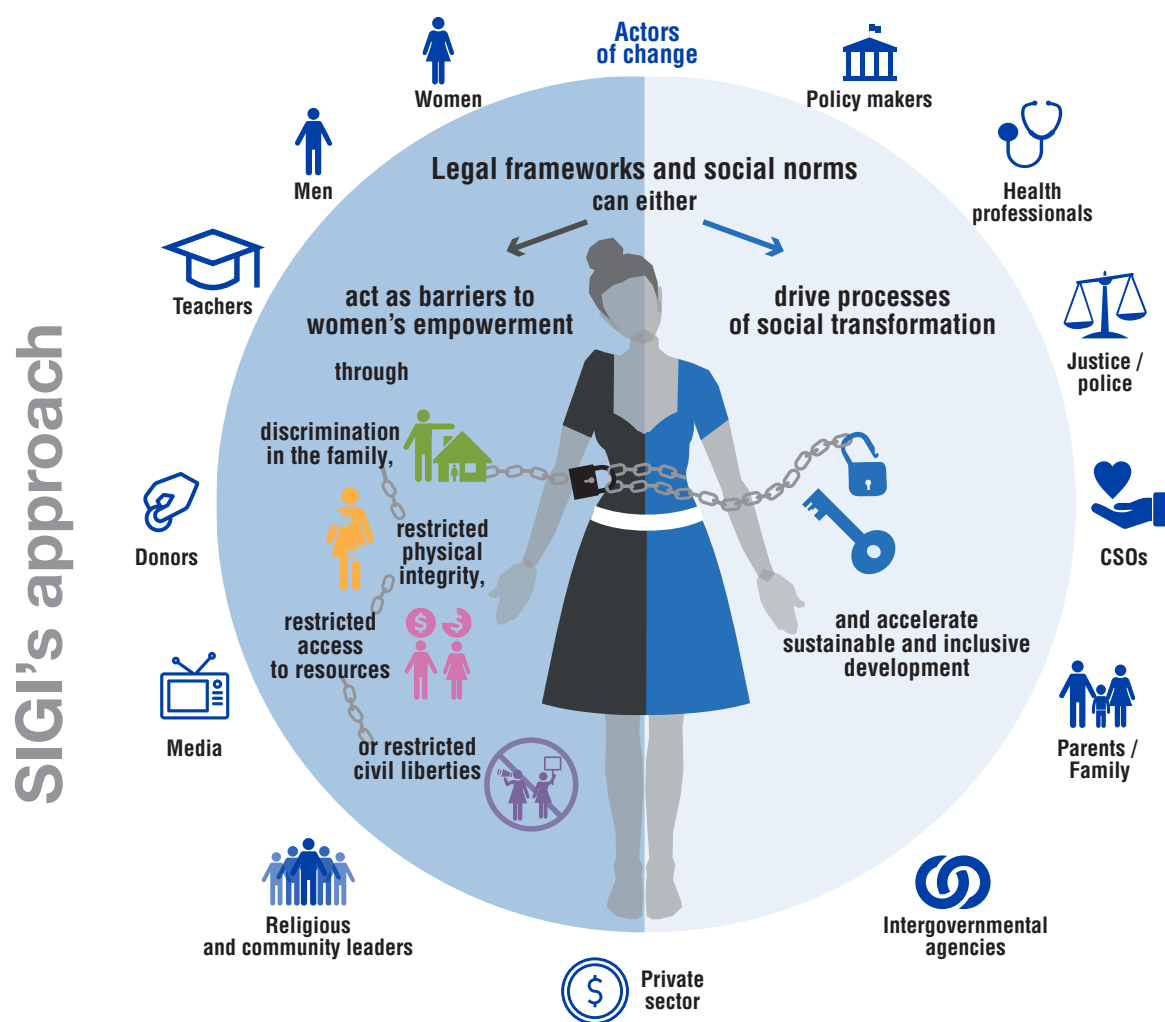


The SIGI is comprised of four main components:

1. [Country profiles](#) containing comprehensive qualitative information on legal framework and action plans to protect women's rights and promote gender equality (for 180 countries).
2. The Gender, Institutions and Development Database ([GID-DB](#)) comprising indicators on the level of discrimination in laws (categorical variable), social norms (attitudinal data) and practices (prevalence rates) for 180 countries.
3. [A cross-country ranking](#) classifying 120 countries according to their level of discrimination in social institutions.
4. [A policy simulator](#) allowing policy makers to scope out reform options and assess their likely effects on gender equality in social institutions.

The Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) helps countries around the world to achieve SDG 5 and bring about gender equality and women’s empowerment by:

- 1. Informing policy makers and development practitioners** on progress and challenges regarding gender-based discrimination in laws, social norms and practices.
- 2. Providing analysis and policy recommendations** to maximise the multiple benefits of gender equality for their development strategies.
- 3. Monitoring progress towards gender equality** and the efficient implementation of legal reforms. The United Nations uses the SIGI as an official data source to monitor SDG indicator 5.1.1. on whether legal frameworks promote, enforce and monitor equality and non-discrimination.



Every day, women's and men's beliefs and behaviours are influenced by what is around them – their families, communities, societies. Nothing is more important than what their communities expect from them, both privately and publicly.

Sometimes, these influences are positive and enhance gender equality; but more often they are negative, and women end up being treated differently and often worse than men.

The SIGI gives policy makers the facts and analysis they need to understand and act on these positive and negative influences so that women and men have the same opportunities.

## SIGI results for Eurasia

### Eurasia performs relatively well on gender equality in social institutions

SIGI results indicate that the regional level of discrimination in social institutions is 24%, compared to 29% at the global level. All but one Eurasian countries ranked in the SIGI 2019 exhibit low levels of discrimination, while Tajikistan has medium levels (Figure 1). Discrimination levels are lower in Western Europe (12%), Northern Europe (15%), Southern Europe (18%), in North America (18%) and East Asia (22%), but Eurasia performs better as a region than Latin America and the Caribbean (25%), Southeast Asia (35%), Africa (40%), Western Asia (41%) and South Asia (48%).

**Figure 1.**  
Levels of discrimination in social institutions in Eurasian countries



Note: Higher SIGI values indicate higher inequality: the SIGI ranges from 0% for no discrimination to 100% for absolute discrimination. Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Moldova and Ukraine have a low level of discrimination (20-30%). Tajikistan has a medium level of discrimination (30-40%). Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan are not ranked due to missing data. Source: OECD (2019), *Gender, Institutions and Development Database*, <https://oe.cd/ds/GIDDB2019>.

### Legal reforms and the ensuing shift in social norms explain the relatively good performance of the region

Since the Soviet era and despite increasing inequalities during the transition period, Eurasia has a successful track record of removing legal barriers and fostering social norms favourable to gender equality. It is one of the world's regions where the legal framework stipulates equal inheritance and divorce rights and where women's reproductive autonomy rights are best protected. Additionally, the social acceptance of domestic violence in the region has decreased from 27% in 2014 to 21% in 2018.

### Yet, discriminatory social norms and practices, especially those governing family matters, still hamper women's empowerment opportunities and gender equality

The pervasive view of women's role as caregivers restricts their access to economic opportunities. At the regional level, 16% of the population thinks it is not acceptable for a woman in their family to work outside the home for pay and 56% of the population considers that men make better business executives than women. In some countries, customary laws still deny women's equal inheritance rights.

# SIGI policy recommendations for Eurasia

## 1. Start with legal reforms and gender-responsive policies

- Eradicate remaining discriminatory laws and legal loopholes, particularly regarding women's working rights, child marriage and violence against women.
- Ensure statutory rights take precedence over customary laws to guarantee the enforcement of legal equality commitments for all women and girls, for instance for inheritance rights.
- Apply a social norm lens to all policies and programmes to improve their gender-responsiveness and foster social transformation.
- Adopt a multi-sectoral and integrated approach within the Eurasian national gender strategies to create a more enabling environment for women's empowerment.

## 2. Foster social transformation through community empowerment and mobilisation

- Challenge negative gender stereotypes and reshape gender roles to foster women's political and economic leadership, and to tackle the unequal distribution of household responsibilities.
- Engage men and all development actors to enhance gender equality efforts and redefine masculinities.
- Support women's rights movements and the amplification through community engagement.

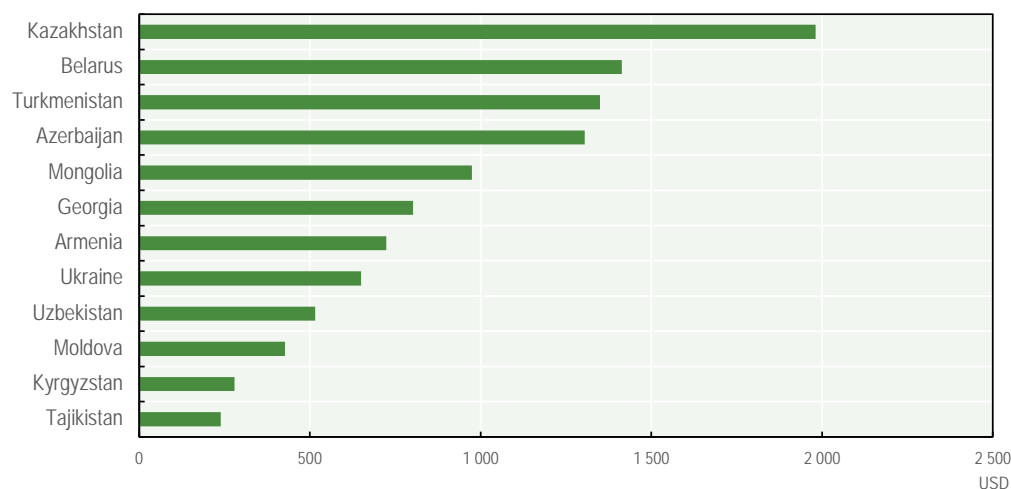
## 3. Step up data collection to better monitor progress

- Collect more evidence and data to better monitor progress and understand the drivers of gender equality.
- Invest in analytical capacity at the national level to better inform and hold accountable decision makers and public policy.

## Costs of discrimination and gains of gender equality in Eurasia

Further focusing on gender norms makes economic sense for Eurasian countries. Gender discrimination is not only costly for women who are denied full access to an economic, political and social life, but it also has a cost for their families and communities as well as their national economies. Formal and informal laws as well as social norms and practices restrict women’s economic empowerment and thus induce an income loss of up to USD 39 billion or 7.5% of the Eurasian income, which amounts on average to USD 888 per capita (Figure 2).

**Figure 2. Income loss per capita associated with discrimination in social institutions by country**



Note: Income losses at the national level in terms of GDP per capita.

Source: OECD (2019), *Gender, Institutions and Development Database*, [oe.cd/ds/GIDDB2019](https://data.oecd.org/giddb/) and World Bank (n.d.), *World Development Indicators*, <https://datacatalog.worldbank.org/dataset/world-development-indicators>.

This loss amounts to USD 5 billion in the Caucasus (USD 944 per capita); USD 13 billion in Eastern Europe (USD 830 per capita); and USD 21 billion in Central Asian economies (USD 890 per capita). This is due to:

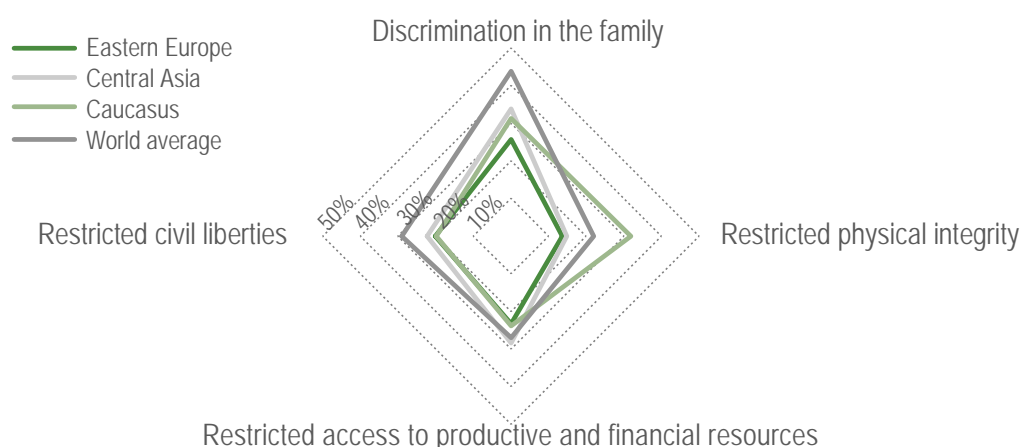
- Discriminatory social institutions such as child marriage or son preference lowering women’s human capital by 16%.
- Discriminatory workplace legislations, norms and practices reducing women’s labour-force participation by 12%.
- Restricted women’s access to entrepreneurship, financial resources and investment opportunities reducing physical capital accumulation by 8%.

Gradual reduction of these gender-based discriminatory social institutions through appropriate policy measures by 2030 could increase the regional annual GDP growth rate by 0.4 percentage points over the next 11 years.

## SIGI results by sub-region

Despite common trends in Eurasia, there are also varying levels and forms of discrimination within sub-regions, with the SIGI ranging from 21% for Eastern Europe to 27% in the Caucasus. Indeed, while the main concern for Eastern Europe and Central Asia is discrimination in the family, the Caucasus' biggest challenge is women's restricted physical integrity particularly due to the phenomenon of missing women (Figure 3).

**Figure 3. SIGI sub-regional results in its four dimensions**



Note: Sub-regional averages in the four SIGI dimensions, with world averages.  
Source: OECD (2019), *Gender, Institutions and Development Database*, <https://oe.cd/ds/GIDDB2019>.

### CAUCASUS: Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia

**KEY PROGRESS:** Women's access to justice has improved: 46% of those who declare lack of confidence in the system are women. It is the only sub-region where women have more confidence in the justice system than men.

**MAIN CHALLENGE:** Missing women remains an alarming issue: an estimated 170 000 young women are missing.

### CENTRAL ASIA: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan

**KEY PROGRESS:** Barriers to women's abortion rights have been removed: since 2015, in four countries (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan) women do not require the approval of anyone to seek abortion.

**MAIN CHALLENGE:** Gender roles within the household are still embedded in the male-breadwinner model: 46% of the population think that it is problematic if a woman earns more money than her husband. In addition, 36% of the population believes that children will suffer if their mother works for pay.

### EASTERN EUROPE: Belarus, Republic of Moldova and Ukraine

**KEY PROGRESS:** Women's reproductive autonomy has improved: the percentage of women with unmet needs for family planning has reduced from 13% in 2014 to 6% in 2019, the lowest rate in Eurasia.

**MAIN CHALLENGE:** Social expectations on women's role create a double burden: despite a high level of female labour participation (48%), women spend on average 5 hours a day on unpaid care and domestic work, compared to 2.5 hours spent by men.

# KEY THEMATIC MESSAGES



## DISCRIMINATION IN THE FAMILY

	Progress to date	Challenges ahead	Policy recommendation	Good practice
<b>Child marriage</b> 	<p>Child marriage is prohibited in <b>7</b> countries.<sup>1</sup></p>	<p><b>All</b> countries but one (Turkmenistan) still allow <b>marriage under age 18</b> with certain exceptions. Despite being below the global average (16%), <b>8%</b> of girls have married before the age of 18.</p>	<p><b>Eliminate legal exceptions</b> that allow girl child marriage, such as judicial and parental consent and stipulate legal sanctions for individuals facilitating the marriage of an individual who is under the minimum age.</p>	<p><b>Turkmenistan</b> raised the minimum age of marriage to <b>18 years</b> for both sexes without exceptions.</p>
<b>Household responsibilities</b> 	<p><b>All</b> countries accord <b>wives and husbands</b> with <b>equal</b> parental authority and with the same rights and responsibilities with regard to their children. Parental leave schemes are guaranteed in <b>10</b> countries.<sup>2</sup></p>	<p>More than <b>1 in 3</b> Eurasians think children with working mothers will suffer. Women allocate <b>5 hours</b> a day to unpaid care work compared to <b>2 hours</b> for men. Uptake of paid parental/paternity leave entitlement remains low.</p>	<p>Encourage <b>equal sharing</b> of caring and domestic responsibilities within the household by reshaping gender roles.</p>	<p><b>Awareness-raising campaigns</b> encourage men to take paternity/parental leaves and promote equal distribution of chores within the household in <b>Ukraine</b>.</p>
<b>Divorce</b> 	<p><b>All</b> countries in the region but one (Tajikistan) provide women with the <b>same rights and requirements</b> as men to initiate and finalise divorce.</p>	<p><b>7</b> countries have customary laws that <b>restrict women's right</b> to initiate divorce on an equal footing with men.<sup>3</sup></p>	<p><b>Remove</b> customary and/or traditional laws and practices that encourage conciliation and mediation at all stages of legal divorce proceedings and deem <b>divorce as socially undesirable</b>.</p>	<p><b>Legal aid</b> for women undergoing divorce in <b>Azerbaijan</b> to overcome judicial barriers and social stigma.</p>
<b>Inheritance</b> 	<p><b>All</b> countries guarantee daughters and widows have the <b>same inheritance rights</b> as men.</p>	<p><b>6</b> countries have customary laws providing daughters and <b>widows</b> with a <b>lower share of inheritance</b> than sons and widowers.<sup>4</sup></p>	<p><b>Eliminate discriminatory customary laws and practices</b> that undermine women's rights to inherit.</p>	<p><b>Training for officials and civil society organisations</b> on women's inheritance rights in <b>Kyrgyzstan</b> to eliminate customary practices that deprive women of their right to inherit.</p>

<sup>1</sup> Armenia, Azerbaijan, Mongolia, Moldova, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan.

<sup>2</sup> Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Mongolia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan

<sup>3</sup> Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Mongolia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan.

<sup>4</sup> Armenia, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan.





## RESTRICTED PHYSICAL INTEGRITY

	Progress to date	Challenges ahead	Policy recommendation	Good practice
<p><b>Violence against women</b></p>	<p><b>3</b> countries have further <b>improved their legal response</b> to violence against women since 2017.<sup>1</sup></p>	<p><b>No</b> country has a comprehensive legal framework on VAW, while domestic violence is widely prevalent and accepted (<b>21%</b> of women declare that can be <b>tolerated</b> and <b>17%</b> women have <b>suffered</b> it in their lifetimes).</p>	<p><b>Criminalise all forms of violence against women</b> including domestic violence, rape, marital rape and sexual harassment in schools, public spaces and on line; and tackle social acceptance of these practices by engaging men and redefining masculinities.</p>	<p><b>Campaigns</b> with male advocates raising awareness of violence against women and challenging “toxic” masculinities in <b>Tajikistan</b>.</p>
<p><b>Female genital mutilation</b></p>	<p>Female genital mutilation is virtually not a concern in the region.</p>	<p>No data collection on the prevalence of female genital mutilation to ensure that is not an issue.</p>	<p><b>Collect data</b> to monitor the prevalence of female genital mutilation and criminalise the practice when cases are unveiled.</p>	<p><b>Criminalisation</b> of female genital mutilation once the practice was discovered in minority communities in <b>Georgia</b> and monitor through data collection.</p>
<p><b>Missing women</b></p>	<p><b>9</b> countries have balanced sex ratios at birth.<sup>2</sup></p>	<p><b>3</b> countries have abnormal sex ratio at birth due to families’ son preference with an estimated <b>170 000 young women missing</b>.<sup>3</sup></p>	<p>Develop a <b>whole of society approach</b> to shifting social norms that can fuel a preference for sons over daughters.</p>	<p><b>Awareness-raising</b> campaigns and <b>legislative measures</b> to re-balance the sex ratio in <b>Armenia</b>.</p>
<p><b>Reproductive autonomy</b></p>	<p>Abortion on demand is legal in all <b>12</b> countries.</p>	<p><b>11%</b> of women have unmet needs for family planning and <b>10%</b> rely on traditional contraceptive methods.</p>	<p><b>Engage men</b> to improve not only women’s but also men’s knowledge of modern contraceptive methods and women’s rights in this regard.</p>	<p><b>Communication</b> strategies and a <b>national approach</b> to promote modern contraceptive use in <b>Ukraine</b>.</p>

<sup>1</sup> Moldova, Mongolia and Ukraine.

<sup>2</sup> Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Moldova, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan.

<sup>3</sup> Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia.

# KEY THEMATIC MESSAGES



## RESTRICTED ACCESS TO PRODUCTIVE AND FINANCIAL RESOURCES

	Progress to date	Challenges ahead	Policy recommendation	Good practice
<p><b>Secure access to land assets</b></p>	<p><b>All</b> countries grant women and men with equal rights to land assets and <b>6</b> countries have mandatory joint titling for married couples.<sup>1</sup></p>	<p>Patrilineal inheritance systems in the region still favour men's access to land assets and <b>27%</b> of all agricultural landholders in the region are women.</p>	<p>Design awareness-raising campaigns about women's land rights to <b>tackle discriminatory patrilineal inheritance</b> traditions and practices.</p>	<p><b>Training for officials and civil society organisations</b> on women's inheritance and land rights in <b><u>Kyrgyzstan</u></b>.</p>
<p><b>Secure access to non-land assets</b></p>	<p><b>All</b> countries explicitly recognise women's rights to non-land assets on equal terms with men.</p>	<p>Only <b>2</b> countries have public measures to protect women's property rights.<sup>2</sup></p>	<p>Conduct holistic awareness-raising campaigns at the community level to ensure better <b>understanding of the legal framework</b> regarding women's property rights.</p>	<p><b>Gender mainstreaming in housing</b> and development programmes to improve women's access to property in <b><u>Uzbekistan</u></b>.</p>
<p><b>Secure access to formal financial services</b></p>	<p><b>All</b> countries have removed legal barriers to women's access to bank accounts and credit and <b>50%</b> of all account holders are women.</p>	<p>Female entrepreneurs face more obstacles to access credit: only <b>5%</b> of women reported having borrowed for business purposes.</p>	<p>Adopt an <b>integrated and multi-entry points approach</b>, and mainstream gender and women's financial inclusion into national policy agendas.</p>	<p><b>Programmes</b> to provide women-led SMEs with access to credit in <b><u>Eastern Europe</u></b> and <b><u>Central Asia</u></b>.</p>
<p><b>Workplace rights</b></p>	<p><b>11</b> countries mandate equal remuneration for work of equal value.<sup>3</sup></p>	<p><b>10</b> countries prohibit women from entering certain professions and <b>16%</b> of the population think it is not perfectly acceptable for a woman to work outside the home for a pay.<sup>4</sup></p>	<p><b>Remove discriminatory legal provisions</b> and challenge social norms that limit women's employment opportunities.</p>	<p><b>Campaigns and trainings</b> to increase women's presence in male-dominated industries in <b><u>Kyrgyzstan</u></b>.</p>

<sup>1</sup> Azerbaijan, Mongolia, Moldova, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan.

<sup>2</sup> Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan.

<sup>3</sup> Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Moldova, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.

<sup>4</sup> Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Tajikistan, Moldova, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.



## RESTRICTED CIVIL LIBERTIES

**Progress to date**

**Challenges ahead**

**Policy recommendation**

**Good practice**

### Citizenship rights



**All** countries provide women and men with equal rights to acquire, change and retain their nationality and confer it on their foreign spouses and children.

**Low birth registration** in Tajikistan and **high rates of statelessness** in **3** countries<sup>1</sup> have critical consequences for women.

Continue efforts to **register all citizens**, at birth and at later stages of life.

**Government-led campaigns** to address statelessness in **Turkmenistan**.

### Political voice



**4** countries have introduced or strengthened measures to promote gender-balanced politics since 2014.<sup>2</sup>

**62%** of the population believes that men make better political leaders than women do.

Implement measures to **overcome discriminatory perceptions** of women's ability to be as competent as men as political leaders.

The **prohibition of sexist advertising** in political campaigns and fines for non-compliance in **Moldova**.

### Freedom of movement



**All** countries grant women and men the same rights to freedom of movement, identity and travel documents.

**69%** of people who do not feel safe walking alone at night are women.

Organise awareness-raising and information campaigns around **gender-based violence, harassment and harmful stereotypes** hindering women's freedom of movement.

Multi-media campaign to **raise awareness on sexual harassment** and to encourage women to come forward in **Georgia**.

### Access to justice



**All** countries provide women and men the same rights to benefit from justice systems.

**59%** of people who do not trust the national justice system are women as they face de facto discrimination.

Promote **awareness of women's rights** among the population and ensure women know how to exercise their rights.

**Legal advisory service** centres established to inform women about their rights in **Azerbaijan**.

<sup>1</sup> Tajikistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan

<sup>2</sup> Armenia, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine.

To learn more about the SIGI

Social Institutions and Gender Index  
[www.genderindex.org](http://www.genderindex.org)

Gender, Institutions and Development Database  
[oe.cd/ds/GIDDB2019](http://oe.cd/ds/GIDDB2019)

SIGI Policy Simulator  
[oe.cd/sigiSIM](http://oe.cd/sigiSIM)

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<https://doi.org/10.1787/f6dfa21d-en>