Mongolia
GENDER ASSESSMENT

June 2024

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ADB	Asian Development Bank
BoM	Bank of Mongolia
CabSec	Cabinet Secretary
CCCP	Coordination Council for Crime Prevention
CEDAW	Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CSAM	Child sexual abuse material
EAP	East Asia and Pacific
FGD	Focus group discussion
GBV	Gender-based violence
GDP	Gross domestic product
GRB	Gender-responsive budgeting
GTZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (German development cooperation agency)
HDI	Human Development Index
HSES	Household Socioeconomic Survey
ICT	Information and communication technologies
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
IGF	Intergovernmental Forum on Mining, Minerals, Metals and Sustainable Development
IISD	International Institute for Sustainable Development
ILO	International Labour Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IPV	Intimate partner violence
IRIM	Independent Research Institute of Mongolia
KII	Key informant interview
LCDV	Law to Combat Domestic Violence
LFPR	Labor force participation rate
LFS	Labor force survey
LGBTI	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex
ME	Ministry of Energy
MES	Ministry of Education and Science
MET	Ministry of Environment and Tourism

MICS	Multiple indicator cluster survey
MLSP	Ministry of Labor and Social Protection
MMHI	Ministry of Mining and Heavy Industry
MOF	Ministry of Finance
MOFALI	Ministry of Food, Agriculture, and Light Industry
MOH	Ministry of Health
MOJHA	Ministry of Justice and Home Affairs
NAOG	National Academy of Governance
NAPCC	National Action Plan for Climate Change
NCGE	National Committee for Gender Equality
NEET	Not in education, employment, or training
NDC	Nationally Determined Contributions
NEMA	National Emergency Management Agency
NGO	Nongovernmental organization
NPA	National Police Agency
NPTG	National Power Transmission Grid
NSO	National Statistics Office
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PISA	Program for International Student Assessment
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SOGI	Sexual orientation and gender identity
SOGIESC	Sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and sex characteristics
SPPGE	Strategic Plan for Promoting Gender Equality
STEM	Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics
Tog	Mongolian Tugrik (national currency, US$ 1 = Tog 3,450)
UNDESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USD	United States Dollar
WEF	World Economic Forum
WBG	World Bank Group
WHO	World Health Organization
WPATH	World Professional Association for Transgender Health

GLOSSARY

Aimag	An administrative subdivision equivalent to a province (there are 21 aimags in Mongolia)
Bagh	The smallest unit of local administration in rural Mongolia made up of approximately 100 households
Citizen representative khural	Elected citizen representative at aimag, soum, or khoroo level
Dzud	An extreme winter weather event occurring in a cold dry climate including drought, heavy snowfall, extreme cold, and windstorms
Khoroo	An administrative subdivision equivalent to a district in Ulaanbaatar city (there are 173 khoroos in Ulaanbaatar)
Ger	Traditional dwelling (portable round tent) of nomadic populations in Mongolia
Gender-Based Violence	Any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women and men whether occurring in public or private life. It also applies to gender non-conforming people.
Intimate-Partner Violence	Intimate partner violence specifically describes violence that occurs between people in sexual or romantic relationships. IPV is more exclusive than domestic violence, but it differs from gender-based violence in that IPV can occur between partners of the same gender identity.
Soum	An administrative subdivision equivalent to a district in the countryside of Mongolia within each aimag (there are 330 soums in Mongolia)
Sexual and gender minorities	People whose sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression, or sex characteristics differ from those of most of the society surrounding them. The term is often applied to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) people. Both LGBTI and LGBTQI+ are inclusive terms used to represent a range of orientations and identities, and the choice between these terms often depends on regional, cultural, or organizational preferences. This publication uses "LGBTI" and "sexual and gender minorities" for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex persons, while recognizing other diverse sexual orientations and gender identities.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Gender equality is fundamental to achieving Mongolia's national development vision and taking advantage of the full potential of its society. Global and regional estimates by McKinsey Global Institute have shown that achieving gender parity in economic participation could increase global GDP by US$ 28 trillion (Woetzel et. al. 2015) and the East Asia and Pacific (EAP) countries' collective GDP by US$ 4.5 trillion by 2025 (Madgavkar, Elingrud, and Krishnan 2016). The equality of opportunities in all aspects of social and economic life for all Mongolians is also an explicit objective of Mongolia's national development strategy, Vision-2050. This gender assessment report provides an overview of the status of gender equality in Mongolia following up on the previous gender assessment conducted by the National Committee on Gender Equality (NCGE) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) in 2019.

Mongolia has fared relatively well globally and in the EAP region on gender equality, yet it grapples with some persistent and growing gender gaps which threaten to reverse some of the gender equality gains of previous decades. Between 2014 and 2024, Mongolia's rank in the World Economic Forum (WEF) Global Gender Gap Index fell from 42nd to 85th place (out of 146 countries) and from 4th to 7th place among 19 EAP countries (WEF 2014; WEF 2024). The country's ranking declined particularly in the areas of political empowerment and economic participation and opportunity, while it remained strong on measures of educational attainment, and health and survival. The Women, Business and the Law index[1] shows improvements for Mongolia over the last five years, with the country continuing to rank higher than the global and EAP averages. Important strides have been made, for example, with updates to the Labor Law, Elections Law, and Political Party Law. While legislation is improving, supportive frameworks for women in the workplace and ensuring women's safety from violence and harassment still need to be strengthened.

As the above indices suggest, economic empowerment and participation and political leadership and voice in decision-making are two areas where barriers for women remain high in Mongolia. Although more women achieve a university education than men, these gains are not translating into advantages in the labor market. Women of working age in Mongolia are 15 percent less likely than working-aged men to be in the labor force. In 2022, women earned 25 percent less than men and dedicated twice the amount of time than men on unpaid household activities (an average of 3.5 hours per

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[1] Women, Business, and the Law Index Score (Scale 1-100) – Mongolia (accessed June 14, 2024), accessed on June 14, 2024https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SG.LAW.INDX?locations=MN.

day). While the gender wage gap can be partly explained by factors such as sectors of employment and years of work experience, about 40 percent of the wage gap remains unexplained.

Gender-based violence (GBV) is another area of emerging concern. The first GBV-prevalence survey conducted in Mongolia in 2017 revealed concerns about domestic violence and particularly violence against children (NSO and UNFPA 2018). Approximately 27 percent of women reported that they had experienced intimate partner violence (IPV), which is equal to the global average but lower than the regional average (33 percent). One in ten women reported they had experienced abuse before they were 15 years old. Reported cases of domestic violence increased by 19 percent in 2020 during the COVID-19 lockdown, indicating the importance of GBV prevention for increasing resilience in times of crisis. Domestic violence and the ability of state services to respond to domestic violence cases during times of natural disasters such as dzud are also of concern. Evidence on this topic and further response measures still need to be developed.

Gender gaps in Mongolia also impact men in negative ways. Men in Mongolia live on average 9.4 years less than women. This life expectancy gap between women and men is the largest in the EAP region and the 12th largest in the world, comparable to Eastern European and Central Asian countries. Notably, the gender life expectancy gap has been growing, from 2.3 years in 1965 to 6.5 years in 2005, reaching a high of 9.8 years in 2015, though it has since leveled off. Men and boys, particularly in rural areas, are affected by a reverse gender gap in education. More women complete tertiary education than men, and this gap is growing in rural areas.

Stigma and discrimination related to sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and sex characteristics (SOGIESC) causes barriers for sexual and gender minorities. Several Mongolian laws, such as the Labor Law (revised in 2021) and Criminal Code, offer explicit protections against discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. Nonetheless, recent surveys indicate that 80 percent of sexual and gender minority respondents refrain from disclosing their sexual orientation or gender identity to their employers, and 70 percent refrain from disclosing it to their family (Flores 2019). A January 2022 study suggests that 28 percent of sexual and gender minority respondents live on less than the minimum wage (ReportOUT 2023).[2] Fears of violence and the loss of employment or housing are some of the key contributing factors for sexual and gender minorities in Mongolia not disclosing their sexual orientation or gender identity (ReportOUT 2023).

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[2] The survey sample included 238 respondents.

The most persistent gender gaps in Mongolia are rooted in gendered social norms. A study on the underlying causes of the gender life expectancy gap finds that adherence to stereotypical masculine gender norms is a strong factor in men engaging in risky health behaviors (World Bank 2020). Lower female labor force participation also reflects gendered social norms, among other factors. Based on UNDP's 2020 social norms index, 47 percent of men and 48 percent of women in Mongolia either "agree'" or "strongly agree" that when jobs are scarce a man should have more right to a job than a woman (UNDP 2020). These norms are also expressed in the lagging participation of women in leadership and decision-making roles. While women are employed in high rates in public administration, they do not yet have a strong voice in political or policy-making processes: women only constitute 30 percent of mid-level managers and 15 percent of managers in high-level positions. In the same survey, 52 percent of men and 44 percent of women agreed or strongly agreed that men make better political leaders (UNDP 2020).

Gender equality will be increasingly important to support the resilience of Mongolian society in adapting to a changing climate. Globally, climate change is acknowledged to be causing specific impacts, often driven by preexisting gender inequalities. Climate change, internal migration, and gender issues are closely interlinked in the Mongolian context. Rural residents, particularly those reliant on traditional herding lifestyles, and urban residents in informal ger settlements are experiencing the impacts from climate change more intensely and have lower ability to cope. Qualitative research in Mongolia, conducted as part of this gender assessment, finds that women are more likely to migrate and to drive migration decisions within the household. At the same time, women are exposed to greater challenges upon migration to urban areas such as fewer and lower paying job opportunities.

In the medium and long term, climate mitigation and green transition policies can present opportunities for women's economic empowerment if targeted actions are taken to foster women's employment in growing sectors. Technological advances in sustainable mining, combined with more flexible and safe working conditions, have contributed to the increased participation globally of women in the mining sector (Ramdoo et al. 2023). Employment in the renewable energy sector is also expected to bring additional job opportunities for women. Economic diversification into crop farming, sustainable tourism, and forestry and landscape management, among other sectors, could offer a wider range of livelihood opportunities in rural areas. Mongolian women are in a good position to take advantage of new opportunities in these sectors given their higher levels of education, including in the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields.

Gender inequalities in each area have broad implications for society and the economy. For example, the lower life expectancy of men, combined with women's low labor force participation, lower wages, and earlier retirement age, leads to higher vulnerability for elderly women. Prevalent masculine social norms can drive risky health behaviors, such as excessive alcohol consumption, which are among the driving factors of both a lower life expectancy of men as well as GBV. Violence against women and sexual and gender minorities has social as well as economic costs to individuals and the state in the provision of medical and other support services and loss in economic productivity (Chadha, Forde, and Duvvury 2022).

Going forward, the challenge for Mongolia is to sustain the gender equality gains accumulated over decades while also addressing in a focused manner the most persistent gender gaps. Mongolia has established a robust institutional mechanism to promote gender equality issues, led by the National Committee on Gender Equality (NCGE), which could be built upon to promote legal and policy advancements for gender equality. Since 2021, Mongolia has also begun to mainstream principles of gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) within sectoral and provincial policy plans. This practice could be continued and strengthened, for example by ensuring that gender focal points within ministries and aimags are integrated in the policy planning and budgeting process and that gender-disaggregated data is regularly collected to enable monitoring of results.

Global evidence suggests that a combination of legal and policy efforts, continuous collection of evidence and capacity building, and public awareness could help reduce gender-based barriers. Some of these results may only be seen in the medium and long term given that entrenched social norms are a root cause of many gender gaps and require long-term change. Global and regional experiences may be used to select efficient and cost-effective policy solutions. Nevertheless, it is important that local policy actions are also rooted in a good understanding of the local context. For this, the robust evaluation of projects and programs implemented in Mongolia will be important to capture lessons for future policy. This gender assessment offers recommendations based on emerging evidence of the most persistent gender gaps in Mongolia as well as available local and international evidence.

Table 1. Short-, medium-, and long-term recommendations for advancing gender equality in Mongolia

Recommendations	Short/ Medium/ Long time frame	Key responsible agencies
Foundational well-being: ending gender-based violence and elevating human capital		
Continue systematic data collection on GBV through national prevalence studies and administrative records	S / M / L	MOJHA (CCCP), NSO, NPA, MLSP
Prepare, adopt, and monitor a comprehensive GBV prevention and response strategy with dedicated resources and clear institutional roles and responsibilities	S / M	MOJHA (CCCP), MLSP, NCGE
Adjust scope of GBV and child protection legislation to ensure that it captures the full spectrum of aspects of GBV	S / M	MOJHA, Cabinet Secretariat (CabSec)
Adopt, implement, and regularly update (based on results and lessons learned) a multisectoral action plan to reduce the gender life expectancy gap*	S / M / L	MOH, MLSP, NCGE
Ensure availability and adequacy of health services for LGBTI (specifically transgender) individuals	S / M	MOH
Implement programs targeted at retaining boys in secondary and tertiary education, with a focus on rural areas	S / M	MES
Promote greater diversification in educational and occupational specialization areas among women, for example, by: * Providing targeted scholarships and grants for girls and women in STEM fields * Establishing mentorship and role model programs connecting female students with women professionals in STEM careers * Creating supportive and inclusive learning environments in educational institutions to encourage female participation and retention in diverse specialization areas * Partnering with firms in the industrial sector and STEM fields to offer internships, apprenticeships, and job placement programs for women	S / M / L	MES, MLSP, private sector

Economic participation: expanding and enabling economic opportunities		
Reduce gender-based discrimination in wage determination and hiring practices, for example, by: * Promoting public awareness, building capacity, monitoring and enforcing Law provisions on anti-discrimination, prohibiting sexual harassment, ensuring equal pay for work of value, etc. * Offering nontransferable paid parental leave for both men and women to encourage shared caregiving responsibilities and reduce career interruptions for women * Providing regular training on unconscious bias and discrimination for all employees, especially those in managerial and hiring positions * Establishing programs that support women's career advancement through mentorship and sponsorship by senior leaders within the organization * Promoting broad, cross-sectoral flexible work hours and remote work options for both men and women	S / M / L	MLSP, CabSec, NAOG, private sector
Promote greater accessibility and affordability of quality childcare, for example, by: * Promoting diverse types of childcare provision (for example, direct government provision, financial support for families, incentives for the nonstate sector, and mandated employer-supported childcare) * Prioritizing extending coverage to vulnerable populations such as the poor, informal workers, single parents, and disabled parents and children through low-cost or free options * Improving public funding of childcare facilities and providing financial incentives to increase private sector funding * Implementing clear institutional requirements to ensure child safety, child development, and overall quality * Prioritizing improving access in urban areas to meet the increasing unmet demand * Continuously collecting evidence and evaluating the impacts of different childcare interventions on women's labor force participation and respective barriers to labor force participation related to care obligations to inform policy	S / M	MLSP, MES, private sector, NCGE

Enable female entrepreneurship, for example, by: * Mandating the collection and publication of gender-disaggregated data on entrepreneurship and asset ownership, including the number of female-owned businesses, access to finance, ownership of collateral, and business performance metrics * Offering nationwide programs that offer business training, mentorship, legal and regulatory support, and networking opportunities for female entrepreneurs * Providing grants, low-interest loans, and venture capital specifically targeted at female entrepreneurs * Creating platforms and opportunities for women entrepreneurs to access national and international markets, including trade fairs and online marketplaces	S / M / L	MLSP, NSO, BoM, Chamber of Commerce, private sector
Leadership: engaging women as leaders		
Monitor and continue to implement provisions and commitments under the updated election and political party laws (including gradual increase of gender quota)	M / L	NCGE, National Elections Commission, political parties, Parliament
Gender and climate		
Collect data on and evidence of gender vulnerabilities related to disaster risk resilience and climate adaptation (for example, impacts of disasters on GBV and impacts in herder women and girls)	S / M	NCGE, CabSec, MET, MED, NEMA, MOFALI
Incorporate gender-specific actions and goals in national climate change and disaster risk management legislation and strategies	S / M / L	NCGE, CabSec, MET, MED, NEMA, MOFALI
Promote employment and retention of women in the green economy and renewable energy sectors	M / L	MES, MED, MET, MMHI, MOFALI
Facilitate access by female entrepreneurs to green and climate financing.	S / M / L	BoM, commercial banks

Strengthening the national gender equality institutional mechanism		
Ensure an institutional mechanism to enable upstream review of new legislation and strategies from a gender lens	M / L	CabSec, NCGE
Expand gender equality legislation to include protection of and nondiscrimination principles for sexual and gender minorities	S / M	CabSec, NCGE
Continue rolling out GRB practices across sectors and aimags and evaluate the results and lessons learned	M / L	MOF, line ministries, provinces (aimags)
Integrate sectoral and aimag gender focal points into policy planning and budgeting departments	S / M	central and line ministries, aimag governor offices
Implement training and capacity building for gender focal points and policy makers (public service officials) for more effective take-up of GRB actions	S / M / L	NCGE, ministries, aimag governor offices, NAOG

CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

1. The organizational framework of this Mongolia Gender Assessment report is guided by the World Bank Group (WBG) Gender Strategy and the national gender equality objectives of Mongolia, which are closely aligned. The WBG Gender Strategy 2024-2030: Accelerate Gender Equality for a Sustainable, Resilient and Inclusive Future and Mongolia's Cross-Sectoral Strategic Plan for Promoting Gender Equality 2022–2031 both emphasize creating equal opportunities in health, education, economic participation, ownership of resources, leadership, and decision-making as well as combating gender-based violence (GBV) (see figure 1). Both strategies acknowledge challenges posed by a changing climate and environment on gender roles and the road to gender equality, as well as opportunities to enhance gender equality in societies' transitions to green and climate-resilient economies.

Figure 1. **Organizational framework of this Mongolia gender assessment report**

Cross-Sectoral Strategic Plan for Promoting Gender Equality in Mongolia - 2022-2031	Mongolia Country Gender Assessment, 2024	World Bank Group Gender Strategy - 2024-2030: Accelerate Gender Equality to End Poverty on a Livable Planet
GOAL 1. Create equal opportunities for girls and boys, women and men for safe, healthy lives and ensure equal access to education.	Foundational well-being: ending gender-based violence and elevating human capital.	**OBJECTIVE 1.** End gender-based violence and elevate human capital.
GOAL 2. Support equal opportunities and participation in the economy.	Economic participation: expanding and enabling economic opportunities.	**OBJECTIVE 2.** Expand and enable economic opportunities.
GOAL 3. Improve the national mechanism for promoting gender equality.	Leadership: engaging women as leaders.	**OBJECTIVE 3.** Engage women as leaders.
GOAL 4. Enhance gender equality and leadership at the decision-making levels.	Gender and climate	**CROSS-CUTTING:** Climate change and the transformative potential of technology.
GOAL 5. Promote gender equality in the climate change mitigation and adaptation processes.	National mechanism for promoting gender equality: gender-responsive planning and budgeting.	

2. The objective of this study is to generate evidence and provide recommendations to the Government of Mongolia, primarily to the National Committee for Gender Equality (NCGE), on priority policy actions to advance gender equality. While this assessment's primary government counterpart is the NCGE, its findings are also relevant to central and line ministries in their annual preparation of gender equality actions and budgets and in the periodic update of sectoral gender equality strategies. This assessment is expected to inform the World Bank's country program in Mongolia as well as programs of other development partners. Finally, the evidence and recommendations summarized in this report may be used by local and national civil society organizations in Mongolia planning their activities around gender equality.

3. Gender equality is fundamental to achieving Mongolia's national development vision and taking advantage of the full potential of its society. Global and regional estimates by McKinsey Global Institute have shown that achieving gender parity in economic participation could increase global GDP by US$ 28 trillion (Woetzel et. al., 2015) and the East Asia and Pacific (EAP) countries' collective GDP by US$ 4.5 trillion by 2025 (Madgavkar, Elingrud, and Krishnan 2016). Additionally, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) has estimated that eliminating gender inequality in Mongolia could increase women's labor force participation to 63.2 percent (ADB, 2020). Mongolia's national development strategy, Vision-2050, includes the explicit objective of equality of opportunity in education and in participation in all aspects of social and economic life for all Mongolians.

4. Beyond its significance to economic growth and the creation of equal opportunities, gender equality is essential to boost the country's resilience to shocks. The COVID-19 pandemic, starting in 2020, affected both male and female labor force participation in Mongolia, yet women were disproportionately impacted due to their predominant employment in health, services, and hospitality sectors and the increase in unpaid caregiving responsibilities. The onset of the pandemic brought an increase in domestic violence, with women comprising more than 90 percent of those affected by domestic violence. Recorded incidents of GBV increased by 15.5 percent between 2019 and 2020 (Begzsuren, Gungaa, and Magee 2022).[3] Severe weather shocks and the coping strategies that households adopt in response also reveal gender vulnerabilities. Severe weather events have been correlated with internal migration and rapid urbanization in Mongolia (Roeckert and Kraehnert 2022). Women are the main income-earners in approximately one-third of internal-migrant households, though their earnings remain lower than those of male migrants (IOM et al. 2021).

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[3] Based on police records, as cited in Begzsuren, Gungaa, and Magee (2022).

5. Enhancing gender equality could help to ensure that any new economic opportunities brought by a green transformation of the Mongolian economy in the medium and long term can be distributed more equitably across society. For example, cross-regional research by the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) and Intergovernmental Forum on Mining, Minerals, Metals and Sustainable Development (IGF) shows a rising trend of women employed in large-scale mining, largely attributed to technological advancements in the sector as well as improvements in women's education and the ability to balance work and family obligations (Ramdoo et al. 2023). The participation of women in the renewable energy sector, currently at 32 percent globally, also presents opportunities for growth in good quality jobs for women. Expanding women's access to finance and entrepreneurship could enable them to take advantage of growth in more sectors and services such as digital services, eco-tourism, and climate-smart agriculture, in urban as well as rural areas.

6. Mongolia is a positive outlier among countries in the EAP in terms of gender equality and is in a good position to reap benefits from all the opportunities described above. Mongolia ranked 7th within the EAP region and 85th in the world (out of 146 countries) on the WEF 2024 Global Gender Gap Index (WEF 2024). With 98.1 percent of girls and 93.7 percent of boys completing lower secondary school and an overall adult literacy rate over 99 percent, Mongolia performs higher than the EAP average and significantly higher than other lower-middle countries globally in terms of educational achievement.[4] Women are also relatively well represented in professional and STEM fields of study, comprising 63.7 percent of all university graduates; 54.7 percent of graduates in the natural sciences, mathematics, and statistics; 29.9 percent in engineering, manufacturing, and design; and 27.8 percent in information and communication technologies (ICT). Mongolia has made important gains in women's health as well, reducing maternal mortality from 158 to 39 deaths (per 100,000 live births) between 2000 and 2020.

7. Still, important gender gaps persist in Mongolia, many of which are driven by traditional social norms, and some of these gaps are growing. Notwithstanding their high performance in education, women's labor force participation at 52.8 percent lags behind men's at 67.8 percent and is lower than the regional average (73.6 percent female, 58.7 male). Mongolian women participate at in the labor force at higher rates than the global average (48.7 percent), yet at lower rates than the EAP average (58.6

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[4] Gender Data Portal, 2022, World Bank, Washington, DC (accessed June 14, 2024), https://genderdata.worldbank.org/en/economies/mongolia.

percent). Women earn 20.6 percent lower wages than men, and this gap has doubled over the last two decades. The wage gap is largely due to the concentration of women in informal and lower-paid sectors. Additionally, women spend 2.5 times as much time on unpaid domestic and care work as men.[5] Women are also underrepresented in leadership positions and decision-making positions. Moreover, the first national GBV survey in 2017 revealed a high prevalence of GBV, including a concerning trend of violence early in life (one in five women reported experiencing violence before the age of 15), which can have lasting impacts across generations.

8. Gender issues in Mongolia are not only women's issues. Gendered social norms affect men in negative ways, most notably as a strong causal factor in a wide and growing gender life expectancy gap. Men live on average 9.4 years less than women and this gap is growing. Men's adherence to stereotypical gender norms and engagement in risky behaviors, alongside other factors such as inadequate occupational health and safety, are leading causes of this gap (World Bank 2020). Men and boys in rural areas are affected by lower access to quality education and the expectation that they will support the family livelihood in livestock herding. Migrant men are susceptible to labor exploitation and unsafe working conditions. Ensuring that social norms enable healthy lifestyles and behaviors of men from a young age, encouraging boys in both rural and urban areas to pursue a good quality education, and supporting preventive social and psychosocial services for men as well as women, can not only help reduce the gender life expectancy gap but also have positive impacts on the broader society. For example, it can reduce incidences of GBV, which is also often instigated and perpetuated by masculine social norms and unhealthy lifestyles and behaviors such as alcohol abuse.

9. Stigma and discrimination related to sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and sex characteristics (SOGIESC) causes barriers for sexual and gender minorities. These issues, though less visible due to limited data on sexual and gender minorities, have an important impact on overall gender parity. Several Mongolian laws offer specific legal protection against discrimination based on sexual orientation (ADB 2024). Mongolia has also ratified five key UN treaties[6]

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[5] Gender Data Portal, 2023, World Bank, Washington, DC (accessed June 14, 2024), https://genderdata.worldbank.org/en/economies/mongolia.

[6] Mongolia has ratified the following key international human rights treaties: International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, ratified in November 1974; International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, ratified in November 1974; Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), ratified in July 1981; Convention on the Rights of the Child, ratified in July 1990; and Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, ratified in January 2002.

protecting a range of social and economic and civil and political rights for all. Still, recent surveys indicate that 80 percent of sexual and gender minority respondents refrain from disclosing their sexual orientation or gender identity to their employers, and 70 percent refrain from disclosing it to their family (Flores 2019). A January 2022 study suggests that 28 percent of sexual and gender minority respondents live on less than the minimum wage (ReportOUT 2023). Fears of violence and the loss of employment or housing are some of the key contributing factors for sexual and gender minorities in Mongolia not disclosing their sexual orientation or gender identity (ReportOUT 2023).

10. The Government of Mongolia has made progressive steps toward elevating policy attention and allocating resources to advance gender equality. In 2002 the NCGE was established, initially as part of the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection (MLSP). The approval of the Law on Gender Equality in 2011 provided a sound legal basis for gender equality in political, legal, social, cultural, and family relations. This Law sets mandatory quotas for women in government and political parties: 30 percent as of July 2023. The institutional mechanism for gender equality in the country is continuously evolving. Since 2018 the NCGE operates independently under the Office of the Prime Minister as part of the Cabinet Secretariat of the Government. In addition to the NCGE, gender councils and gender focal points have been appointed in each line ministry as well as in each aimag (province). The NCGE prepares and monitors comprehensive and cross-sectoral two-year action plans with specific targets for the implementation of the Gender Equality Law.

11. To ensure that policy actions and targets are adequately financed, Mongolia has made concrete steps to mainstream gender-responsive budgeting (GRB). Since 2021 the Ministry of Finance has released circulars on GRB as part of annual budget guidelines and requested Budget Governors to provide information on gender issues.[7] Select line ministries (MLSP and Ministry of Education and Science (MES)) and aimags have since piloted GRB in their budget process. This was an important step forward to promote better data generation; it is an evidence-based and targeted approach to address most critical gender gaps, recognizing that government resources are limited and should be tailored toward programs that produce results.

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[7] This effort was piloted under World Bank Technical Assistance with EU Trust Fund support under the Strengthening Governance in Mongolia Project.

12. Strong data and evidence are an important element of strengthening policy and programming for gender equality results. Mongolia has a relatively strong basis in its national statistical data collected by the National Statistics Office (NSO). The NSO was also involved in developing and publishing the first national GBV survey in 2017, based on the World Health Organization methodology, which is planned to be repeated regularly. Yet, some important data for gender equality results are still missing for Mongolia, including data on housing, land, and asset ownership and gender-disaggregated administrative data on access to key services. Collection of more granular and gender-disaggregated data by line ministries, encouraged by the GRB process, would support formulation of better tailored programs, pilots of innovative approaches to address persistent gaps, and more rigorous impact evaluations to continuously improve gender equality outcomes.

13. The challenge for Mongolia over the next ten years will be to sustain and build upon the policies to date that have brought gender equality gains and to tailor policy efforts and available resources to tackle persistent gaps. This country gender assessment report aims to generate evidence on key gender gaps in Mongolia to inform and better target the World Bank's support, as well as policies and programs of the Government of Mongolia, other international partners, and stakeholders, toward reducing critical gender gaps in the country. The report builds on the previous country gender assessment conducted by the NCGE and ADB in 2019, *Mongolia Gender Situational Analysis: Advances, Challenges, and Lessons Learnt Since 2005* (NCGE and ADB 2019).

14. This report is based on desk research, analysis of quantitative data, and primary qualitative research conducted between September 2023 and May 2024. The desk research included a review of literature on different aspects of gender equality published by government, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and international financial institutions, among others, primarily over the past five years since the previous country gender assessment was produced. It also included a review of government policies, programs, institutional arrangements, and action plans as well as budgeting information, to the extent possible, relevant to advancing gender equality in Mongolia. An analysis of quantitative data was conducted on key NSO surveys-household survey, Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS), GBV survey, and available administrative data, for example on access to health care and educational enrollment and completion-with a focus on the 2019-2023 period. In addition, primary qualitative data was collected in informal ger areas of Ulaanbaatar city and in Uvurkhangai aimag, with a focus on exploring gender-specific vulnerabilities

related to climate change and internal migration. The latter included 16 focus group discussions (FGD) (11 with women and 5 with men), 18 key informant interviews (KII), and 6 ethnographic interviews (life stories) with migrant and returned migrant men and women.

15. The report is structured as follows: *Chapter II. Foundational Well-being: Ending Gender-Based Violence and Elevating Human Capital* highlights progress made and areas of persisting gender gaps in education and health, as well available evidence on the prevalence and root causes of GBV. This chapter presents global evidence of data on policies and programs that can be employed toward reducing the gender life expectancy gap, a high priority area for the Government of Mongolia. *Chapter III. Economic Participation: Expanding and Enabling Economic Opportunities* discusses gender discrepancies in labor force participation, wages, and use of time. *Chapter IV. Leadership:* Engaging Women as Leaders focuses on women's voices and participation in decision-making and the underlying causes for persistent underrepresentation of women in key political and leadership positions. *Chapter V. Gender and Climate* aims to provide better understanding of gendered vulnerabilities to the impacts of climate change in the context of Mongolia as well as opportunities for enhancing gender equality in the country's transformation toward a greener and more resilient economy. *Chapter VII. Institutional Mechanism for Gender Equality: Gender-Responsive Planning and Budgeting* outlines the progress Mongolia has made to advance governance processes to promote gender equality (specifically through GRB) and further efforts needed to sustain and improve planning and budgeting for gender equality outcomes. *Chapter VII. Conclusions and Recommendations* summarizes key gender gaps from the country assessment and offers policy recommendations along the pillars above, as well as overall institutional mechanisms for gender equality.

CHAPTER II. FOUNDATIONAL WELL-BEING: ENDING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AND ELEVATING HUMAN CAPITAL

16. In 1981 Mongolia became one of the first countries in the world to ratify the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). By most human development indicators, Mongolia ranks highly in the world as well as within the EAP region. Mongolia ranks among the countries with "high human development" with a Human Development Index (HDI) value of 0.741 in the 2023/24 UNDP Human Development Report (UNDP 2024). After a decline in most human development indicators through the political and economic transitions in the 1990s, HDI trends in Mongolia have been improving steadily.

17. Regarding gender equality, however, progress in the country has been uneven. Some indicators, such as maternal mortality, have improved dramatically over the past 30 years and others, such as gender parity in education, have been maintained at a high level. However, some gender gaps have persisted and widened, including most notably a gap in life expectancy. Moreover, new and emerging data from Mongolia's first survey on the prevalence of GBV shows worrying trends of intimate partner violence (IPV) and violence against girls.

Health

18. Article 12 of CEDAW emphasizes the need to eliminate discrimination against women in the field of health care and to ensure women's equal access to health care services. State Parties are required under the Convention to ensure that women can access appropriate services in connection to pregnancy, confinement, and the postnatal period as well as adequate nutrition during pregnancy and lactation. Women and men have differing needs and outcomes across all areas of health care, including communicable and noncommunicable diseases and sexual and reproductive health care.

19. One of the key gender gaps in Mongolia is the persisting and growing divergence in life expectancy between women and men. In 2022, men's life expectancy was on average 9.4 years shorter than women (figure 2). This is found to be primarily linked to men's unhealthy lifestyle choices and risky behavior, such as consuming alcohol, smoking tobacco, making poor dietary choices, and a lack of physical activity (Chimed-Ochir et al. 2022). Suicide, homicide, and industrial and traffic accidents are also among the leading causes of male mortality, especially prevalent among younger men. In 2020 a study by the World Bank on the causes of the gender life expectancy gap also found that earlier mortality for men is closely related to their lower likelihood to seek medical attention (World Bank 2020). Qualitative research in the World Bank's study found that adherence to masculine social norms was among the underlying causes for engaging in risky behaviors.

| Figure 2. | Gender gap in life expectancy |
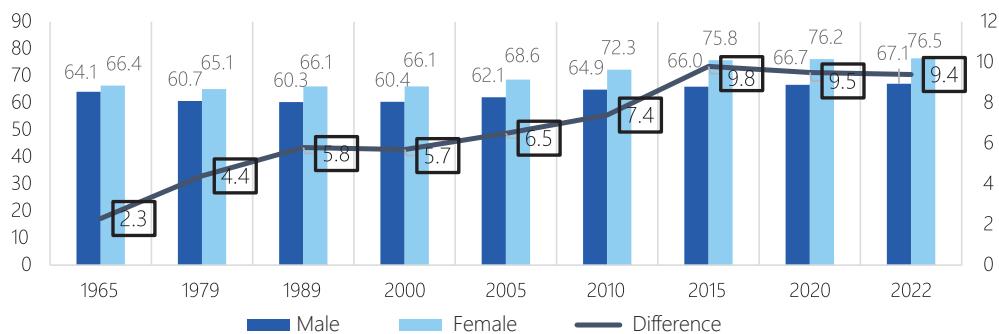
Source: Data from Center for Health Development and WHO 2022.

20. The main factor of mortality in Mongolia is disease, accounting for 83 percent of all deaths, though disease patterns differ for men and women. The leading diseases in mortality of both men and women are cardiovascular diseases, which account for 43 percent of morbidity-related deaths, and cancer, which accounts for 31 percent of morbidity-related deaths. Disease patterns are different for men and women, even though both men and women are predominately affected by cardiovascular disease and cancer. Men die from cardiovascular disease at younger ages than women, with higher mortality rates due to cardiovascular disease starting at age 45, whereas mortality rates due to cardiovascular disease peak in women over 75. Seventy-eight percent of deaths due to bronchial or lung cancer are of men (World Bank 2019). The burden of malnutrition remains high in Mongolia, with the prevalence of obesity among adults in both men and women reaching epidemic proportions. Prevalence of obesity in mothers of reproductive age is 46.3 percent

(50.1 percent in rural areas) and it is 48.8 percent among men of 15–40 years of age (MOH, National Center for Public Health, and UNICEF 2017).

21. The gender gap in life expectancy in Mongolia has been linked with risky health behavior. This includes smoking and alcohol consumption, which elevate men's risk of certain noncommunicable diseases and can be contributing factors in accident- and suicide-related deaths. A study of over 2,000 men from four regions in Mongolia revealed that approximately 60 percent of men were smokers, of which 90 percent smoked daily (World Bank 2020). Another survey of 15,500 households in Mongolia found that 56 percent of adult men smoked tobacco in 2013 and 58 percent of men smoked in 2018, compared to less than 10 percent of women, placing Mongolia among one of the world's highest per capita male smoker populations (World Bank 2020). Alcohol consumption is also common among men in Mongolia. According to a survey of over 2,000 men from four regions, 71 percent had consumed alcohol within the past year and 28 percent of men were likely or highly likely to drink too much alcohol in public (World Bank 2020). The quantity of alcohol consumed is a liter per week on average: average annual alcohol consumption increased by 1.9 times from 28.8 liters in 2007 to 52.5 liters in 2018 (World Bank 2019). Norms about masculinity may increase rates of alcohol and tobacco consumption, as alcohol consumption and smoking have been associated with masculinity in other contexts (Demaio et al. 2014; Kodriati, Pursell, and Hayati 2018; Ng, Weinehall, and Öhman 2007; Peralta 2007; Wells et al. 2014.).

22. Structural factors are closely linked to men's exposure to health risks, including risky health behaviors, particularly given gender norms about men's roles. Men are expected to be breadwinners, protectors, and even aggressors (UNICEF 2020). Due to a highly competitive labor market with few opportunities to earn an adequate wage, many men are unable to fulfill their traditional roles as providers for their families. Without sufficient employment, men can lose hope and turn to alcohol or tobacco to alleviate their stress from pressures to fulfill their traditional roles as breadwinners (World Bank 2020). Pressure to provide for the family and difficulties in doing so can also exacerbate mental health challenges and contribute to patterns of suicide. For example, 47 percent of suicide cases between 2012 and 2016 were among individuals who were unemployed (World Bank 2020). Emotional vulnerability is considered feminine in Mongolia (UNICEF 2020), creating a barrier to men seeking help to cope with their challenges. In addition, Mongolian men are often engaged in laborious, heavy-duty work in risky environments, exposing them to greater health risks (World Bank 2020). Indeed, men are much more likely than women to experience workplace injuries across sectors of activity in Mongolia.

23. The gender gap in life expectancy in Mongolia has also been linked to men being more averse to seeking medical attention than women, which can hinder efforts to prevent, diagnose, and treat noncommunicable diseases. A survey of men from four regions showed that 59 percent of men reported only seeking medical attention when ill, and 20 percent had never seen a doctor (World Bank 2020). Moreover, the number of male outpatients is 1.5 times lower than female outpatients, and interviews with local health representatives revealed low rates of men visiting hospitals, for preventive care, with a tendency that men only see a doctor when conditions are severe (World Bank 2020). Women are more likely to be diagnosed with cancer and cardiovascular disease than men; however, mortality due to these illnesses is higher among men. At least in part, this discrepancy seems linked to later diagnosis of medical conditions for men, although other factors such as knowledge and implementation of treatment regimens may also contribute to the gap (World Bank 2020). Men's reluctance to seek health care is linked with gender norms that associate help-seeking with femininity. Evidence from other contexts shows that men avoid seeking health care to assert their masculinity, especially when other forms of affirming their masculinity, such as productive employment, are unavailable (Courtenay 2000). As such, gender-informed disease prevention and early detection and treatment programs will need to be critical pillars in efforts to address the gender gap in life expectancy in Mongolia. Box 1, below, summarizes results from a global evidence overview on effective and cost-efficient interventions to address causes of the gap in gender life expectancy.

24. Overall, Mongolia has made great strides in reducing the risks for pregnant and birthing mothers, especially considering the population is so dispersed. The maternal mortality rate reduced from 158 women dying per 100,000 in 2000 to 39 in 2020, much lower than the regional average of 74[8], with near universal (99.3 percent) rates of births attended by skilled health staff (2019 MICS survey, from communications with the NSO). However, between 2019 and 2022, Mongolia's progress in reducing maternal deaths suffered a setback. In 2020 and 2021, an economic downturn caused by COVID-19 led to the state cutting budgets for contraceptives and other reproductive health supplies. The number of maternal deaths per 100,000 live births spiked during COVID-19 but then dropped back to pre-COVID numbers in 2022 (figure 3). The highest deaths were reported in Ulaanbaatar, followed by the Central and Khangai regions. This was also due to the requirements of the quarantine, during which pregnant women experienced a range of challenges in accessing urgent

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[8] WHO, trends in MMR 2000-2020, 2023

Box 1. **What can be done to reduce the gender gap in life expectancy in Mongolia?**

Noncommunicable diseases are the main cause of male mortality in Mongolia, and alcohol and tobacco consumption are risk factors for developing these diseases. The most cost-effective strategy to reduce alcohol and tobacco consumption is raising taxes on these products. Other cost-effective solutions are mass-media campaigns on the dangers of tobacco, combined with providing resources for quitting or reducing consumption, as well as smoking quit lines that provide national toll-free telephone counseling services for quitting. Smoking quit lines have been shown to double the likelihood on average that smokers will quit (Ali et al. 2018) and to also be a cost-effective solution. As for reducing alcohol consumption, increasing taxes and banning advertisement of alcohol products have been shown to be cost-effective practices. Current restrictions in Mongolia could be expanded to include low-alcohol content beverages that are frequently consumed by youth. Restricting the days, times, or locations of alcohol sales is another cost-effective policy. Mongolia could impose stricter rules on dates and times of sale and restrict venues of sale to better enforce existing laws. While more costly, therapy and psychosocial interventions, including delivered in groups, can be another effective way to support both smoking and alcohol cessation.

Men in Mongolia are less likely than women to seek preventive or primary care to help detect and treat noncommunicable diseases early on. Communicating with patients and potential patients is one promising intervention to increase uptake of preventive and primary health care services for men. Communications can be patient-specific and also target other household members, such as spouses.

Suicide is another cause of early male mortality in Mongolia. Eighty-five percent of suicide deaths in Mongolia are men, and almost 400 Mongolian men die by suicide each year (Badarch et al. 2022). Adolescents are at particular risk. School-based awareness programs and psychological interventions could help improve mental health and reduce suicide attempts, as could the expansion of mental health services and treatment more broadly. Early identification of individuals at high risk of suicide and follow-up with them is another effective strategy to reduce suicide.

As shown by survey data in Mongolia, gender norms influence men's higher tobacco and alcohol consumption and lower their likelihood of seeking preventive or primary health care (World Bank 2020). In addition, norms that emphasize men's role as a provider can deteriorate the mental health of men who face economic struggles. Although more rigorous evidence is needed, workshops and safe spaces for dialogue about masculinity and norms are promising ways to shift attitudes, beliefs, and health-related behaviors. Other promising interventions are communications campaigns, such as documentaries, edutainment interventions that communicate messages through entertaining programs, and lighter touch social-media campaigns.

medical services. For example, service reductions in childcare worsened existing barriers to accessing care. In addition, psychological changes caused by chronic stress increased the risk of maternal death. Besides this, Mongolia's unprecedented air pollution levels, one of the worst in the world and caused by the emissions of coal-fired stoves, continue to provoke serious health effects in pregnant women, especially in urban areas (UNICEF and RIVM 2020).

Figure 3. **Number of maternal deaths (per 100,000 live births), by region**
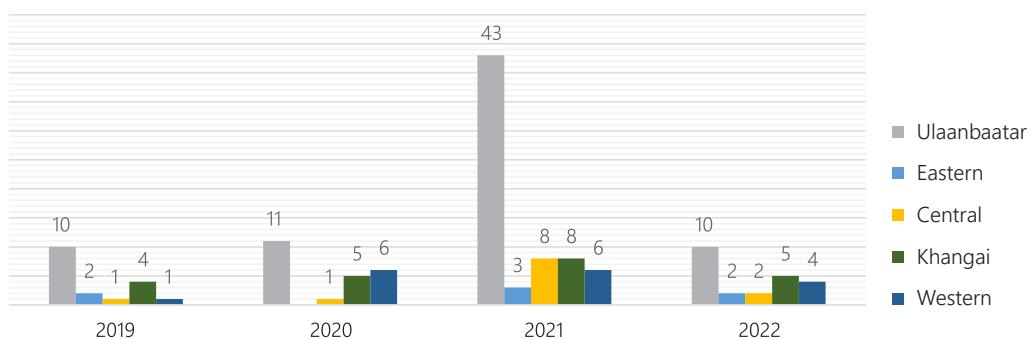
Source: Data from communications with the NSO.

25. The fertility rate in Mongolia has remained unchanged over time; however, there is a notable difference between rural and urban areas. In 2024, Mongolia's population fertility rate (the average number of children born to a woman over her lifetime) is 2.6, while it remained 2.7-2.8 between 2020-2023.[9] Similarly, according to the latest data available, in 2021, 27 of every 1000 girls ages 15-19 gave birth, compared to 26 of every 1000 girls in 2020.[10] However, a change in rate is notable in urban areas, where between 2019 and 2022 the percent of registered births decreased by 14 percentage points for women aged 25-29 (see figure 4). Mongolia has the lowest adolescent fertility rate in the region, but still higher than the UN Sustainable Development Goal of less than 13 live births by 1000 girls by 2030.

[9] World Population Dashboard: Mongolia (database), UNFPA, New York (accessed June 18, 2024), https://www.unfpa.org/data/world-population/MN.
[10] World Population Prospects 2022 (database), UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA), New York (accessed June 18, 2024), https://population.un.org/wpp/.

Figure 4. Percent of registered births by age of mother in rural and urban areas
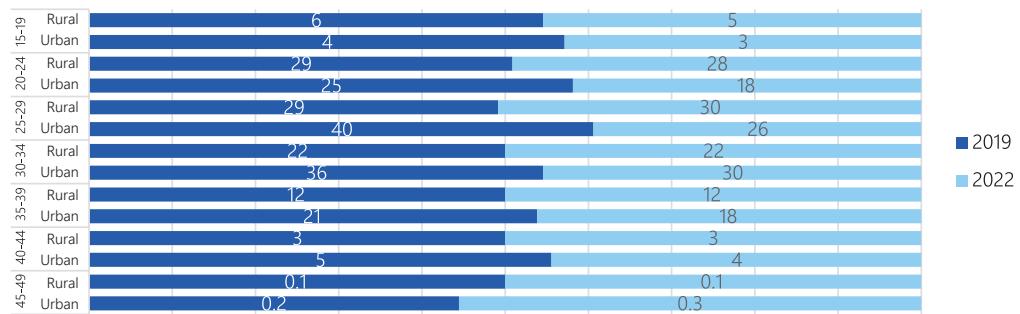
Source: Data from communications with the NSO.

26. Efforts across multiple sectors and actors have contributed to the improvement of maternal mortality rates in Mongolia. The main government action program focused on maternal and child health care centers was initiated by the National Population Policy in 1996 (Hill, Dodd, and Dashdorj 2006). Subsequently, a series of programs focused on maternal and child health were implemented by the government and other international organizations[11] which played an instrumental role in reducing maternal mortality rates. Despite increased urbanization, many in Mongolia still pursue a traditional nomadic lifestyle and their health issues stem from the remoteness of their communities. Harsh weather conditions and a terrain that is often difficult to navigate pose significant challenges to getting reproductive health services to everyone who needs them. To address these challenges, the government increased the number of maternity waiting homes[12] in all districts, introduced a "two-week" rule that encourages women in at-risk communities to attend a prenatal clinic two weeks before they are due to deliver, and tapped into the growing mobile and satellite phone networks to help reduce maternal mortality risks.

27. Despite improvements in health outcomes as noted above, equitable access to quality health care still faces some challenges. In the 1990s Mongolia experiences the significant reduction of formal safety nets. State funding of health care facilities considerably shrank in in that period. The funding increased in the first decade of the 2000s with international donor support and the national economy's

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[11] Supporting international organizations included the World Health Organization (WHO), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), Asian Development Bank (ADB), Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ), and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). They provided funding, training, and technical assistance to strengthen maternal health services.
[12] Waiting homes are places where women carrying high-risk pregnancies can stay until they give birth.

improvement. A study of adolescent girls revealed that they continue to face barriers in access to sexual and reproductive health services and information, especially in rural areas (Bayaraa, Agho, and Akombi-Inyang 2023). Some discrepancies are also noted between urban and rural areas. Additionally, services for preventative and early interventions for mental health care need to be further developed.

28. Sexual and gender minorities experience significant barriers to accessing health care, which negatively impacts these vulnerable populations. Evidence from Mongolian LGBTI organizations shows a lack of understanding among health care providers regarding sexual and gender minorities and the specific physical and mental health challenges these individuals face (LGBT Centre of Mongolia 2019; ReportOUT 2023). Often, their sexual orientation or gender identity is misunderstood as a mental disorder or addiction, leading to forced "conversion therapy" practices, such as psychiatric treatments, which have long-term adverse impacts on their health and well-being. A study reveals that a large majority of sexual and gender minorities in Mongolia feel uncomfortable disclosing their identity, notably to health care professionals, with 93 percent of respondents expressing discomfort in sharing this information (ReportOUT 2023). There's also a shortage of mental health care services for LGBTI people. Lack of information, awareness, or sensitization among health care service providers about the well-being and unique health care needs of sexual and gender minorities leads to these individuals being denied access to appropriate medical care.

29. In 2018, Mongolia introduced a significant amendment to its Law on Civil State Registration, making it hard to get a gender marker change. This amendment stipulates that a gender marker change can only be facilitated upon medical verification of a complete sex change. Previously, Mongolia's regulations necessitated medical verification of gender dysphoria[13] for such changes. This amendment thus effectively tightened the criteria for individuals seeking a change of their gender marker, necessitating a more extensive medical verification process that goes beyond an assessment of gender dysphoria. There is a notable absence of health care guidelines or standards specifically addressing the needs of transgender individuals seeking transition-related health care. This deficit is compounded by a lack of trained health care professionals capable of providing such services. This gap persists even though the Law on Civil State Registration permits transgender individuals to change their gender marker based on documented medical transitions.

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[13] According to the World Professional Association for Transgender Health (WPATH), gender dysphoria "refers to discomfort or distress that is caused by a discrepancy between a person's gender identity and that person's sex assigned at birth (and the associated gender role and/or primary and secondary sex characteristics)" (Coleman et al. 2012).

30. Medical professionals, particularly gynecologists, struggle to offer competent services to LGBTI people. Women's and gynecological clinics' forms are not updated to consider Non heterosexual and Non cisgender identities, thus excluding sexual and gender minorities. A lack of awareness among medical staff regarding the specific sexual and reproductive health needs of LGBTI people results in a deficit of appropriate care. Assisted reproductive services are often refused to lesbian and bisexual women. Transgender people face obstacles in accessing gender-affirming health care services such as hormone replacement therapy or gender-affirming surgeries within Mongolia due to a lack of standards and regulations that would govern these matters. Public health insurance programs do not offer coverage to sexual and gender minorities for health care needs such as gender-affirming health care or assisted reproductive services, making these services inaccessible to financially vulnerable sexual and gender minorities.

Gender-Based Violence

31. Domestic violence remains the most prevalent form of violence against women in Mongolia despite recent legislation that criminalizes it. In Mongolia, one in three women (35 percent) report having been subjected to physical, sexual, or economic violence during the last year or in their current relationship, and more than half of all women (59.7 percent) report experiencing such violence in their lifetime.[14] Similarly, the share of women who have experienced IPV is nearly the same as the world average, 27 percent (figure 5).

32. Particularly concerning are the rates of GBV affecting youth. The likelihood of a woman in Mongolia experiencing violence is higher at a younger age than at an older age. According to an NSO and UNFPA (2018) study, one in ten women in Mongolia reported having experienced sexual abuse before they were 15 years old, with most common perpetrators being other family members (29.5 percent), friends or acquaintances (19 percent), and complete strangers (18.7 percent). Similarly, younger women aged 20-29 years are on average 3.3 times more likely to experience violence than older women aged 30-39 years. (NSO & UNFPA 2018).

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[14] Gender Data Portal, 2022, World Bank, Washington, DC (accessed June 14, 2024), https://genderdata.worldbank.org/en/economies/mongolia.

33. This situation further deteriorated during COVID-19 pandemic. In 2020, 6,263 domestic violence cases were reported to the police, which was a 19 percent increase from the previous year (WHO 2022). At the same time, One-Stop Service Centers[15] dedicated to assisting women and child victims of domestic violence also reported a 90 percent increase in the number of clients.[16] Moreover, reports indicated that over 95 percent of reported domestic violence perpetrators were men (NSO & UNFPA 2018).

Figure 5.	Share of women who have experienced intimate partner violence (physical or sexual) in their lifetime (percent)
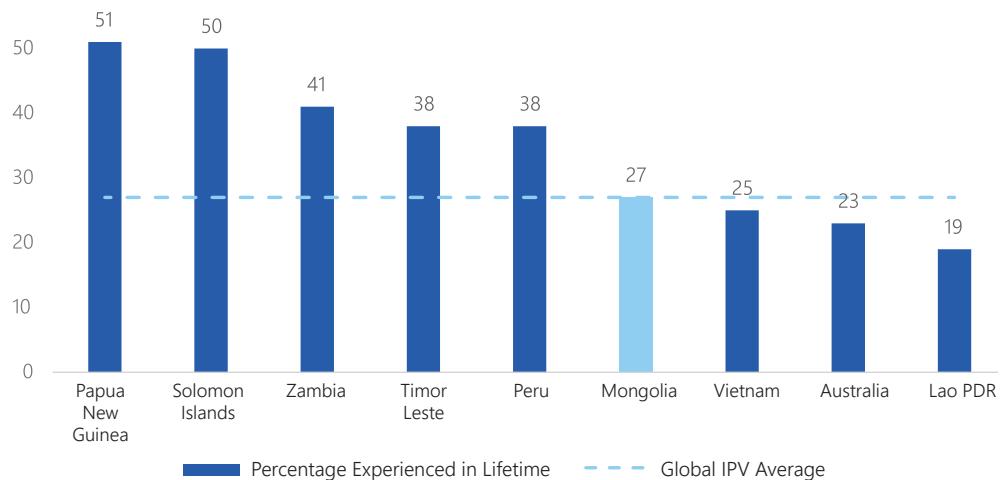
Source: The Global Health Observatory (database), WHO (World Health Organization), Geneva (accessed June 18, 2024), https://www.who.int/data/gho/data/indicators/indicator-details/GHO/intimate-partner-violence-lifetime.[17]

34. Public opinion polls also report most respondents (84.6 percent) agreeing that domestic violence is a widespread problem in Mongolia (Hologic, Inc. 2024). Young respondents were more likely to have experienced physical violence from a partner. IPV is the most prevalent form of violence in both urban and rural areas, followed by economic violence (figure 6). Almost two-thirds (62.2 percent) indicated that violence occurs when the male partner is drunk. Jealousy is also considered a common trigger, identified by just over one-third of women (36.2 percent) (NSO &

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[15] There are seven One-Stop Service Centers in the provinces and three in UB districts.
[16] See an undated UNFPA article, "Women in Mongolia escape domestic violence during pandemic," at https://www.friendsofunfpa.org/women-in-mongolia-get-help-to-escape-domestic-violence-during-pandemic/.
[17] Modeled estimates based on most recent survey data, 2021. Note that modeled estimates may differ from official national statistics.

UNFPA 2018). Housing is part of the problem. A large portion of Mongolians live with their families in a ger, which offers limited privacy. Abuse happens within the family, and families mostly keep quiet about it. If the issue is exposed to the authorities, the whole community finds out about the matter (Duin 2020). Moreover, a significant percentage of women in both rural and urban areas hold attitudes that justify violence against women and girls; for example, 62 percent women in rural areas agree that a husband can hit a wife under any circumstance and 56 percent of women in urban areas deem marital rape acceptable. Most men consider forms of domestic violence to include not allowing women to work, verbal abuse, forced or unwanted sexual intercourse, and beating or hitting. However, some men did not consider forced sexual intercourse between a man and his wife to be sexual violence. Other views expressed were that pregnant woman cannot be beaten up, at least not severely. It may be acceptable to slap them. (NSO and UNFPA 2018).

Figure 6.	Percent of women who have experienced partner violence by violence type
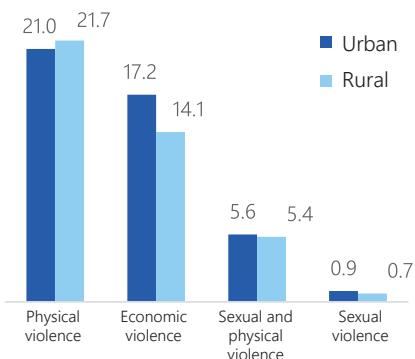
Source: Data from NSO and UNFPA 2018.

Figure 7.	Women's attitude toward violence
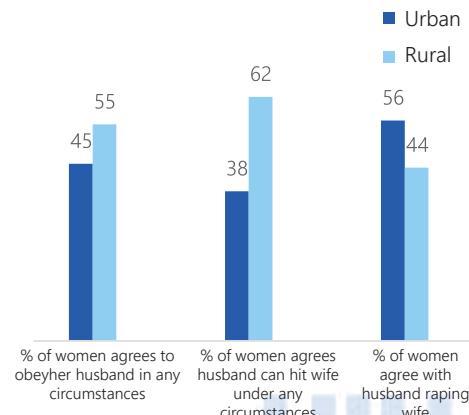
Source: Data from NSO and UNFPA 2018.

35. Violence impacts women's overall well-being and health and that of their children and other family members. GBV is a prevalent issue that directly threatens the safety of women and girls and impedes the achievement of gender equality through its wide-ranging impacts on women's human rights, health, education, and economic empowerment. Women in Mongolia who have experienced physical or sexual violence report poor health and symptoms of mental health disorders. Similarly, women who had experienced partner violence were more likely to have children with behavioral problems than those who had not. Many women also don't realize that what they endure constitutes physical or sexual violence (Amarsanaa, Kovács, and Rácz 2024; WHO 2024).

36. The threat of violence also impacts women's and sexual and gender minorities' work opportunities. In 2020, 36.1 percent of working women in Mongolia reported experiencing domestic violence in the past 12 months, with 13.2 percent of working women reporting specifically physical or sexual domestic violence in the same time period (Chadha, Forde, and Duvvury 2022). Similarly, a 2023 study highlighted persistent challenges faced by sexual and gender minorities in the workplace (ReportOUT 2023). According to the study, only 20 percent of employed LGBTI Mongolians, whether working full or part time, felt secure enough to disclose their sexual orientation or gender identity to their employers. Nearly a quarter of the surveyed LGBTI Mongolians (23 percent) reported firsthand experiences of discrimination in the workplace due to their actual or perceived sexual or gender identity, and a striking 78 percent believed that such discriminatory practices remained widespread (ReportOUT, 2023). Even by the most conversative estimate, an average earner in Mongolia loses approximately US$ 754 every year due to violence, which means 1.94 percent of the GDP is lost by the country to GBV every year (Chadha, Forde, and Duvvury 2022). This is a total of cost of US$ 235 million (US$ 222 million lost in productivity, US$ 7.6 million in foregone income, US$ 4.6 million lost in care work and household production, and US$ 2.7 million in out-of-pocket costs) compared to the cost of US$ 9.9 million in providing social, health and legal services (Chadha, Forde, and Duvvury 2022). To address the issue of sexual harassment, the Mongolian Parliament approved a revised version of the Labor Law in July 2021, effective from January 1, 2022, which includes provisions of zero tolerance for violence and harassment, including sexual harassment at work, and grants rights to employees during their employment and in employment relations. However, the law does not specify penalties for offenders and the system for implementation remains inadequate. The Gender Equality Law mandates all organizations to have their own sexual harassment policy, but there are no repercussions if they do not. The actual consequences for perpetrators may also vary depending on the severity of the offense, the workplace policies, and actions taken by employers and authorities independently.

37. In general, there is a recognition of the seriousness of GBV, but Mongolian laws and regulations lack the specificity needed for consistent judicial and prosecutorial interpretation and application. In February 2017, the Mongolian Parliament promulgated the Law to Combat Domestic Violence (LCDV). This legislation focuses on domestic violence prevention and response, including measures to protect survivors from further harm. The LCDV also provides for multisectoral coordination, which has led to the re-establishment of the Coordination Council for Crime Prevention (CCCP) chaired by the Minister of Justice and Home Affairs (MOJHA). It also established a special unit at the National Police Agency (NPA) for GBV / domestic

violence to enhance the implementation of the LCDV. Yet, challenges remain since the laws and their implementing regulations lack the specificity and required funding needed for consistent judicial and prosecutorial interpretation and application. Moreover, Mongolia's justice system prioritizes punishment over protection of victims, leading to widespread underreporting and a lack of prevention strategies against GBV, including domestic abuse (Hoover 2023). Often seen as a private matter, domestic violence rarely prompts police intervention. The result is that statistics on GBV are sparse and do not allow an assessment of the efficacy of the LCDV (Hoover 2023). A study by the Association of Mongolian Criminologists (2020) describes the need to address the lack of a clear distinction between petty offense and constant abuse in the case of domestic violence in existing legislation. In the Law on Petty Offense, an act of domestic violence is considered a petty offense if it is not "constant"; domestic violence only becomes a crime when there is "constant abuse." This gap becomes an obstacle when an intervention is needed in cases of partner violence. Another study on police cultures also linked poor implementation of domestic violence laws with law enforcement's "militarized masculinity" and high rates of officer-involved domestic violence (Gerelt-Od 2023).

38. Mongolia enacted a law and criminal code[18] which took effect in 2017 that protects individuals from discrimination based on their sexual orientation or gender identity, but those commitments have yet to be enforced. It also initiated mandatory gender-sensitivity training for police. Service provision to victims of violence, including shelters, One-Stop Service Centers, and legal aid is only limited to victims of IPV in heterosexual marital relationships. High levels of stigma and discrimination persist at social and systemic levels, making life not only psychologically challenging but also physically dangerous for sexual and gender minorities. Stigma and biases in the law enforcement agencies create barriers for sexual and gender minorities seeking legal services and prevent the effective implementation of legislation to protect sexual and gender minorities (Koch, Knutson, and Nyamdorj 2020). Individual testimonies and anecdotal evidence show that sexual and gender minorities are intimidated by the law enforcement authorities. Although the 2015 Criminal Code includes sexual orientation and gender identity as protected grounds against hate crimes, violence against sexual and gender minorities and incidents of discrimination remains severely underreported. From 2017 to 2021, just five cases were registered with the police. From 2017 to 2021, 13 cases were recorded at the General Prosecutor's Office.

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[18] Article 14 of the 2015 Criminal Code (effective 01 July 2017) prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity and provides a unique provision against SOGI-based discrimination.

39. Child abuse is also a significant problem and consists principally of domestic violence and sexual abuse. Between 2017–2020, 676 children were reported to have been sexually assaulted across Mongolia. In 2020 alone, at least 160 children, mostly girls, were affected by sexual assault across the country.[19] Most of the perpetrators of this sexual violence were individuals close to the victims, including their stepfathers, brothers, relatives, and even biological fathers. Under the Mongolian 2015 Criminal Code, child abuse is punishable; a man convicted of defiling a child under 14 years old will be punished with 12-20 years imprisonment or a life sentence. Moreover, a man who is found guilty of defiling a child aged 14–18 years can be sentenced to between 2-8 years imprisonment. However, there is no comprehensive child protection system to effectively prevent or respond to violence, exploitation, or abuse directed at children. The Family, Child and Youth Development Authority operates a hotline to report child abuse, an emergency service center, and a shelter for child victims of abuse. The government-run shelters serve child victims of domestic violence, sexual abuse, neglect, and abandonment, but they have inadequate capacity to provide separate accommodation for especially vulnerable children. Some children in Mongolia are also exploited to produce child sexual abuse material (CSAM). National laws pertaining to the sexual exploitation of children remain insufficient as they do not clearly criminalize the use or offering of children for use in the production of CSAM, nor the procuring of children aged 16–17 to produce such materials.

40. Mongolian children are also at risk of trafficking internally and internationally for the purpose of sexual exploitation. Mongolia is a destination country for both international and domestic offenders; it is also classified as a source country for children subjected to trafficking for sexual purposes in the immediate neighboring countries of South Korea, Japan, and Malaysia and in other countries including Germany, Sweden, and the United States (ECPAT, 2022, US department of State, 2023). Women and girls aged 14 years and above are the most vulnerable to trafficking. They are often either students with part-time seasonal jobs, those with irregular income, or those looking for an occupation who have migrated to another location where they are not registered. Those at risk have often experienced physical and psychological hardship and are divorced or single. Such at-risk people have often witnessed or are victims of domestic violence. COVID-19 degraded people's livelihoods at individual and family levels, further exacerbating their vulnerability to human trafficking due to fewer income and job opportunities, increased psychological stress, and use of social media which, as reported by the police, posed challenges related to new modalities of recruitment of victims via the internet (Bureau of International Labor Affairs 2022; US Department of State 2022).

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[19] National Police Agency, 2020.

Education

41. There is a reverse gender gap in education in Mongolia, with women on average more educated than men. Educational attainment in Mongolia is generally high, with more than 75 percent of the adult population (aged 25 and older) having completed high school or higher and 32 percent having completed tertiary education or higher as of 2022. Mongolia has the highest rate of tertiary completion of lower-middle income countries and ranks among the top even of upper-middle-income countries (figure 8). Women in Mongolia are significantly more likely than men to have completed tertiary education; in 2022, 36 percent of adult women had completed tertiary education, compared to 27 percent of adult men. Mongolia's reverse gender gap in tertiary education is among the largest in the world (figure 9), and this gap has become more pronounced over time, with younger generations exhibiting significantly larger female-male differences in tertiary completion (figure 10).

Figure 8.	Tertiary education completion among adults (aged 25+) and GDP by country
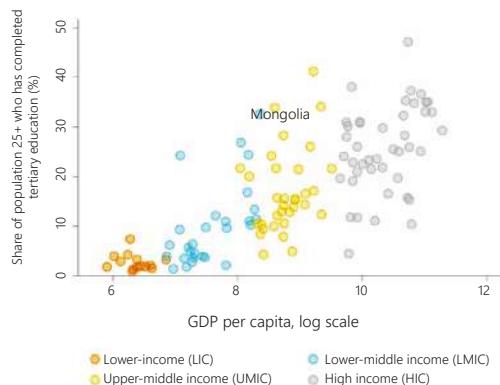
Figure 9.	Female-male gap in tertiary completion and GDP by country
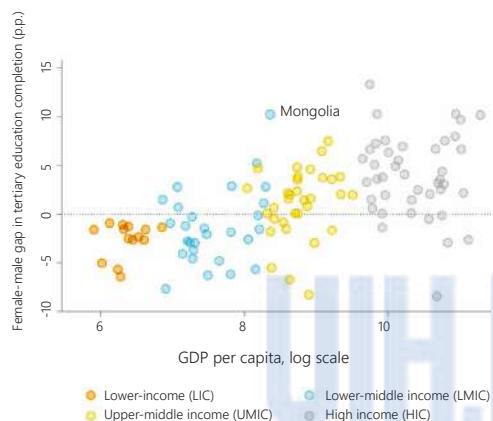
Note: GDP per capita is in 2015 USD and is shown in log terms.
Source: Data from the World Development Indicators database.[20]

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[20] The World Bank's World Development Indicators database is at https://databank.worldbank.org/source/world-development-indicators.

Figure 10. Completion of tertiary education by age category, 2022 (percent of population)
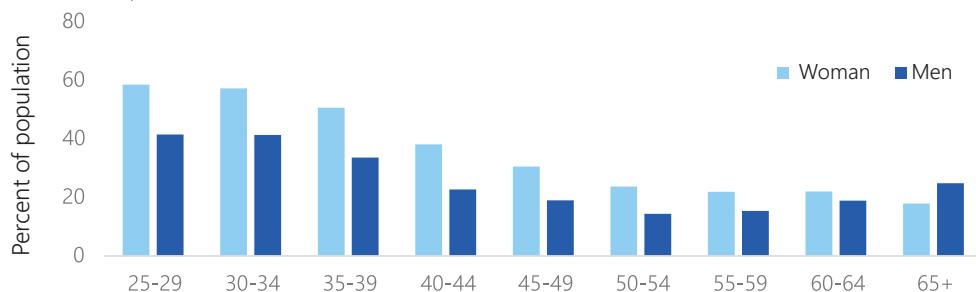
Source: Data from the NSO 2022 HSES.[21]

42. Much of the reverse gender gap in educational attainment can be explained by fewer boys transitioning from high school to tertiary education. Enrollment in primary and secondary education is similar among boys and girls in Mongolia (figure 11). A gender gap, however, emerges after high school, with fewer boys transitioning into tertiary education (figure 12).[22] In 2022, boys were 33 percent more likely than girls to drop out after high school; the majority opt to enter the labor force in low-skilled agriculture, construction, or manufacturing jobs. While the primary reason for dropout among boys is to engage in income-generating activities, they are also twice as likely as girls to report that they dropped out due to a lack of interest in school.

Figure 11. Net enrollment ratio by gender and grade, 2022
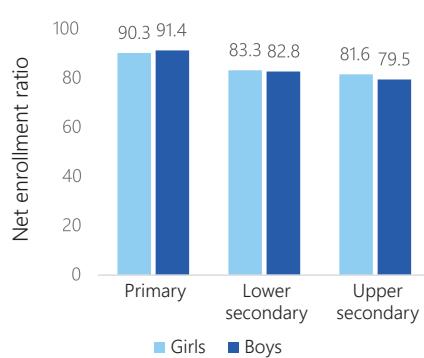
Source: Data from the NSO 2022 HSES.

Figure 12. School attendance among youth, 2019-2022 (percent of population)
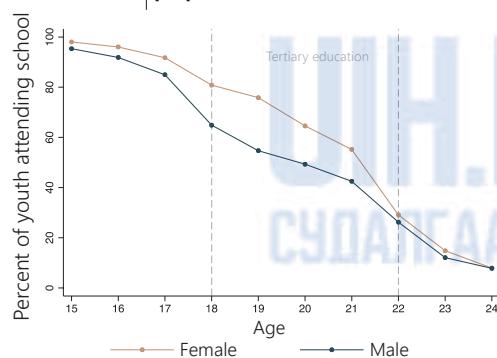
Source: Data from the NSO LFS 2019–2022.

[21] The NSO 2022 HSES data is available at http://web.nso.mn/nada/index.php/catalog/184.
[22] Statistics in this section come from the NSO Labour Force Survey, years 2019–2022. Available at http://web.nso.mn/nada./index.php/catalog/LFS.

43. The reverse gender gap in tertiary enrollment has declined in recent years, but progress has largely been limited to urban areas. Between 2019 and 2022, the female-male gap in tertiary enrollment decreased from 10.3 to 8.5 percentage points, indicating greater gains in tertiary enrollment among men (figure 13). This decline, however, was driven primarily by improvements in urban areas. In fact, the reverse gender gap has increased in rural areas: between 2019 and 2022, the female-male gap in tertiary enrollment increased from 7.2 to 17.3 percentage points in rural areas. Lower rates of tertiary enrollment in rural areas, especially in the countryside, mean that there is greater scope for progress. But this progress has been uneven, with tertiary enrollment growing faster for women than men. Greater progress among women in rural areas suggests differing barriers to education for men and women and more entrenched barriers for men.

44. Limited accessibility and affordability restrict tertiary enrollment, particularly in rural areas. Children in poorer households are less likely to be enrolled in school at all levels of education in Mongolia, especially at the appropriate age. Poverty has the greatest detrimental impact on enrollment at the tertiary level for both men and women, suggesting significant financial barriers to tertiary education. Based on the 2022 HSES, the average university tuition in Mongolia is about 2.4 million Tog per year, and 64 out of 69 tertiary institutions are in urban areas, requiring further dormitory fees (on average, 1 million Tog per year in 2022) for students from remote areas. Altogether, fees associated with tertiary education are about 18 percent of average household consumption in 2022, indicating that tertiary enrollment may represent a sizable financial burden to households at the bottom of the welfare distribution (from communication with the Government Agency for Education).

45. While there are some public and private sources of financial support for students, coverage is extremely limited. The State Education Loan Fund offers scholarships and loans to support tertiary tuition; however, coverage is low and funds are primarily targeted toward students pursuing studies abroad. In the 2022–2023 academic year, only 1.2 percent of tertiary students (339 students) received support from the Education Loan Fund, leaving the majority of students enrolled in tertiary education to shoulder tuition expenses out of pocket.[23] Moreover, in 2023, the Education Fund Loan faced allegations of corruption and nepotism, with accusations pointing to preferential treatment toward familyw members of high-ranking government officials and politicians (Bekmurzaev 2023).

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[23] https://mongolianeducationmy.sharepoint.com/:x:/g/personal/tsogbadrakh_agency_edu_mn/EVhlWJ7mpSNKgT5V1A gCpiQBtgIBMTi1cvroA5Fa-w6UjQ?rtime=LpwjctxS3Eg , Government Agency for Education.

46. Poverty has a greater negative impact on tertiary enrollment of men than of women. High costs and limited means of financing tertiary education means that most of the financial burden falls on households. In rural areas, especially in the countryside, poverty plays a more significant role for men than women in deterring tertiary enrollment, with men aged 18 to 24 in the poorest 20 percent of the rural welfare distribution three times less likely to attend university compared to women (figure 14). This gap is smaller but still sizable at higher levels of welfare.

Figure 13.	Female-male gap in tertiary enrollment (percent of population aged 18–24)
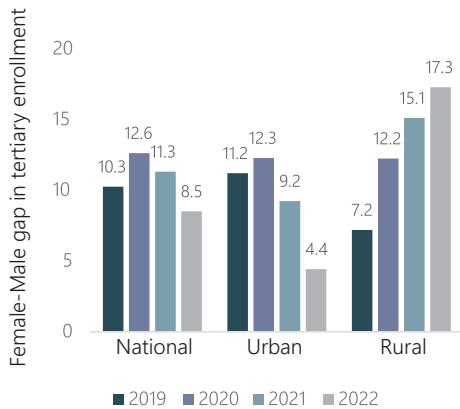
Source: Data from the NSO LFS 2019–2022.

Figure 14.	Tertiary enrollment by consumption quintile in rural areas (percent of population aged 18–24)
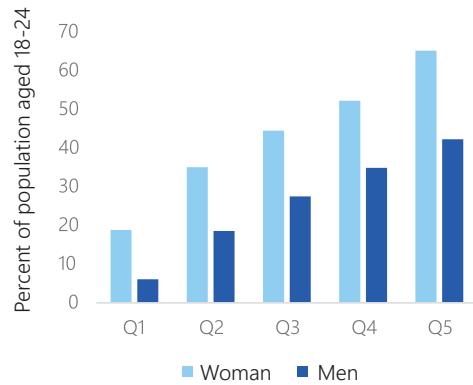
Note: Q1 = poorest quintile, Q5 = richest quintile. Quintiles are drawn over the distribution of per-adult equivalent consumption in rural areas.
Source: Data from the NSO 2022 HSES.

47. Among students enrolled in higher education institutions, significant differences in fields of specialization exist between women and men. Women are 26 percentage points more likely than men to specialize in health, education, or social work, while men are 26 percentage points more likely to major in STEM fields such as engineering and ICT (figure 15). Gender gaps in specialization have persisted over time, with virtually no difference in the shares of men and women majoring in health and education versus STEM fields between 2019 and 2022.

48. Gender disparities in academic specialization in Mongolia may be rooted in deeply ingrained social norms dictating which fields of study or sectors are deemed appropriate for women versus men. Data from the 2022 Program for

International Student Assessment (PISA)[24] reveal significant differences in career expectations and self-confidence between male and female students (MES 2022). Specifically, the data shows that female students in Mongolia are 80 percent less likely to report future careers in STEM fields compared to their male counterparts. Moreover, girls demonstrate lower confidence in their abilities in science and mathematics, despite achieving higher scores in these subjects on standardized assessments. These disparities suggest that societal expectations and perceptions regarding gender roles may contribute to the underrepresentation of women in STEM fields and hinder their confidence in pursuing careers in these areas from an early age. Addressing these social norms and fostering a supportive environment that encourages girls' interest and confidence in STEM subjects is crucial to promote gender equity in academic specialization and career aspirations.

Figure 15.	Fields of specialization in tertiary institutions, 2023–2024 academic year (percent of students)
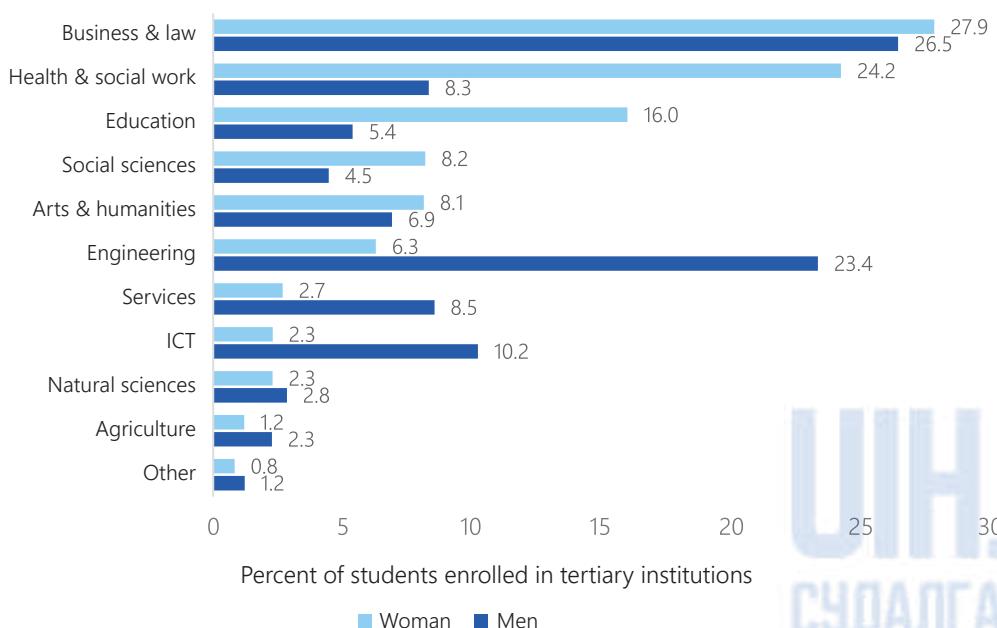
Source: Data from communication with the Ministry of Education and Science.

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[24] The PISA is a study conducted by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) across member and nonmember countries, aiming to assess the performance of educational systems by gauging the academic proficiency of 15-year-old students in mathematics, science, and reading.

CHAPTER III. ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION: EXPANDING AND ENABLING ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

Labor Force Participation

49. As of 2022, working-aged women in Mongolia are 15 percentage points less likely than working-aged men to be in the labor force.[25] This discrepancy mirrors a global trend in which, on average, men tend to participate in the labor force at higher rates than women, with a median gap of approximately 15 percentage points (figure 16). Mongolia's current gender gap in labor force participation places it within the mid-range both globally and among other countries in the region and those with a similar GDP.

50. Ensuring gender equality in the labor force is essential to attain national priorities and foster sustainable economic growth. Mongolia's Vision-2050 development policy aims to promote gender equality and increase the labor force participation rate (LFPR) to 65 percent by 2030 and 70 percent by 2050. By harnessing the full potential of both men and women in the workforce, Mongolia can reach this goal and its economy can benefit from a larger pool of talent, skills, and innovation. Closing gender gaps in employment and wages could also lead to higher productivity and efficiency, as well as increased consumer spending and investment. Empowering women economically enhances individual livelihoods and drives broader economic development, contributing to higher GDP and improved living standards for society as a whole. A 2020 ADB study estimates that removing gendered disparities in both the workplace and at home could lead to a 10-percentage-point increase in the female LFPR and a 0.5 percentage point increase in the per capita GDP growth rate (ADB 2020).

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[25] Based on data from the 2022 Labor Force Survey by the NSO.

Figure 16. Labor force participation rate by country (percent of population aged 15+)
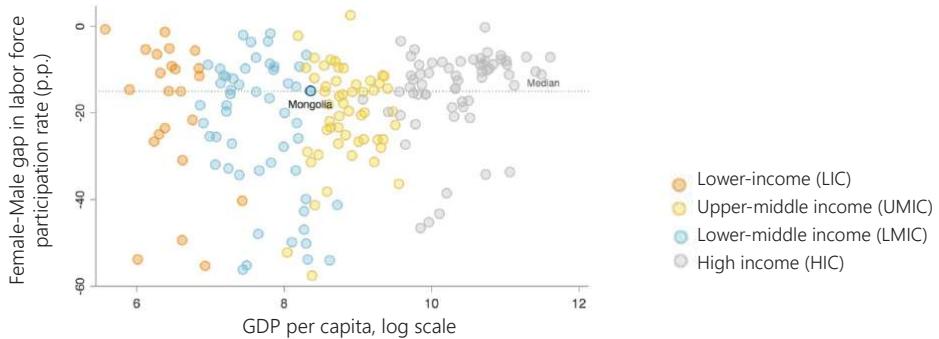
Source: Data from the World Development Indicators database.

51. Gender disparity in the LFPR in Mongolia has persisted from 2019 to 2022, with a consistent gap of approximately 15 percentage points observed during this period (figure 17A). The COVID-19 pandemic had a marked impact on labor force participation for both men and women, particularly toward the end of 2020 and the beginning of 2021. Impacts, however, were largely limited to Ulaanbaatar due to stricter lockdowns in the capital city. While early lockdowns had more severe impacts on the service sector, traditionally male-dominated industries such as construction, manufacturing, and transportation experienced more prolonged effects due to not only the pandemic but also trade disruptions caused by the war in Ukraine. Compared to the first quarter of 2020, labor force participation among men in Ulaanbaatar declined by 8 percentage points in the first quarter of 2021, while for women, the decline was 5.2 percentage points during the same period (figure 17B). LFPR eventually rebounded for both men and women with the easing of lockdown measures.

Figure 17. Labor force participation rate (percent of population aged 15+)
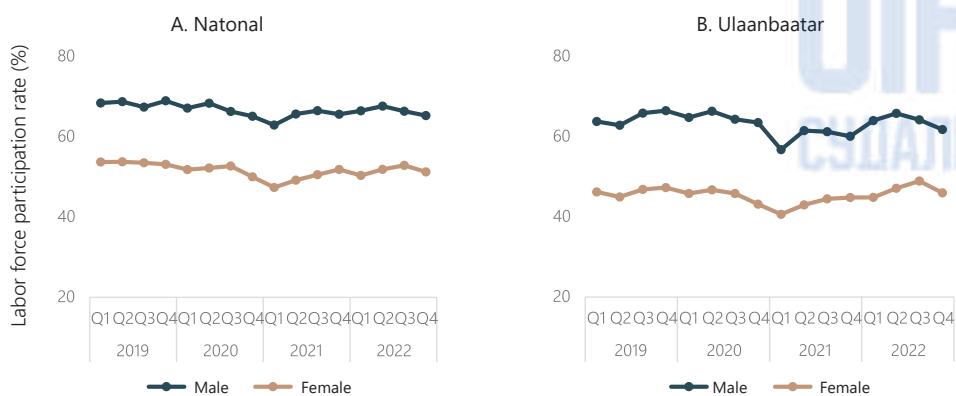
Source: Data from the NSO LFS 2019–2022.

52. What factors account for the persistent gender gap in Mongolia's LFPR? The government identified gender equality as a national priority in its 2011 Gender Equality Law and has taken continued action since then to lessen women's childcare responsibilities, address gender stereotypes, and prohibit discrimination in hiring policies and in the workplace, among other initiatives to promote greater equality in the labor force. However, the gender gap in labor force participation has shown little improvement, suggesting that further efforts are needed to address the underlying issues that prevent women from joining and staying in the labor force. The remainder of this section looks at how different factors such as poverty, human capital, social norms, and gender stereotypes undermine female labor force participation.

53. Completing higher education is more strongly correlated with entering the workforce for women than for men. In rural areas, where a substantial portion of the population engages in self-employment or unpaid work and the majority have completed high school or lower levels of education, educational attainment does not play an important role in determining labor force participation. Conversely, in urban settings, completing higher education is a significant determinant of working for both genders. Notably, the likelihood of labor force participation increases more rapidly with higher levels of educational attainment for women compared to men. Women who have completed tertiary education exhibit a 27 percent higher likelihood of being in the labor force in contrast to those with only a high school diploma, while the marginal effect for men is 10 percent.

54. This difference, combined with wider gender gaps in labor force participation among the poorest, suggests significant barriers hindering poor, low-skilled women from entering the labor force, particularly in urban areas. Data from the NSO's 2022 Household Socioeconomic Survey (HSES) shows that differences in employment between men and women are most pronounced among individuals in the poorest 20 percent of Mongolia's welfare distribution (figure 18). Within this segment, the disparity in the employment-to-population ratio between men and women is nearly double that observed in other economic segments. Moreover, observed gender gaps in labor force participation by educational attainment are partially attributable to the greater likelihood of poorer women to be less educated. Taken together, these findings suggest that poor, low-skilled women encounter considerable challenges to access employment opportunities, suggesting supply-side constraints such as financial barriers hindering economic participation (for example, inability to afford childcare) or demand-side constraints such as limited demand for low-skilled labor. As highlighted in the following section, women in the workforce predominantly gravitate toward service sectors such as education, health, public administration, and

retail trade. If there is insufficient demand for unskilled labor within these sectors, poor, low-skilled women may face disproportionate barriers to participating in the workforce.

Figure 18. Employment-to-population ratio by consumption quintile, 2022 (ages 25–54)
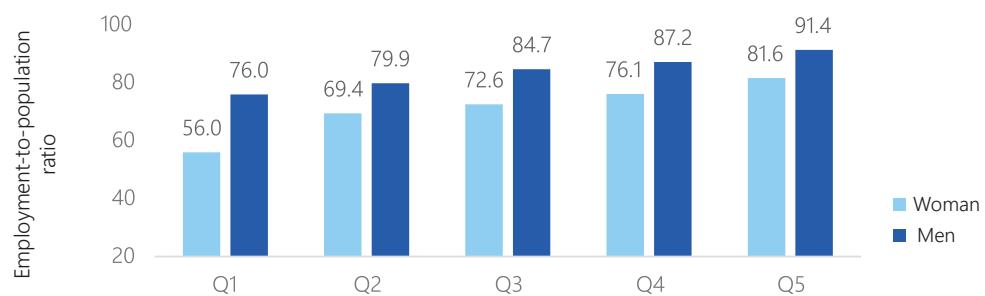
Note: Quintiles of per-adult equivalent consumption are shown. Q1= poorest quintile; Q5 = richest quintile. This shows employment in the past 12 months at time of survey.
Source: Data from the NSO 2022 HSES.

55. The dynamics of female labor force participation in Mongolia exhibit age-related patterns that diverge significantly from those observed among men. Gender disparities in labor force participation emerge at an early age, largely due to higher rates of tertiary enrollment among women. In 2022, 34.8 percent of female youth were in the labor force compared to 52.2 percent of male youth (figure 19). Despite this, the share of female youth not in education, employment, or training (NEET) is notably higher than for their male counterparts. Specifically, the NEET rate among female youth is 20.5 percent, whereas it is 13.9 percent among male youth. This gender gap remained largely consistent between 2019 and 2022. Furthermore, after tertiary education, many women do not transition into the labor force, or they work for several years and then leave the labor force. Many women choose to get married and temporarily stop working to start a family and care for children. Pre-retirement, the gender disparity in economic participation is thus most pronounced between the ages of 25 and 40, during typical childbearing years, with female labor force participation in this age range averaging 20.8 percentage points lower than that of men. This phenomenon leads to significant gaps in work experience for women that can make it challenging for them to rejoin the workforce or compete with men for equal pay. Women over 40 encounter numerous obstacles in securing employment due to social stigma and a lack of appropriate reskilling programs (Begzsuren, Gungaa, and Magee 2022).

Figure 19. **Main activity by age category, 2022 (percent of population)**

A. Women

B. Men
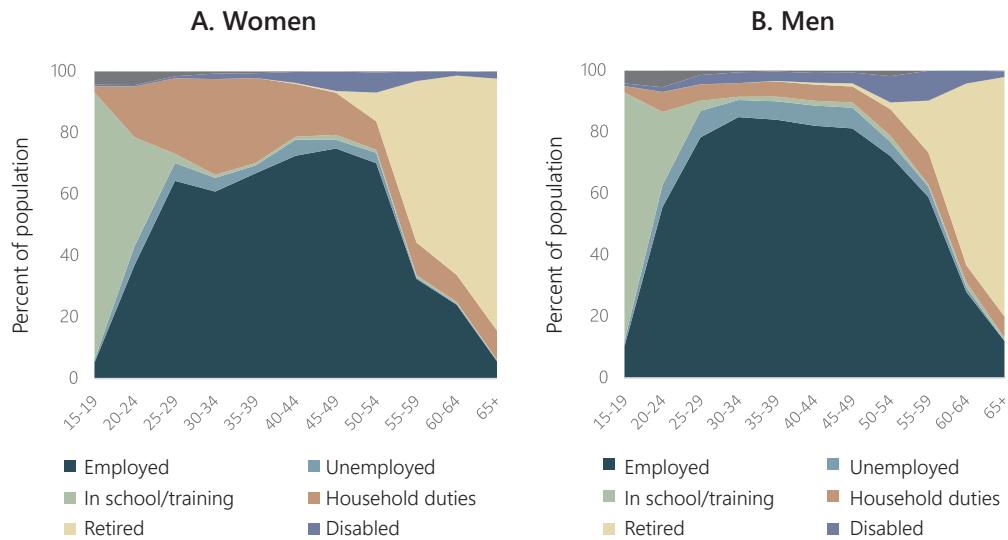
Source: Data from NSO LFS 2022.

56. Women in Mongolia shoulder a disproportionate share of caregiving and household responsibilities, presenting significant barriers to their labor force participation. Analysis shows that each additional child aged five or younger in the household is associated with a 13.1 percentage point decrease in the likelihood of a woman aged 24 to 50 being in the labor force, while having a negligible effect for men. This finding underscores the considerable barrier that childcare presents for women in comparison to men. In 2022, women in Mongolia dedicated an average of 3.5 hours per day to household chores and unpaid care work, nearly twice the amount of time men spent on these activities (figure 20). The average amount of time spent on unpaid domestic activities declined for women between 2019 and 2022, but this trend may reflect a decline after heightened household responsibilities during the COVID-19 pandemic. The gender gap in time spent on unpaid domestic and care work is even larger for households with young children. Even among the working population, women spend about 72 percent more time on domestic responsibilities than men (figure 21). This presents a double burden on working women, which can limit their ability to fully commit to their careers and pursue advancement opportunities. Caregiving responsibilities are considered one of the causes for lower female labor force participation (see Box 2).

Figure 20.	Number of hours spent on unpaid domestic and care work, 2019–2022
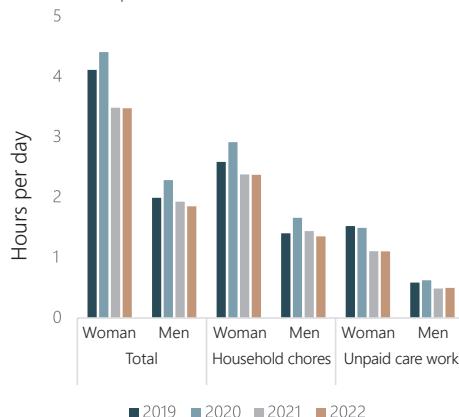
Figure 21.	Number of hours spent on unpaid domestic and care work, 2022
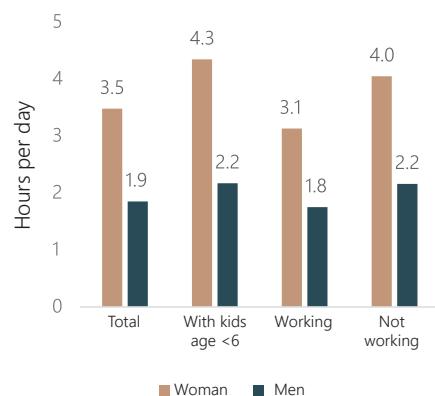
Note: Sample restricted to women aged 18 to 54.
Source: Data from the NSO LFS 2019–2022.

Box 2.	Fertility and social assistance in Mongolia

The provision of extensive social assistance targeting women and mothers in Mongolia may inadvertently act as a disincentive to female labor force participation. With cash transfers provided for various stages of motherhood, including pregnancy and raising children under the age of 3, and additional benefits for each child under 18, women are incentivized to prioritize caregiving roles over entering or remaining in the workforce. Furthermore, the retirement age for women is set at 55, five years earlier than that of men, and the pension system offers rewards for having more children. These policies collectively reinforce traditional gender roles, encouraging women to focus on familial responsibilities rather than pursue career opportunities. While further research is needed on this topic, such policies may contribute to lower labor force participation among women in addition to gender disparities in the workforce, less economic empowerment, and less old-age economic security. Efforts to address this issue may involve redesigning social assistance programs to better balance support for caregiving responsibilities with incentives for workforce participation and career advancement.

57. Between 2019 and 2022, caregiving responsibilities have put increasing pressure on women to stay at home. During this period, having a child under age five was associated with an increasingly negative effect on women's labor force participation, contrasting with a negligible effect for men (figure 22). This disparity suggests growing responsibilities for women to prioritize childcare duties, which may hinder their ability to work. Conversely, the presence of school-age children (ages 5 to 14) has minimal influence on female labor force participation, likely reflecting the intensive care needed for younger children and the availability of formal schooling options for older children that alleviate some caregiving responsibilities for women. Additionally, the sizable effects of living with a retired or disabled elderly household member on labor force participation, especially for women, underscore the significant and persistent obligations borne by women to take care of elderly members of the household across years. An aging population means that targeted measures will be needed to ensure that growing caregiving responsibilities do not disproportionately fall on women and hinder their economic participation and career advancement opportunities. Addressing these gender disparities in caregiving responsibilities is crucial to promote women's economic empowerment and narrow gender gaps in the labor market.

Figure 22. Effect of household composition on labor force participation (percentage points)
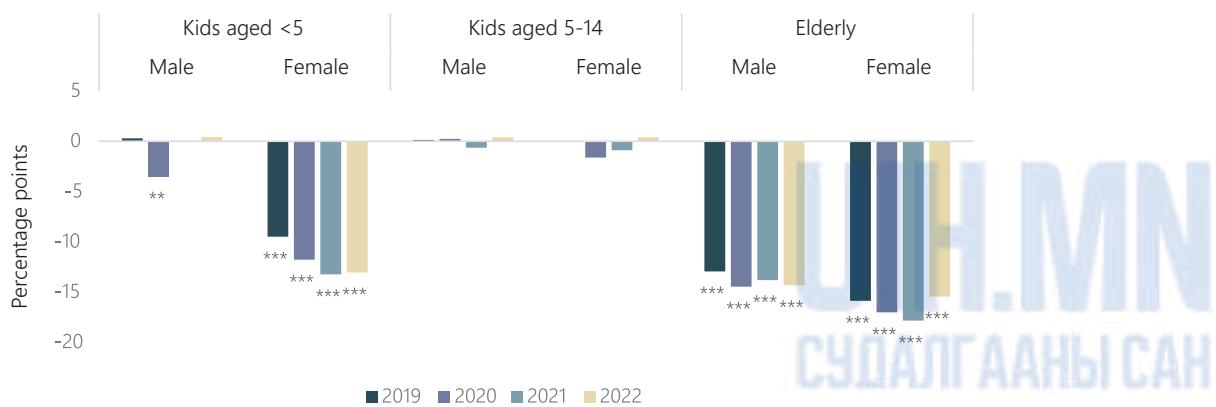
Note: Each bar represents the percentage point effect of the stated variable on labor force participation, controlling for individual characteristics and location variables. Asterisks indicate statistically significant differences from zero. Sample is restricted to individuals aged 24 to 54.
Source: Data from the NSO LFS 2019–2022.

58. In urban areas, lack of job flexibility may be a significant impediment to women's ability to effectively balance work and family responsibilities. In 2022, the female LFPR is higher in rural areas than urban areas (figure 23) due to the higher prevalence of self-employment and unpaid work-primarily in herding and agricultural activities-in rural areas. While these jobs may offer lower earnings and less security compared to formal employment, they afford women the flexibility to attend to familial responsibilities while remaining engaged in productive economic activities. Conversely, urban areas predominantly have waged jobs (75 percent), which often offer greater job security but may lack flexibility. Despite the potential benefits of telecommuting, its adoption remains limited in Mongolia, primarily due to the concentration of jobs in face-to-face service sectors such as education, health, and retail trade, as well as in physically demanding sectors such as construction, manufacturing, and mining. Furthermore, full-time jobs offering flexible work arrangements are scarce, leading many women to opt for part-time or informal employment opportunities. This highlights the pressing need for policies and initiatives that promote job flexibility and accommodate the diverse caregiving responsibilities of women in urban areas.

Figure 23. Labor force participation rate by urban/rural, 2022
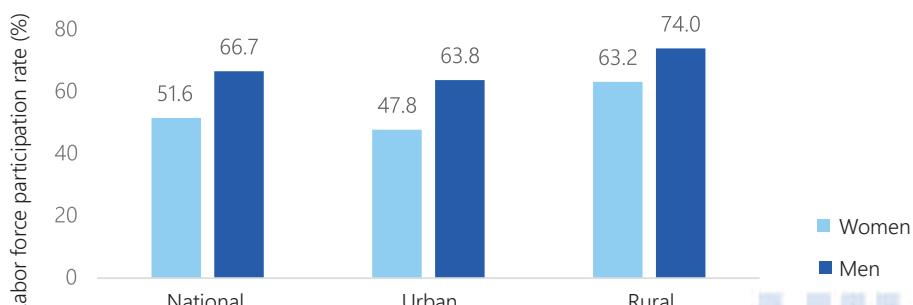
Source: Data from the NSO LFS 2022.

59. Targeted policies are needed to alleviate the caregiving responsibilities of women and facilitate their greater participation in the labor force, particularly in urban areas. While Mongolia offers subsidized childcare services for children aged two or younger, as well as for those between ages three and five, issues of accessibility, affordability, and quality persist, including the absence of national legislation on childcare for children under three. Under the Government Action Plan of 2020–2024, enhancing childcare services for children under three was identified as a priority, but the COVID-19 pandemic impeded substantive progress. Redoubling efforts to ensure a greater supply of accessible, affordable, and better-quality childcare services for young children is imperative to achieve this national agenda. Providing

financial incentives, such as tax credits or subsidies, to employers who offer on-site childcare facilities or other support for employees' caregiving needs could encourage businesses to adopt family-friendly policies and could be effective options to make daycare facilities more accessible. Creating financial incentives for small, private childcare providers and providing support for mandatory training and certification processes could also improve supply. Moreover, implementing cross-sectoral policies that support flexible work arrangements, such as telecommuting and flexible working hours, could help men and women to share caregiving responsibilities.

60. Despite recent growth in the number of kindergartens, the current supply remains inadequate to meet demand. In the 2022-2023 academic year, Mongolia had 1,386 registered kindergartens, accommodating over 260,000 children.[26] This translates into a ratio of almost 190 students per kindergarten (figure 24) and a student-teacher ratio of nearly 15 to 1. Roughly 60 percent of children aged zero to five attended kindergarten in the 2022–2023 academic year, suggesting that any increase in demand would require a greater supply of kindergartens, especially in Ulaanbaatar and aimag centers. In the countryside, the gap between the number of students attending kindergarten and the number of children aged zero to five is particularly stark, likely reflecting both supply-side issues (only 30 kindergartens exist in the countryside) and a lack of demand for kindergartens among nomadic herder households.

61. Poorer households, herders, and households living in ger districts of urban areas are less likely to send their children to kindergarten, pointing to issues of affordability and accessibility. To meet demand, the number of private kindergartens has increased in recent years. While most private kindergartens received government subsidies in 2022, costs associated with attending private institutions are still higher than those associated with attending public institutions. Based on the 2022 HSES, the average cost of sending a child to a public kindergarten was 116,000 Tog per year, while the average cost for private kindergarten was more than 15 times higher, at 1.8 million Tog per year. The average per-student costs associated with private kindergarten make up roughly 9 percent of average household consumption and 16 percent of household consumption among poor households, indicating that for many poor households, the option of sending their children to kindergarten may be impractical. Policies that improve the supply of affordable kindergartens that offer comprehensive and quality care, especially in poorer areas, and targeted initiatives to provide subsidies for poorer households could alleviate responsibilities for poorer, lower-skilled women and improve their participation in the labor force.

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[26] This does not include 27 "railway" kindergartens reported by the MES, which are kindergartens run by the railway companies.

Figure 24. Ratio of number of children aged <5 to number of kindergartens by location, 2022–2023
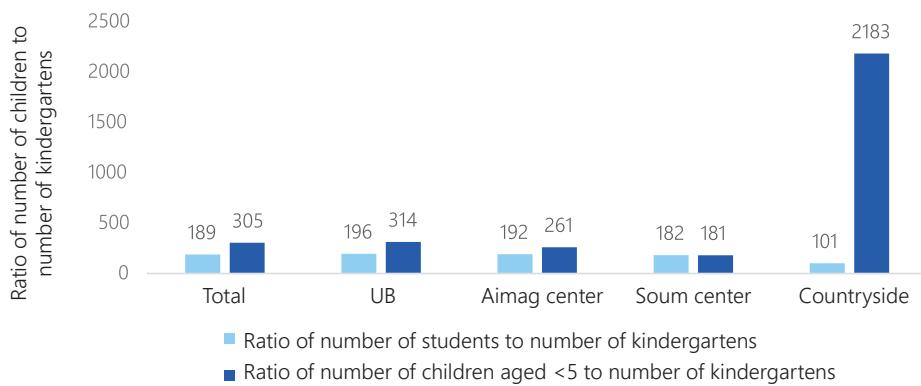
Note: Railway kindergartens are not included.
Source: Data from communication with the Ministry of Education and Science.

62. Overall, the above findings underscore the influence of entrenched social norms and gender expectations on female labor force participation. From an early age, women shoulder a disproportionate share of household chores and caregiving responsibilities, thereby limiting their opportunities for career advancement. As shown in the previous chapter, the current environment fails to address systemic biases that influence girls to overwhelmingly aspire toward low-paying service fields rather than STEM fields, potentially constraining their career prospects. Despite higher levels of education than men, women face significant barriers to working in salaried jobs or pursuing long-term career aspirations due to prevailing societal norms dictating women's roles as caregivers and homemakers and a lack of accessible and affordable childcare facilities. Women may perceive employment, especially in full-time, high-skilled jobs, as incompatible with their roles as wives and mothers, leading them to prioritize marriage and family over career advancement.

63. The persistent gender gap in the LFPR may also reflect the presence of gender-based discrimination in the labor market. While the Law on Gender Equality prohibits discrimination in the workplace based on gender, family status, pregnancy, or childcare responsibilities, in practice, discrimination persists in various aspects of employment, including hiring practices, remuneration, and the provision of paid leave (Begzsuren, Gungaa, and Magee 2022). Employers face difficulties sustaining jobs and providing social insurance to cover maternity and childcare leave, leading to a reluctance to hire and retain female workers, especially those of reproductive age. Older women beyond traditional childbearing years also often encounter

discrimination due to their perceived lack of relevant experience and skills, with a preference for younger workers prevailing in some sectors. While the government's initiative to subsidize maternity and childcare leave for firms is a step in the right direction, broader coverage and increased subsidization are essential to mitigate disincentives to hiring women.

Employment and Wages

64. Driven by higher job growth in traditionally male-dominated sectors, gender differences in sectoral participation have persisted between 2019 and 2022. In 2022, women were 20.2 percentage points more likely than men to work in services, with a high concentration of women in the education and health sectors (figure 25). On the other hand, men are more likely to work in industrial jobs, particularly in mining and construction. These differences in sectoral participation have largely remained unchanged since 2019. Between 2019 and 2022, industrial sectors such as construction and manufacturing have seen the highest job growth (figure 26). These sectors have traditionally been characterized by a high concentration of men, which may point to social barriers or gender stereotypes deterring women from entering these sectors. Given the high concentration of industrial jobs in urban areas, greater labor demand in traditionally male-dominated sectors has contributed to a wider gender gap in sectors of employment in urban areas.

Figure 25.	Sectors of employment, 2022 (percent of workers age 15+)

Source: Data from the NSO LFS 2022.
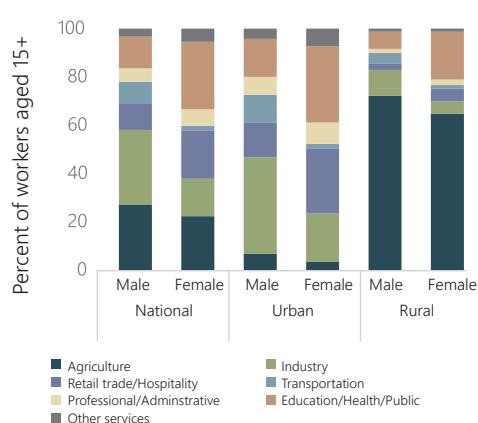
Figure 26.	Change in number of workers by sector of employment between 2019 and 2022 (thousands)
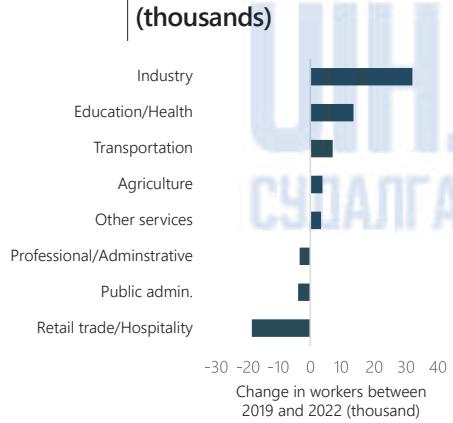
Source: Data from the NSO LFS 2019–2022.

65. Women are more likely than men to hold professional positions, but engagement in low-skill, low-wage service occupations is still high among women. In 2022, the share of workers in managerial positions was similar between men and women, but women were about 14 percentage points more likely than men to hold professional and technical positions, primarily owing to higher employment in education and health (figure 27). At the same time, women were twice as likely as men to engage in service and sales occupations, many of which are associated with lower wages. Men, on the other hand, were more than four times as likely as women to work as craft/trade workers or plant operators. These gender disparities have shown little variation in both urban and rural areas between 2019 and 2022, suggesting a persistence of occupational segregation based on gender over time. Such findings underscore the need for continued efforts to identify and address underlying structural barriers that lead to occupational segregation such as gender stereotypes that influence segregated fields of study and discriminatory hiring practices.

Figure 27. Occupation, 2022 (percent of workers aged 15+)
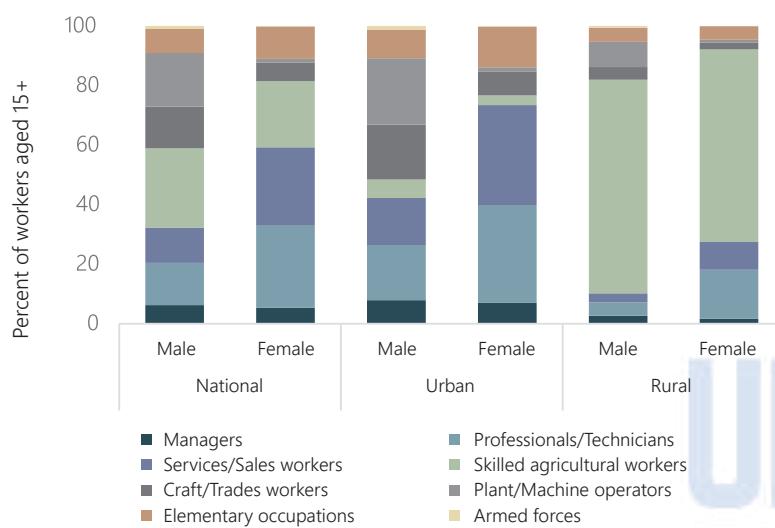
Source: Data from the NSO LFS 2022.

66. Despite higher overall rates of formal employment, women are more likely to engage in unpaid work, particularly in rural areas. Women exhibit a higher likelihood of working in formal, waged jobs, which can be attributed to their higher participation in education and health and their higher average skills compared to men (figures 28 and 29). Men, on the other hand, are more likely to be self-employed.

These differences in employment can be observed in both urban and rural areas, but in rural settings, women are also more likely than men to be engaged in unpaid work in the family business, primarily herding and farming activities: 38 percent of working women in rural areas are unpaid family workers compared to 25 percent of men. Men in rural areas are significantly more likely than women to be considered self-employed, reflecting greater decision-making power among men over household business decisions.

Figure 28.	Employment type, 2022 (percent of workers aged 15+)

Source: Data from the NSO LFS 2019–2022.
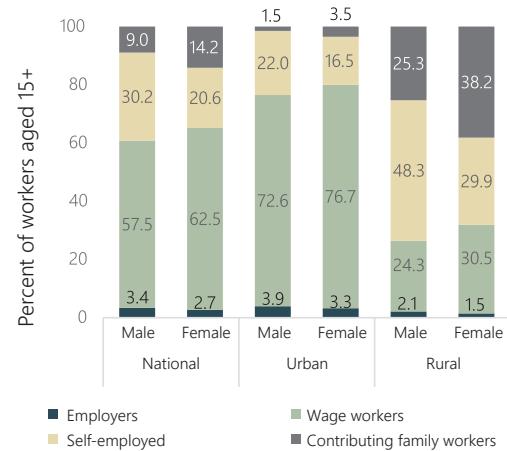
Figure 29.	Informal employment, 2022 (percent of workers aged 15+)
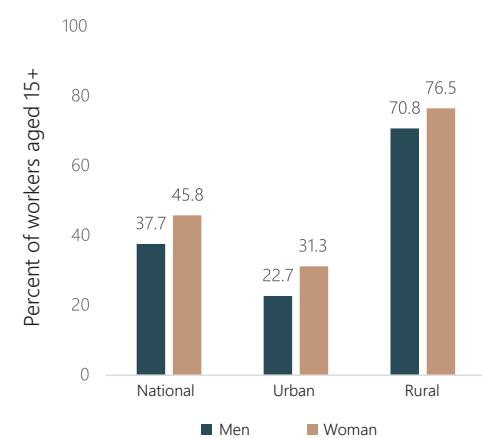
Source: Data from the NSO LFS 2019–2022.

67. Between 2019 and 2022, there has been a notable rise in the gender wage gap. In 2019, female wage workers earned approximately 19 percent less than their male counterparts, a figure which showed signs of decline in 2020 and 2021 but increased to 25 percent in 2022 (figure 30). The increase in the wage gap in 2022 can largely be explained by greater employment growth in relatively higher-paid sectors-particularly in industries-which tend to be dominated by men. This disparity in wages extended across both urban and rural areas, with rural areas experiencing a more pronounced increase in the wage gap (figure 31). However, given that over 85 percent of wage workers reside in urban areas, the national trend closely mirrors the urban trend.

Figure 30.	Average monthly wage by year and gender (in 2022 Tog)
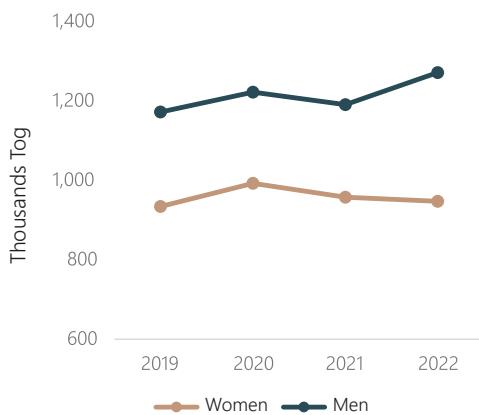
Source: Data from the NSO LFS 2019–2022.

Figure 31.	Gender wage gap by area (female monthly wages as a share of male monthly wages)
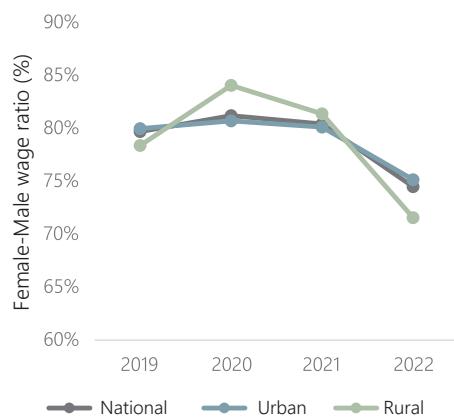
Source: Data from the NSO LFS 2019–2022.

68. The gender wage gap is larger when the fact that women with higher education are more likely to select into the labor force is taken into consideration. In Mongolia, higher educational attainment is associated with a greater likelihood that women will engage in the labor force. As shown above, various factors such as educational attainment, household welfare, and the presence of young children in the household are important determinants of whether a woman in Mongolia is in the labor force. Consequently, women who select into the labor force may be systematically different from women outside of the labor force in ways that can impact their earnings. Failing to address this selection bias would result in an underestimation of the gender wage gap. Using techniques like the Heckman correction[27] can mitigate this bias, providing a more precise estimation of the relationship between gender and wages. Applying this correction method, the gender wage gap increases from 19.8 percent to 25.1 percent.

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[27] The Heckman correction addresses selection bias by first modeling the factors influencing whether individuals are included in the workforce, such as education, experience, and other socioeconomic variables. This selection equation estimates the probability of being employed, which is then used to adjust the wage equation, ensuring that the estimated wage gap reflects the true differences in earnings between men and women, while accounting for factors that may influence employment status.

69. How much of the estimated wage gap is due to differences in characteristics between men and women in the labor force and how much is unexplained? The Oaxaca-Blinder decomposition quantifies the portion of the gender wage gap attributable to differences in observable characteristics (such as education, experience, and occupation) between men and women, as well as the unexplained portion attributable to discrimination or other factors. Applying this decomposition technique sheds light on several factors contributing to gender disparities in wages:

- **Experience:** Within the labor force, women are, on average, older and have slightly more work experience than men. This trend can be attributed to the tendency of men to enter the workforce at an earlier age, while women often join later, typically after completing tertiary education and once their children begin schooling. The gender wage gap increases from 25.1 to 25.9 percent when considering higher average levels of experience among women in the labor force (figure 32).

- **Hours worked:** Men have higher monthly wages than women, partly because they tend to work longer hours. On average, men in paid jobs work six more hours per week than women in paid jobs. Controlling for the number of hours worked in the past month thus reduces the gender wage gap from 25.9 to 22.5 percent, explaining about 13 percent of the total gender wage gap.

- **Sectoral participation:** Gender differences in sectoral participation explain an additional 36 percent of the gender wage gap, because women are more likely to go into low-paid service sectors such as health, education, and retail trade.

- **Occupation:** Controlling for occupation explains an additional 9 percent of the gap, reflecting the higher tendency of women to be employed in lower-skilled, lower-paid service occupations.

70. The remaining 40 percent of the gender wage gap remains unexplained, suggesting potential gender discrimination in the workforce. Even when accounting for factors such as education, experience, sector, and occupation, a significant portion of the wage differential between men and women remains unresolved. This unexplained gap suggests that women may face systemic biases and barriers in the labor market that result in unequal pay for equal work. Addressing this disparity requires proactive measures to challenge discriminatory practices and promote gender equity in hiring, compensation, and career advancement opportunities.

Figure 32. Oaxaca-Blinder decomposition of gender gap in monthly wages (percent), 2019–2022

Source: Authors' calculations based on the NSO LFS 2019–2022.

Entrepreneurship and Asset Ownership

71. Gender-disaggregated data on entrepreneurship and asset ownership remain limited in Mongolia. Several studies have noted a lack of gender-disaggregated data on these topics in Mongolia; however, recent reports have documented persistent gender inequalities in access to finance and asset ownership (UNDP, UN Joint Programme, and Mongolian Sustainable Finance Association 2021). While the National Statistics Office of Mongolia (NSO) produces statistics on enterprises in Mongolia based on the national business registry, gender-disaggregated data are currently not publicly available. Mandatory requirements for registered businesses to report the number of female and male employees as well as the gender of those in top management positions could help the NSO improve the availability of gender-disaggregated data related to entrepreneurship and leadership. In terms of asset ownership, the Bank of Mongolia (BoM) produces gender-disaggregated statistics on account ownership and loans; this shows that access to finance is generally high among both men and women in Mongolia, but loan sizes tend to be smaller for women (from communication with the BoM). Improved and more frequently collected gender-disaggregated statistics on the ownership of assets such as immovable property, access to finance, and entrepreneurship are crucial to monitor progress toward gender equality in this area.

72. Available data suggest that female entrepreneurial engagement beyond the agricultural domain remains low. In 2022, only about one-fifth of female workers were self-employed, with more than 40 percent of these engaged in agricultural activities, primarily herding. Data from the World Bank Enterprise Surveys[28] corroborate low female entrepreneurial engagement, showing that despite slight improvements

between 2013 and 2019, most private sector firms continue to be dominated by men in both management and employment roles.[29] In 2019, around 39 percent of firms were either managed or owned[30] by women, a slight increase from 32 percent in 2013. Furthermore, a clear divide exists between male- and female-led firms, with women more likely to lead businesses in the retail and hospitality sectors and men more prevalent in construction and ICT.

73. Women-led firms encounter greater barriers in business operations. Compared to male-run firms, female-run firms are 10 percent more likely to be considered a micro or small-sized enterprise. Even after accounting for firm size, women-led firms are 24 percent more likely than those led by men to cater toward local markets rather than national or international ones. Moreover, access to finance poses a more significant barrier to women than men: in 2019, almost a fifth of women-led firms reported that access to finance was a severe obstacle to business operations, compared to less than 2 percent of male-led firms (figure 33). Data from the Enterprise Surveys also shows that while women-led firms were more likely to apply for loans, they were also more likely to be rejected compared to firms led by men.

Figure 33.	Extent access to finance is an obstacle to business operations, 2019 (percent of firms)
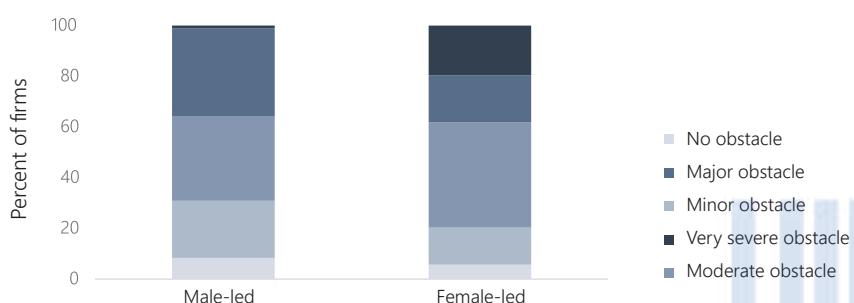
Source: World Bank Enterprise Survey 2019.

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[28] The World Bank Enterprise Surveys collect comprehensive data from private sector firms across various countries to assess the business environment and its impact on firm performance. These surveys cover a wide range of topics, including finance, infrastructure, competition, and workforce, providing valuable insights for policy makers and researchers to promote economic growth and development. In Mongolia, the Enterprise Surveys were conducted in 2013, 2019, 2020, and 2021. The 2020 and 2021 surveys featured special surveys that aimed to assess the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on firms.
[29] World Bank Enterprise Surveys (Mongolia 2019), World Bank Group, Washington, DC (accessed June 17, 2024), https://www.enterprisesurveys.org/en/data/exploreeconomies/2019/mongolia.
[30] In the case of firms with multiple owners, the firm was considered female-owned if half or more of the owners were women.

74. Promoting entrepreneurship may be an effective way to increase female labor force participation by offering women opportunities for economic independence and empowerment, as well as flexibility to balance work and family obligations. Entrepreneurship fosters skill development, leadership capabilities, and access to networks, enabling women to navigate the business landscape more effectively. Small-scale ventures like microenterprises often operate in local or niche markets, which can make them accessible to women-especially low-skilled or poor women-who may face barriers to entering formal employment. Improving entrepreneurial opportunities, especially in the presence of ingrained social norms surrounding women's roles as caregivers and homemakers, could thus be a promising policy option to bolster female labor force participation. While there have been targeted efforts to improve female entrepreneurship in the country, more widespread and comprehensive initiatives are needed to address the barriers that female entrepreneurs in Mongolia face, including ensuring that women have access to affordable financing, training programs on business management and financial literacy, capital, and markets, as well as support networks.

CHAPTER IV. LEADERSHIP: ENGAGING WOMEN AS LEADERS

75. With regard to leadership and decision-making, although women are employed in high rates in public administration, they do not yet have a strong voice in political or policy-making processes. Under Article 7 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), State Parties must take all appropriate measures to ensure that women have equal rights and opportunities to participate in the formulation and implementation of government policy. Women should be able to hold public office and perform all public functions at all levels of government on equal terms with men. As of 2023, women held 13 out of 76 seats in Parliament, which is only 17 percent of the total seats, well below the regional average (22.1 percent) and the critical mass (30 percent) needed in legislative assemblies to be able to exert a meaningful influence (de Silva de Alwis, 2023) (figure 34). Nonetheless, the results of the 2016 and 2020 elections are the highest number of seats for women since the first democratic election in 1992 (compared with 3 seats out of 76 in both 1992 and 2008). To date the highest position a woman has held is acting prime minister for eight days. As for the presidency, there were no female candidates in the 2017 or 2021 presidential campaigns.

76. Women in Mongolia form 51 percent of the electorate and actively participate in elections, but their political decision-making remains underrepresented. Women remain absent from top political offices both at the national and subnational levels (UNDP nd). According to UNDP's Gender Social Norms Index, half of Mongolia's population perceives men as better political leaders; 52 percent of male and 44 percent of female respondents either "agree" or "strongly agree" with this statement (UNDP 2023). Women also remain underrepresented in civil service leadership roles and in the private sector as mid-level managers: women only constitute 30 percent of mid-level managers and 15 percent of managers in high-level positions (UNDP 2016). In the sub-index of Political Empowerment, Mongolia is ranked 120 (0.104 on a scale of 0–1), which is similar to Ghana and Niger but places it among countries with the lowest gender parity (WEF 2024). Women's political participation has been consistently low, meaning that political empowerment has not seen much improvement.

77. Women's representation in public services is especially low where gender quotas and balance are mandated. According to an assessment made by GIZ (2020), no woman has ever been appointed as Governor of Ulaanbaatar City, Chairperson of the City Council, or Head of the Governor's Office. In recent years, only one woman has served as Deputy Governor of Ulaanbaatar City. Women also account for only 17.6 percent of heads of divisions and units at the Ulaanbaatar City Governor's Office, falling short of the quota. Otherwise, the two women serving as District Governors fulfill the 20 percent quota. Also, women make up 43.2 percent of heads of divisions and units at District Governor's Offices, meeting the required quota. In public service management, women constitute 28 percent at the city level and 78 percent at the district level (GIZ 2020). This indicates that men predominantly occupy higher-level positions at the city level, while a significant number of women are employed at the district level and are more often found in lower-level roles.

78. The low number of women at the decision-making level also displays the limitations of women's voice and agency. The underrepresentation of women in the political sphere can be attributed to the existence of a considerable gender bias. At the core of the issue is that social norms and traditional views keep women from actively seeking political power. While there are no laws discriminating against women, senior official positions are male dominated. Importantly, the underrepresentation of women in executive positions within traditionally female-dominated sectors such as education and health care highlight the persistent issue of gender bias in leadership (Figure 35).

Figure 34.	Seats held by women in national parliaments (percent, female)
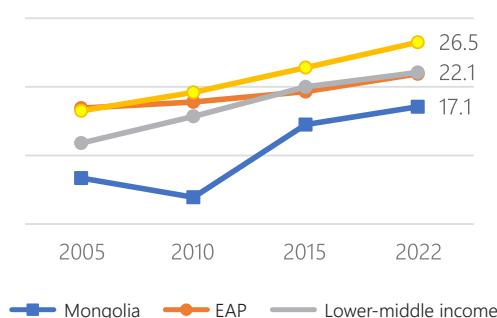
Source: World Bank Gender Data Portal.

Figure 35.	Citizen representative khurals (percent)
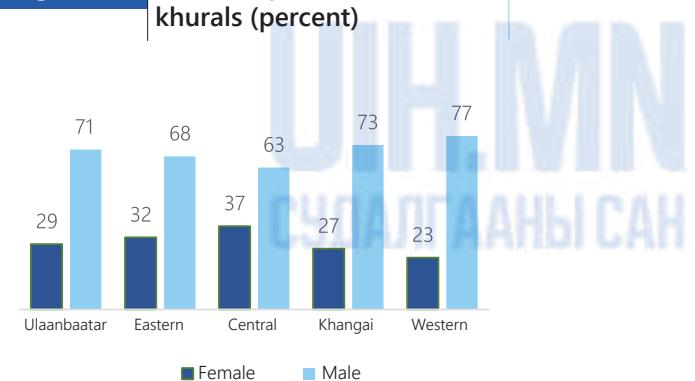
Source: NSO 2022.

79. Overall, progress has been made but it has been slow, and the share of women in politics has improved only through quota measures. During communist times, women had a higher share of seats (up to 24 percent). While women's share in Parliament initially dropped after democratization, quota systems have played a crucial role in their recent rise to 17 percent, which is the highest level achieved under democratic rule. Efforts to increase women's representation in Parliament through quotas went through continuous twists and pushbacks: a proposed 30 percent quota in 2005 met opposition and was withdrawn, a lower 20 percent quota in 2011 succeeded and led to a slight increase in women parliamentarians. In 2015, a 30 percent quota was introduced again just to be changed back to 20 percent on the eve of the 2016 election. Recent legal reforms, as of July 2023, have once again increased the quota for women on the party candidate list from 20 percent to 30 percent for the 2024 parliamentary election and aim to increase it to 40 percent for the following election in 2028[31]

80. Nonetheless, such steps are not enough to ensure that women constitute at least a "critical mass" of 30 to 40 percent of seats. The publicly announced goals for expanding the Parliament have not included enhancing female representation by introducing gender quotas for members of Parliament. In general, women candidates face numerous challenges when they need to mobilize support, from traditional views of "men as leaders and women as followers" to limited economic resources. Altogether, this has led to considerable electoral disadvantages for women, since the majoritarian electoral system with large electoral districts required mobilizing considerable funds for campaigns. The recently introduced mixed electoral system for the 2024 Parliament elections will have 78 members of Parliament elected by majoritarian representation and 48 members by proportional representation (Oyunsan 2023). Moreover, it will have 13 constituencies, which considerably increases the size of the electoral district. This is a particularly relevant issue as in past elections (1992 and 2008) large electoral districts and no quotas led to the historically lowest number of women parliamentarians.

81. Large electoral districts tend to disadvantage the electoral chances of women, smaller parties, and independent candidates who have limited resources for campaigning. It will only be seen after the 2024 election if the promised candidate quota

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[31] This paragraph is based on information from the background paper developed by the consultants who worked on this project. It also draws on information available through the website of the General Election Committee of Mongolia, https://m-election.mn/en/home (accessed on June 18, 2024). It should be noted that the Law on the Promotion of Gender Equality and Law on Political Parties do not set a seat reservation quota. The Parliamentary Election Law (Article 8.2.3) contains a candidates' quota (candidates of any gender representation should not be less than 30 percent); Article 30.6 of the same law notes that parties or coalitions will nominate placed candidates based on the order of 1:1 gender.

of 30 percent women will compensate for these disadvantages. Despite this, it is important to note that such measures would most likely benefit candidates with access to the major party's platform (network and resources), with its well-established organizational structure and the financial resources needed to compete in enlarged districts.

Table 2. **Women's representation in Parliament**

Elections	Electoral System	Number of Constituencies	Number of Seats	Women MPs	Candidate Quota
2024	Mixed (Majoritarian and Proportional)	13	78 + 48		30%
2020	Majoritarian	29	76	13	20%
2016	Majoritarian	76	76	13	20%
2012	Mixed (Majoritarian and Proportional)	26 + 1	48 + 28	10	20%
2008	Majoritarian	26	76	3	
2004	Majoritarian	76	76	5	
2000	Majoritarian	76	76	8	
1996	Majoritarian	76	76	9	
1992	Majoritarian	26	76	3	

82. Due to existing data limitations, assessment of local elections is difficult. Researchers with access to the data concluded that for most of the local elections, data quality was so poor that they could only assess the 2000, 2004, 2016, and 2020 local elections (The Asia Foundation 2023). Their main findings were that local elections followed patterns similar to the parliamentary elections, but with a lower voter turnout and less transparency. Moreover, despite limited data, they could identify that a strong membership with the Mongolian People's Party was a major advantage in local elections. Most likely due to data limitations, the analysis was not disaggregated by gender. (The Asia Foundation 2023).

83. Despite underrepresentation in politics, public opinion in Mongolia leans toward gender equality in political participation. In the 2023 Politbarometer survey,[32] 82.9 percent disagreed with the statement that women should care for the

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[32] The Politbarometer survey is carried out by the Saint Maral Foundation. The 2023 survey is at https://www.santmaral.org/_files/ugd/915e91_658ad78e7b8e469d828b49a2c359e494.pdf.

household and leave politics to men. Moreover, an overwhelming majority considered gender equality to be "important" or "very important" (92.9 percent). An earlier survey in 2020[33] revealed that for nearly a half of respondents, a candidate's gender did not make a difference in their vote, and nearly a third expressed they were more likely to choose a woman over an equally qualified man. Respondents in rural areas and men were slightly less likely to choose a woman.

Figure 36.	Attitudes toward electing male versus female candidate for a political post

EL4. If it happens to you during elections to choose between two candidates: a man and a woman, and if both have equal qualities, what will be a chance that you will vote for the woman?
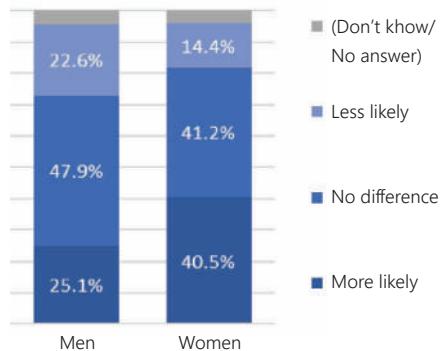
EL4. If it happens to you during elections to choose between two candidates: a man and a woman, and if both have equal qualities, what will be a chance that you will vote for the woman?
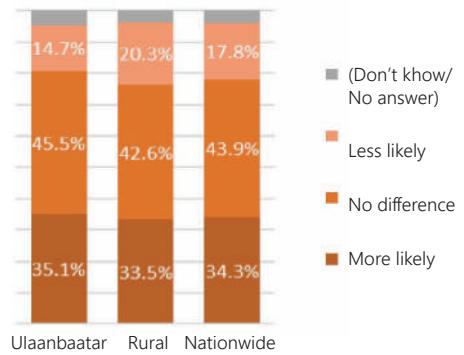
Source: Data from the Sant Maral Foundation 2020 Politbarometer survey.

[33] The Politbarometer survey is carried out by the Saint Maral Foundation. The 2020 survey is at https://www.santmaral.org/_files/ugd/915e91_baa833e8e28b445a95be85a1f8a86c67.pdf.

CHAPTER V. GENDER AND CLIMATE

84. Globally, climate change is acknowledged to be causing impacts that are gender sensitive. Preexisting gender inequalities are often drivers of the differing gendered impacts of climate change. A meta-analysis of reports on climate-related disasters in 141 countries found that gender differences in death rates were directly linked to women's economic and social rights. In societies where women and men enjoyed equal rights, there were no significant sex differences in the number of deaths (Neumayer and Plümper 2007). Across the world, socioeconomic, educational, and labor market disparities impact the degree to which men and women are able to adapt to climate-induced shocks. However, these drivers are often not well understood due to the scarcity of relevant gender-disaggregated quantitative and qualitative data.

85. Goal 5 of Mongolia's Strategic Plan for Promoting Gender Equality (SPPGE) 2022–2031 is to promote gender equality in national climate change mitigation and adaptation processes. The Plan outlines three objectives under this Goal: (i) Mainstream gender in climate change mitigation and adaptation policies, planning, and actions; (ii) Ensure gender equality in environmental conservation, foster sustainable consumption, and increase decent green jobs; and (iii) Improve the capacities of women, men, and social groups to participate in climate change mitigation processes. Together, these objectives are linked to a total of 27 specific activities and targets under the responsibility of 12 ministries and two specialized agencies. They are also meant to be supported by NGOs and local governments. Other objectives in the action plan are also closely linked to addressing climate-induced gender vulnerabilities, such as the fourth objective under Goal 1 which calls for improving lives and livelihoods of women and girls in rural areas.

86. The implementation of gender commitments specific to climate change is constrained by the fact that Mongolia is still in the process of developing core legislation and policies on climate change. The Climate Change Law is under preparation. Although some core policies and programs have been adopted, sector-specific mitigation and adaptation programs with concrete targets are yet to be developed and budgeted. If gender is to be mainstreamed effectively in this process of evolving the climate change legal and policy framework, it will be important to understand and better define sector-specific gender gaps and tailored measures to

ensure that programs and activities can meaningfully address the gender-differentiated impacts of climate change and disasters.

87. A 2022 ADB research study presents a comprehensive analysis of climate change and disaster resilience laws, policies, and institutions in Mongolia from a gender lens (ADB 2022). The ADB (2022) study finds that Mongolia's climate and disaster policies mostly lack differentiated actions and targets to ensure equitable outcomes for women and men and need to be further developed. Two notable exceptions are: (i) the National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC), which is classified as gender sensitive due to its mention of gender equality as an implementation principle and its reference to promoting the participation of women in international and regional activities related to climate change; and (ii) the Environmental Sector Gender Strategy 2014-2030, which directly promotes strengthening women's resilience. The ADB (2022) study also concludes that without systematic data collection on gender-sensitive impacts of climate change and disasters, these policies and action plans are likely to remain aspirational and not make substantive differences in enhancing the resilience of women or expanding opportunities for them as part of climate mitigation policies.

88. As the above study suggests, there is a need to better understand the scope and nature of gender vulnerabilities related to climate change in Mongolia in order to inform climate policy. A limited number of qualitative studies have explored links between gender and climate. For example, a study on gender and water in Mongolia indicates that men's and women's responsibilities for water collection are much more equitably shared compared to data from other parts of the world where that work is mostly performed by women and girls (Hawkins and Seager 2010).[34] Regarding energy and heating, ADB (2022) analysis shows that women in rural and ger areas are traditionally responsible for the upkeep of fire, which can be a time-consuming daily task and also results in being more exposed to air pollution from coal burning stoves. Women are often affected disproportionately by power outages and scarce heating supplies as they need to either find alternative energy sources or spend extra time to complete basic household chores. Both studies show that while women primarily make household decisions related to water and heating, they are poorly represented in public decision-making regarding either energy or water resource management. In 2023, the NCGE in collaboration with development partners initiated a study on challenges for herder women-a group which is the most directly impacted by the changing climate and severe weather events-to further refine activities and targets to improve the situation of women and girls in rural areas.

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[34] This study is based on fieldwork in rural and informal ger areas in Ulaanbaatar and Omnigobi aimag.

89. This chapter aims to contribute to the analysis of gender and climate considerations in Mongolia and to advance policy recommendations in two areas: (i) improving evidence of climate and gender vulnerabilities; and (ii) expanding benefits and opportunities for women in the transition to a green economy, in order to support gender-responsive climate change policy in the country. The chapter is based on review of existing literature and on primary qualitative research among women and men (migrants and reverse migrants) in informal ger areas of Ulaanbaatar and rural and peri-urban areas of Uvurkhangai aimag, conducted in January and February of 2024.

Evidence of Climate and Gender Vulnerabilities

90. Climate change, internal migration, and gender issues are tightly interlinked in the Mongolian context. In Mongolia, rural residents, particularly those reliant on a traditional herding lifestyle, and urban residents in informal ger settlements experiencing the impacts from climate change the most intensely and have the lowest abilities to cope. Research exploring migration and population data at provincial and district levels between 1992–2018 find that there is a correlation between extreme winter events and sizable permanent out-migration from affected provinces for up to two years after an event, and that pastoralist households are most affected by these events (Roeckert and Kraehnert 2022). Ulaanbaatar grew from 650,000 in 1998 to over 1.6 million in 2023, and now hosts almost half of the country's population. The concentration of migrants from rural areas in Ulaanbaatar brings a new set of challenges with possible cross-generational impacts. Migrants are often left out of public services, which can exacerbate cyclical poverty. Exclusion from health systems can result in conditions left untreated for months and leave mothers with unsafe and unsanitary childbirth conditions (Kapoor et al. 2021). Box 3 highlights some of the key issues related to climate change impacts, migration, and gender sensitivities.

Box 3.   Gender vulnerabilities related to climate change and migration

Climate change and severe weather events are contributing to the erosion of rural livelihoods, accelerating urban migration, straining urban resources, and concentrating poverty in urban areas (ADB and World Bank, 2021; Kapoor et al. 2021). Though just under one-third of Mongolians still live a traditional nomadic lifestyle dependent on livestock, shocks from climate change have prompted a rural exodus and accelerated urban migration in search of new opportunities (Kingsley 2017; Save The Children, 2023).

Urban migrants settle in ger districts, which are peri-urban areas characterized by plots of land unconnected to services, inadequate and mostly unpaved road networks, and a severe lack of social and economic facilities or basic infrastructure (Begzsuren and Joffre 2018).

New migrants to Ulaanbaatar and secondary cities face employment uncertainty and risks of labor exploitation (ILO 2013; IOM and IRIM 2022). Both male and female internal migrants report some level of discrimination when job searching in Ulaanbaatar (Schmillen and Sandig 2018). Mongolians engaged in construction and street-based vending are prone to heat-related health impacts, and as a result they face declining livelihoods and lower incomes (Kapoor et al. 2021). Households in ger districts struggle to access an acceptable supply of water, and the water's quality is estimated to be between four to five times lower than the accepted sanitary norms (Kapoor et al. 2021). While the share of people living in poverty is higher in rural than urban areas, a higher number of Mongolians living in poverty reside in urban areas, and urban areas exhibit higher inequality (World Bank 2023). By 2020, half of the country's population resided in Ulaanbaatar (IOM and IRIM 2022). Efforts to slow the rate of rural to urban migration, through migration bans implemented between 2017 and 2020, were found to increase the vulnerabilities of urban migrants (IOM and IRIM 2022).

Women and children are often the most sensitive to changes in household welfare that may accompany migration. Changes in housing conditions and welfare have secondary effects on undernutrition, disruption to health care access, and increased exposure to indoor air pollution from heating (Kapoor et al. 2021). Coal continues to play a central role in energy production in Mongolia and accounted for 70 percent of the total energy supply in 2017 (Chepelianskaia and Sarkar-Swaisgood 2022). That same year, over 80 percent of electricity was generated in coal-fired power plants, while renewable energy accounted for only a 3 percent share (Chepelianskaia and Sarkar-Swaisgood 2022). Though cities throughout Mongolia have long relied on coal-fired power plants and coal for heating, as climate change produces harsher and longer winters, households in informal urban settlements burn more coal to keep warm. This increases children's exposure to pollutants that affect their development. A recent study, for example, finds a direct link between urban pollution and low birth weight in Mongolia (Dorj et al. 2014; Kapoor et al. 2021). Pneumonia is the second leading cause of childhood mortality, and children also suffer frequently from bronchitis and asthma. Children living in the most polluted center of Ulaanbaatar were found to have lung function 40 percent lower than children in rural areas (Kapoor et al. 2021). These health burdens force children to miss critical learning and other development opportunities, with long-term impacts on their economic welfare.

Lifestyle changes associated with urbanization impact health. The shifting livelihood of pastoralists reduces access to and reliance on traditional diets and activity, which has fueled obesity particularly in urban and peri-urban areas. Also, climate-induced shocks and their link to poverty means that these households are instead reliant on markets for food and are more likely to purchase, as a result of budget constraints, low-quality, highly processed foods that are high in fat, sugar, and salt (Kapoor et al. 2021).

91. Qualitative research conducted for this study shows that respondents had limited information about climate change. In most cases, the respondent's understanding of climate change was limited to local extreme weather phenomena. Overall, most participants did not believe that climate change affects genders differently. A number considered the effects of climate as mainly relevant to those whose livelihood depends on the weather and nature, such as herders and farmers. Since those sectors largely depend on men's physical outdoor labor, the participants believed that men engaged in herding and farming were most impacted by climate change. Gender differences that respondents could directly describe mainly had to do with women's and men's physical ability to withstand harsh weather conditions.

92. The qualitative research conducted as part of this gender assessment suggests that women are the main decision-makers in the household regarding migration. On the one hand, this is a sign of resilience as women are more likely to transition away from herding and look for jobs in the city, while rural men's livelihoods are more tightly linked to herding. On the other hand, it presents new type of challenges for women, as they continue to earn lower wages when they do transition to urban employment and are exposed to additional health and social risks, as noted in the box above.

93. For most of the respondents, climate change is not explicitly seen as a reason to migrate, although they highlight severe weather events and related economic factors as some of the factors driving migration. For the majority, the underdevelopment of rural areas (lack of good health care, schools, universities, and jobs) was the main push factor for migration. They see Ulaanbaatar as offering better job opportunities, food choices, and access to education and medical services, while in rural areas there is limited employment, poor health care services, and a limited market. Indebtedness is often mentioned as a reason to migrate, particularly for herders.[35]

> FGD 13: "In general, expenses exceed income. With the profit from the sale of animals, we usually buy bran and prepare it for our animals. In the spring, cashmere brings income. During the Lunar New Year, we typically pledge our spring cash and take a [new] loan."

> KII 6: "Being a herder is not easy. Cashmere brings a slight profit in the spring. We can't sell animals' meat at a high price . . . . Since I don't always have cash

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[35] FGD participants described taking different types of loans: herders' loans, female entrepreneurs' loans, pension loans, payday loans for housing and tuition, car loans, mortgage loans, mobile application loans, World Vision loans, local store loans, salary loans, and business loans.

on hand, I borrow money from the bank, flour from the shop, and medication from the pharmacy when I am sick. I spent four seasons living between loans. Occasionally, we would pay off one obligation with another debt if one or two animals were sold. I prepared bread and other baked products, sewed garments, and borrowed an oven while I was in the center of the soum."

94. The decision to migrate is often related to choices around children's schooling and is perceived to be linked to a number of interrelated social and family dynamics. Most commonly, the participants described situations in which a husband is herding and a wife with children stays in the settled areas because of the children's school. Usually, the husband lives in the bagh to take care of the animals, while the wife lives in the soum to send the children to school for most of the school year. Some participants even linked this family arrangement to increasing cases of divorce. Others noted that the trend of sending daughters to study left the men behind, and since women don't want a man less educated than them, they don't want a young herder as a spouse. In some cases, families may decide to permanently migrate to the city and abandon a herding lifestyle in order to keep the family together.

> FGD 10: "My husband takes care of the livestock while I am looking after my three children and sending them to school. And thus, we get separated. My husband goes to seasonal work in April and comes back in December. So, then at home I am a woman and a man if I go outside [doing a man's job]. So, it seems easier to be in the city. I want to work and live abroad, but it is difficult because my children are young."

> FGD 13: "Climate change has a severe impact on the economy of herding families and the internal relationship of families, which in turn affects the divorce rate of young families. It is more and more common for women to leave their husbands and settle in centers."

95. Among the interviewed reverse migrants, the choice to return to the countryside was mainly justified by the high cost of living in Ulaanbaatar, traffic congestion, and health considerations. Participants who returned from Ulaanbaatar described problems with children getting ill from the smoke, a lack of available places in kindergartens, and-due to a lack of city registration-the inability to treat their children in public hospitals. Participants also noted that the cost of living in Ulaanbaatar is higher than in rural areas, so they were priced out. Many mentioned heavy traffic and safety issues. Registration problems repeatedly came up as a challenge in settling in Ulaanbaatar. Respondents also mentioned competition in the city and the fact that they lacked skills to get a good job. Some participants considered that returning to

life in the rural area would be good for their children's upbringing, teaching them to become more independent. The 3 percent mortgage rate offered in the province was also cited as a reason for their relocation, allowing families to have savings, which was impossible in Ulaanbaatar.

96. Overall, participants in our qualitative study demonstrated a limited understanding of climate change and were not easily able to identify gender-differentiated impacts of climate change. When comparing men's and women's responses, men-especially herders-were more aware of the links between severe weather events, environmental factors, and the economic challenges faced by their household. This is consistent with survey data conducted as part of a 2018 Politbarometer survey,[36] which shows that men in Mongolia are more likely to link climate change to environmental concerns such as air pollution, extreme weather events, drought, and water scarcity (figure 37).

| Figure 37. | Views of men and women on climate change impacts on selected social and environmental phenomena |

Percent of those who believe the environment has a very stong impact on:
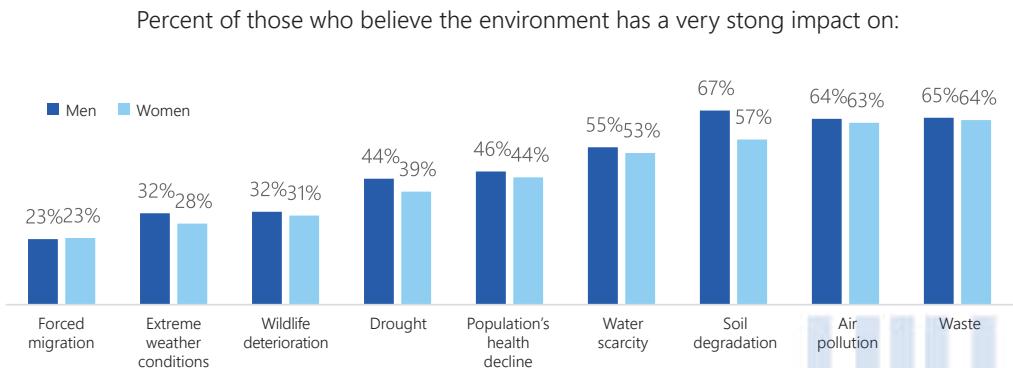
Source: Data from the Sant Maral Foundation 2018 Politbarometer survey.

Expanding Benefits for Women in the Transition to a Green Economy

97. Meaningful consideration of the social dimensions of climate change in policy and legislation will require the participation of vulnerable groups, and representing the perspectives of women and youth in political and economic participation. Meaningful engagement of women, youth and vulnerable groups in climate change in policy and legislation will be key to ensure that climate policies integrate their concerns and needs. As such, expanding the participation of women in leadership and decision-making at the national and subnational levels will be important for improving inclusion in climate policy and expanding the potential benefits for women in a "just transition" to low-carbon development.

98. In Mongolia, women may benefit from opportunities in transitions in sectors such as energy and mining, agriculture, tourism, digital services, and environmental management. Ongoing challenges with a shortage of specific skills and the general mismatch of demand and supply of skills in Mongolia presents an opportunity moving forward, particularly in the context of a just transition (Gassmann, François, and Trindade 2015). The strong gender segregation by sector in Mongolia means that different approaches will be required to support men and women in adapting to the economic impacts of climate change, ensuring they are not left behind, and enabling their participation in greener economic activities.

99. The changing nature of work in energy and extractive industries points to significant potential gains in new and more inclusive job opportunities. There is a growing trend of women's employment in the mining sector, largely attributed to disruptive technologies that are changing the nature of the work. A global study on women in the mining workforce finds that technological advances (greater automation of work making the jobs less dependent on physical strength) combined with more progressive labor policies (flexible and safer workspaces) are contributing to a growing involvement of women in the mining and extractive industries sectors (Ramdoo et al. 2023).[37]

100. Mongolia is in a good position to take advantage of this opportunity for higher-value female employment. Women's representation in the mining sector at 4.2 percent is the highest among the comparator countries covered in the IISD and IGF study (Ramdoo et al. 2023). Mongolia also stands out with good representation of women in STEM. As detailed earlier, women in Mongolia comprise over half of

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[37] This report covers data from 12 countries: Mongolia, Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Brazil, Canada, Sweden, Australia, Ghana, Peru, South Africa, and Zambia.

graduates from natural sciences, mathematics, and statistics; nearly a third of graduates from engineering, manufacturing and design; and a similar percent in ICT. A deliberate collaboration between the Ministry of Mining and Heavy Industry (MMHI), the MES, and universities is working to develop and implement human resource policies that focus on training engineering professionals and increasing women's participation in the mining sector in line with the government's gender strategy (Ramdoo et al. 2023).

101. However, existing gender barriers, often driven by social norms and expectations, are constraining women from benefiting from employment growth in the mining sector. For example, while 80 percent of male graduates from the Geology and Mining School of the Mongolian University of Science and Technology take jobs in the mining sector, less than 30 percent of women graduates from the same school continue to work in the sector (Ramdoo et al. 2023). The main reasons reported for choosing jobs in other sectors were that they are too young to work in the sector and perceptions from their families that mining is not appropriate for them. Women also reported that either their contracts terminated or they simply decided to leave jobs in the sector while pregnant even though the national Labor Law provides for protections in the event of pregnancy and nondiscrimination in employment (Ramdoo et al. 2023).

102. Growth in the renewable energy sector in the medium and long term could also create higher-earning employment opportunities for Mongolian women. Globally, the renewable energy sector is expected to create millions of jobs in the next few decades (World Bank forthcoming). To meet this demand, it is critical that the share of women's employment in the sector increases. For these opportunities and benefits to be equitable, it is also key that representation of women in technical and leadership positions increases. Currently, women represent 32 percent of the global workforce in renewable energy, and two out of three of these jobs are in Asia (primarily in China). In Mongolia, women represent 25 percent of the energy sector workforce. Their employment is concentrated in administrative positions and in the capital city. For example, women represent 45 percent of the workforce of the Ministry of Energy (ME), 29 percent of employees of the Ulaanbaatar Heating Network, and only 4 percent of the workforce of the National Power Transmission Grid (NPTG) (World Bank, 2024). NPTG is in the process of undertaking a gender assessment of its workforce with a view to developing a measurable action plan for improving gender diversity in the company. A World Bank (2024) report on expanding women's employment in renewable energy in the EAP region recommends seven action areas (see figure 38), including systematically collecting sex-disaggregated data in the sector; creating safe and flexible workplaces that promote women's retention; and addressing cultural norms, discrimination, and sexual harassment.

Figure 38. Expanding women's employment in renewable energy

Several measures can be implemented to EXPAND EMPLOYMENT OF WOMEN in the Renewable Energy sector

Source: World Bank. 2024

103. Transformation of the Mongolian agriculture, forestry, and land management sectors could bring particular benefits to rural women. This is an important area for climate mitigation as well as adaptation and resilience, given that women in rural areas face fewer employment options and are most directly impacted by climate change. Mongolia's SPPGE includes a set of objectives under its Goal 1 aimed at improving resilience and enhancing opportunities for rural women.[38] Still, the formulation of specific programs and activities to achieve these objectives needs to be developed, underpinned by a good understanding of the barriers faced by men and women in each of these areas.

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[38] Objective 1.4. Improve the livelihoods of rural women and girls includes the following sub-objectives: 1.4.3: Develop incubators where herder women will be trained and advised on how to use labor-saving technologies, run entrepreneurship, join cooperatives, and promote networks; 1.4.4: Develop and introduce a gender-sensitive training program for young herders' capacity building; 1.4.5: Carry out specific strategies designed to support assistant herders' livelihoods, improve their working conditions, provide them with skills training, and safeguard them from human rights abuse, gender discrimination, and violence; and 1.4.6: Introduce capacity-building consultancy services for rural women to help generate ecologically responsible tourism.

104. In the short and medium term, it will be vital to improve data and evidence of gender-specific impacts and opportunities related to climate change in key sectors when preparing tailored gender-responsive activities and targets to accompany climate change policies in those sectors. In the area of climate mitigation, it will be valuable to identify specific actions to enhance opportunities for women in renewable energy, sustainable mining, climate-smart agriculture, and environmental management given that the transformation of these sectors will be a priority in Mongolia's transition to a low-carbon economy. This is in line with objective 5.1.3 of the SPPGE: "Conduct gender impact assessment on the livestock, energy and mining industries which are the major emitters of GHGs [greenhouse gasses] and reflect findings in the pertinent policy documents." To have a stronger effect on unlocking opportunities for both women and men, policy actions in these sectors need to be accompanied by interventions in education and the labor market and by public awareness measures to address existing constraints that may continue to pose barriers to women's participation in these sectors.

105. In the area of climate adaptation and disaster risk resilience, it will be important to have a people-centered approach that follows the priorities of specific social groups. This would entail understanding choices that women and men make to cope with adverse weather conditions and the implication of these choices on families and communities as well as on economic and social welfare. Consulting with both women and men and their representative organizations could help bring more diverse perspectives into these policy actions and plans. More concretely, gender assessments could be undertaken to inform specific sector strategies-for example, in the energy, agriculture, environment, and disaster risk resilience sectors-to inform medium-term actions and the setting of gender-related targets for these sectors, which could be consistently monitored by the respective government authorities (ME, the Ministry of Food, Agriculture, and Light Industry (MOFALI), the Ministry of Environment and Tourism (MET), and the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), with NCGE as the coordinating entity).
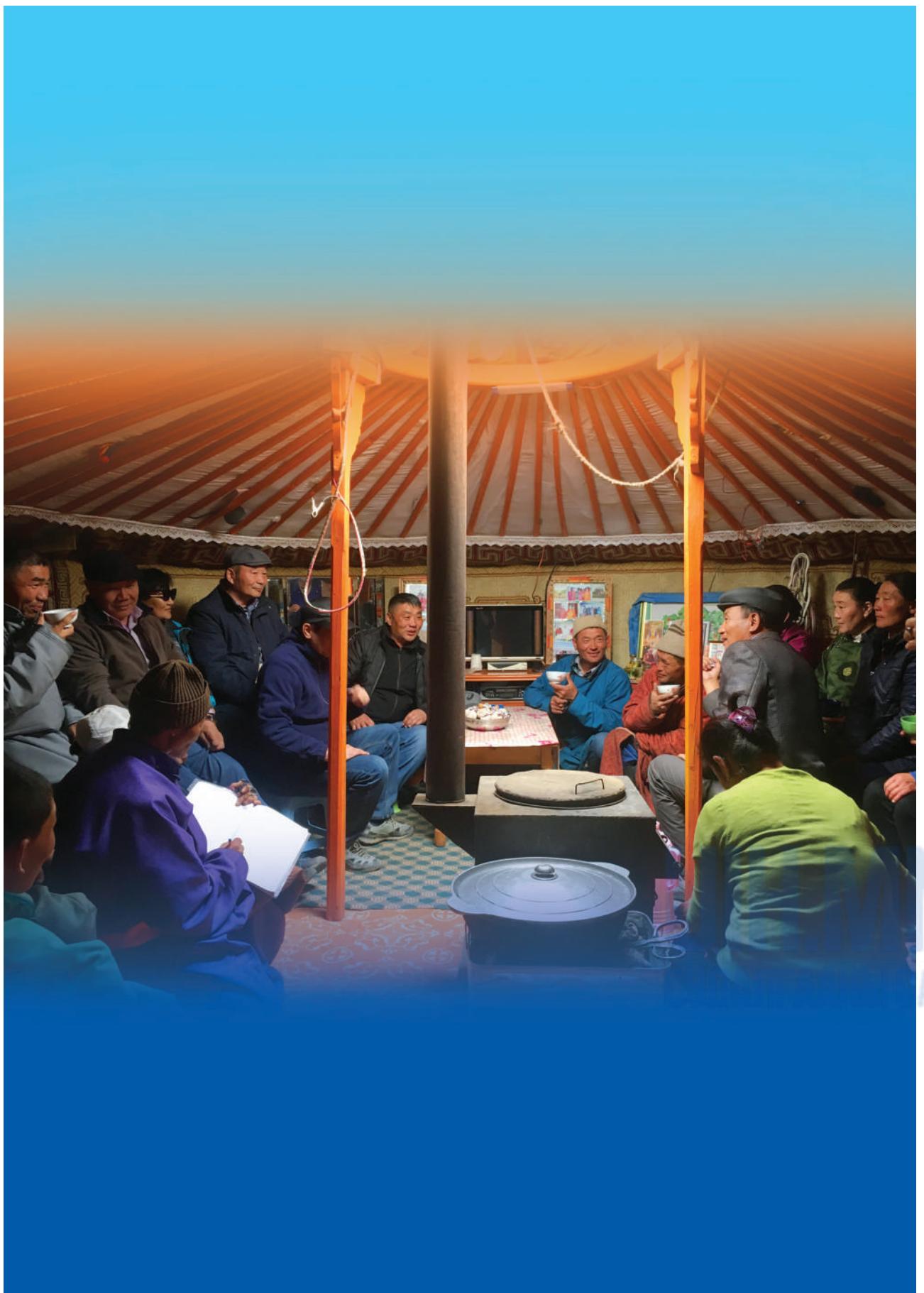
CHAPTER VI. AN INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISM FOR GENDER EQUALITY: GENDER-RESPONSIVE PLANNING AND BUDGETING

106. Gender disparities are deeply rooted and systemic, so addressing them requires a comprehensive and structured approach. One key element of such an approach is to include gender-responsive policy planning and budgeting in government operations. The premise of gender-responsive planning and budgeting is that effective gender equality programs cannot exist independently of or externally from a government's broader policy objectives and priorities; they must be connected throughout its operations.

107. Since 2020, the Mongolian government has taken steps toward integrating gender perspectives into its public finance management system. Starting from the budget preparation process for 2021, the Ministry of Finance (MOF) began preparing gender-responsive budget circulars, requesting all Budget Governors (in line ministries and aimags) to conduct gender assessments, prepare gender action plans, and collect and provide data on gendered aspects and results of their funded programs. This resulted in a detailed, nine-step GRB model (figure 39) designed to embed gender responsiveness in the budget process, from planning and formulating to implementing and reporting.

108. Since 2021, GRB circulars have been issued, and they are now an integral component of the annual budget guidelines. The GRB circulars play a crucial role in gender-responsive public finance management by mandating the inclusion and specification of gender outcomes in planned expenditures, thus ensuring that gender considerations are integrated into the budget planning process. The MOF has announced that the Gender-Responsive Budget Circular will also be released in 2024 in preparation for fiscal planning in 2025.

Figure 39.	Nine-step GRB model

Mongolian GRB Model: A comprehensive nine-step approach

Budget Planning

1 Budget Governors submit to MOF Gender Responsive Objectives within Proposed Prior- ities for Medium-Term Fiscal Statement/ Medium-Term Budget Statement

▶ **2** MOF Prepares Annual GRB Statement together with Medium Term Fiscal Statement/ Medium Term Budget Statement

▶ **3** MOF prepares Budget Circular with Guidelines how to prepare GRB Budget Proposals

Budget Formulation

4 Budget Governors pre- pare Gender Respon- sive Budget Proposal as required in Budgaet Circular and submits budget proposals offi- cially to MOF.

▶ **5** MOF prepares Con- solidated GRB Budget Proposals (Part of the Budget Documenta- tion submitted to Par- liament for discussion and adoption)

▶ **6** MOF prepares Con- solidated information on adopted Gender Responsive Proposals in the Annual Budget to the Parliament

Budget Execution and Performance Reporting

7 Budget Governors prepare Performance and Evaluation Reports, Recommendations for the next budget cycle

▶ **8** MOF prepares Annual Consolidated GRB Performance Report as a part of Annual Budget Performance Report

▶ **9** NCGE prepares the Annual GRB Progress Report, Recommenda- tions by using Con- solidated Reports for Budget Governors

■ Budget Governors   ■ Ministry of Finance (MOF)   ■ NCGE - National Committee of Gender Equality

NOTE: Gender responsive public investment, public procurement and audit will be developed as a part of GRB activities of MOF across different functions. The chart above describes core milestones within budget planning process.

Source: Figure taken from MOF n.d.

109. The consistent requirement for GRB from the MOF is expected to foster a profound understanding among institutions of the need for continuity in gender-responsive practices and also to reinforce internal efforts to meet these mandates better. This includes enhancing gender-responsive policy planning and aligning gender considerations with sector-specific policies. Consequently, while the GRB circular is only a singular aspect of a broader budget planning system, it is a crucial starting point and a solid foundation for future measures. The next immediate step for the government is to establish guidelines to report on the implementation of gender commitments from the previous year. Requirements related to GRB will need to be integrated into all budget planning stages, beginning with the annual and mid-term budgetary frameworks. Additionally, the future organic budget law[39] will need to be reinforced with provisions specific to GRB, which are needed to solidify the process

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[39] The current organic law on budget does not explicitly mention provisions for GRB or address the needs and rights of women or other groups within the budgetary framework.

and to ensure that the GRB approach is firmly institutionalized. Similarly, mandating gender-disaggregated data collection and publishing within the system through the Glass Account Law[40] could help shed light on the gender-specific impacts of budget allocations. Aligning the glass account system with Mongolia's gender equality policies and frameworks, such as the Law on Promotion of Gender Equality, would further solidify the commitment to gender equality in fiscal governance, making the glass account system a potent tool for advancing gender equity.

110. The effectiveness of GRB depends significantly on the capacity of Budget Governors to integrate gender considerations into their operations and planning. In Mongolia, the process of implementing GRB is being carried out gradually. To support this, an annual self-assessment tool has been introduced as part of the GRB circular. This tool requires institutions to evaluate their progress based on three key factors: aligning gender policies with sectoral objectives; ensuring the availability and utilization of gender-disaggregated data in policy planning; and enhancing internal capacity for gender-responsive policy planning. This yearly self-assessment helps the MOF evaluate whether institutions can meet GRB requirements. In addition, it enables the NCGE to identify institutional capacity-building needs, making it a leading gender equality mechanism within the government. By identifying areas that require improvement, the NCGE can provide capacity building and technical assistance to institutions to effectively incorporate gender perspectives into their planning processes. Past efforts to build capacity were impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Most activities had to be conducted online, which presented challenges to providing comprehensive support to institutions. Remote work and health concerns related to the pandemic also shifted priorities within the MOF, as the ministry needed to adapt to changes and address pandemic-related needs promptly.

111. Pilot programs in line ministries and related capacity-building initiatives have helped lay the groundwork for embedding GRB within ministry operations, reflecting a strategic commitment to gender equality. The pilot program[41] has been implemented with two key ministries: the MES and the MLSP. More recently, the Ministry of Health (MOH) has also expressed interest in initiating a GRB process. The reporting and verification processes from the first round of piloting still need to

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[40] This law aims to enhance the transparency and efficiency of use of state and local budget funds and assets through a transparent "glass account" system for better public oversight.

[41] The pilot phase of GRB in line ministries involved several vital actions: establishing a dedicated GRB group; delivering a capacity-building program to the ministries; providing ex-post analyses of selected programs; and developing GRB proposals in the format mandated by the MOF. These actions formed the foundation of the GRB circular's effectiveness.

be completed in order to provide lessons learned for refining the process. Further actions are required to integrate GRB fully into the public financial management system. During the pilot phase, a commitment was made to embed GRB within the Cross-Sectoral Strategic Plan for Promotion of Gender Equality (2022–2031) by the MOF, signaling a continued effort toward comprehensive integration. Additionally, the ministry has pledged to incorporate GRB into the forthcoming PFM action plan, which will chart the course for future reforms

112. Gender-responsive policies in Mongolia need better integration with national and sectoral policies and budgets. The GRB process and the preparation of sectoral gender strategies and action plans are still proceeding on a dual track. There are policies, laws, and guidelines that lay out the framework for policy planning from a broad perspective down to specific sector strategies, and then there are also laws and strategies that focus solely and entirely on gender equality. While gender equality goals inform and influence sectoral policies, they are not integrated into the design of these policies and programs, and the practical implications of this become evident in the planning and budgeting process. The lack of alignment significantly affects how gender priorities are integrated into policies, programs, and, ultimately, budgets. Therefore, with these parallel tracks in place, there is a noticeable lack of integration, impacting the effective incorporation of gender considerations.

113. Gender focal points within line ministries and aimags are important to ensure better integration between gender objectives and the respective development plans of their ministry or aimag. As such, it is important to embed these gender experts into the policy and planning units and ensure that they participate actively in policy and budget formulating. Equally important is to continue an effort of technical capacity building for gender focal points and the broader cadre of policy planning officials to raise awareness of the specific technical issues relevant to gender equality in their areas of planning. The National Academy of Governance (NAOG) has recently introduced mandatory courses on aspects of gender equality for public officials as part of its curriculum. Such efforts could be continued and strengthened, including also making them available to senior public officials.

114. Improved gender statistics are a critical precondition for gender-responsive policy planning and performance reporting. Mongolia has made commendable progress in collecting gender statistics across various sectors, but data in selected areas still needs to be improved. The legal framework for gender statistics in Mongolia is supported by a comprehensive set of laws, programs, and strategies which collectively aim to enhance the production and use of gender-disaggregated

data to support informed policy making and promote gender equality.[42] The NSO has established a comprehensive framework for gathering gender statistics. Data in the finance, tax, and business sectors need to be improved, including data on women's entrepreneurship, access to finance, and asset ownership. It is essential to present gender data in a more user-friendly and accessible format to enable policy makers to make informed decisions effectively. Having gender-disaggregated data about the beneficiaries of budget programs is a crucial step toward addressing the main challenge of creating gender-responsive performance reports. Going forward, it would also be recommended that, in addition to the NSO, Budget Governors in the respective sectors and aimags also maintain up-to-date gender-disaggregated administrative data on agreed aspects. Maintaining and upgrading such data systems will be vital to conduct both ex ante and ex post gender analyses.

115. As noted above, raising the technical skills and awareness of the MOF and Budget Governors is a critical area for the effective implementation of GRB. Embedding GRB within the policy planning units of line ministries is important and is where capacity building is most needed. Relying on parallel structures, such as gender focal points or new offices, may be simpler to establish but will not foster systemic and sustainable reform. Integrating GRB into the daily functions of policy planning units will ensure that the GRB approach is sustained over time, as these units are permanent fixtures within institutions and central to policy and budget formulation, reporting, and other critical functions.

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[42] These include, among others, the Law on Statistics, the National Program for the Development of Statistics, the Law on Promotion of Gender Equality, the Mid-term Strategy for Implementing the Law on Gender Equality, and the National Program on Gender Equality.

CHAPTER VII. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

116. Going forward, it will be important for Mongolia to build upon the considerable gains in gender equality built over decades and focus policy efforts on tackling persistent gender gaps. Sustaining gender equality gains would entail, among other actions, maintaining and further strengthening the gender equality institutional mechanism of the government, linking this mechanism more closely with a GRB process, and continuing investment in and attention to key services (for example, education, health care, social protection, and childcare) which have brought significant gains to women's human capital. At the same time, innovative and evidence-based approaches should be developed and tested to tackle more entrenched challenges such as expanding male life expectancy, reducing rates of GBV for adult women and female adolescents/minors, and leveling the playing field for women in the labor market. Barriers faced by sexual and gender minorities need to be better understood and addressed. Tackling the most challenging issues of gender equality would require close attention to improvements and effective implementation of legislation, continuous data and evidence, and cooperation across sectors as well as a coordinated approach across government, development partners, and civil society.

117. This report offers key recommendations in the following areas: (i) strengthening legislation; (ii) improving policies and programs aimed at reducing gender gaps; (iii) strengthening the national gender equality institutional mechanism and the capacity of public officials and gender focal points; and (iv) continually improving gender equality data and evidence. Figure 40 provides a summary of the recommendations under each area.

Figure 40. Gender assessment: short and medium-term recommendations

- Enable upstream review of new legislation and strategies
- Expand scope of GBV and child protection legislation
- Expand protection based on sexual orientation and gender identity

Legislation

Policy and Programs

- Prepare and implement GBV Prevention and Response Program
  - Prepare and implement Gender Life Expectancy Gap Action Plan
    - Strengthen supporting frameworks for women's labor force participation and labor market retention

- Improve gender-disaggregated data on asset ownership, incomes, entrepreneurship
- Improve knoweldge and data on gendered impacts of climate adaptation and mitigation
- Continue regular data collection on GBV

Data and Evidence

Institutional Mechanism

- Continue GRB practice in budget process
- Conduct monitoring and verification of results in GRB pilot ministries
- Train and integrate sector and aimag gender focal points in budget and planning units

Legal Recommendations

118. Ensure legal mechanisms enabling a gender review and comments on all new legislation and strategic documents. There are significant opportunities to strengthen the enabling environment for gender equality programs and actions by including gender-sensitive provisions in new and updated legislation, such as the new Mongolia Climate Change Law (in draft), revisions to the Environmental Impact Assessment Law which introduce guidance on conducting social impact assessment (updates in draft), and proposed revisions to the Child Protection Law which previously contained prohibitions on corporal punishment but did not tackle issues of GBV or domestic violence. Given the legal status of the NCGE, currently there is no mechanism to systematically mainstream gender considerations and monitoring mechanisms into new legislation or strategic policy documents. Such a mechanism would enable better upstream monitoring of gender outcomes across key laws, strategies, and programs.

119. Expand legislation in the area of GBV. The Law on Combating Domestic Violence (2004) is the main GBV-related law in the country. It was amended in 2017 to reconcile inconsistencies with other laws; additionally, the Criminal Code of Mongolia (2015) makes domestic violence a criminal offense. The scope of domestic violence legislation could be expanded to cover other areas of GBV such as physical and sexual violence outside of the home and verbal, psychological, and economic violence. Additionally, widening the scope of the law to include more explicit protections for vulnerable groups such as children and adolescents, SOGI minorities, and victims of trafficking could enable the expansion of services for these groups as recommended by the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women (UN General Assembly 2022). This aspect will require additional dedicated research of international good practice to inform both the GBV legislation and comprehensive policy and programming in the context of Mongolia.

120. Expand protections for sexual and gender minorities under the Gender Equality Law. Mongolian legislation already includes specific protections for citizens against discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. These are present in the Labor Law (2021), the Criminal Code, and the Law on Civil State registration (revisions as of 2018). However, the national Law on Gender Equality does not contain provisions related to sexual orientation or gender identity. The SPPGE 2022–2031 implicitly refers to sexual and gender minorities when it addresses "social groups." Introducing more explicit provisions on SOGI-based discrimination in the Gender Equality Law would ensure consistency with other legislation and contribute to better data collection and monitoring of outcomes for this group.

Policy and Programmatic Recommendations

121. Advance GRB across all line ministries and align GRB process with gender equality action plans and targets. The Government of Mongolia, through the MOF, has advanced significantly in promoting GRB across the budget cycle. The MOF Gender Strategy 2016–2024 envisions incorporating gender equality measures into the central economic and sectoral development policies and programs, and it mandates governmental administrative organizations to have Gender Strategy Action Plans. Several ministries, including the MLSP and MES, have piloted GRB approaches, and MOF intends to expand these pilots to other ministries in the coming year. Still, there is often a disconnect between sectoral gender actions plans and the budget-

setting process of MOF and each line ministry and the national gender equality action plans and targets produced by the ministries and coordinated by NCGE. A stronger alignment of these processes could lead to more effective programs as well as more efficient use of limited government resources. For example, a sequenced prioritization and planning exercise could result in programmatic activities, targets, and budgets. Gender-sensitive budgeting methods should also be incorporated in all budget laws and capacity building provided to public officials in GRB principles and methods.

122. Prepare comprehensive strategies and programs to tackle multisectoral challenges. Some of the most pressing gender challenges in the context of Mongolia will require a coordinated multisectoral approach. Moreover, to be most effective and resource efficient, such approaches should build on global and regional evidence as well as on evaluations of activities from the Mongolian context. Thus, a wide range of potential actions and commitments by multiple government stakeholders could be narrowed to fewer tailored actions that are more intensively focused and budgeted. Two such complex areas are GBV prevention and response and the reduction of the gender life expectancy gap:

- *Gender-based violence:* A comprehensive strategy, program, and institutional mechanism for GBV prevention and response is yet to be developed in Mongolia. This process has been initiated by the UNFPA and MOJHA with the drafting of a comprehensive strategy. Moreover, UNFPA in collaboration with the NSO is committed to supporting a regular survey of GBV prevalence in Mongolia. This effort will require both financial and technical support from a variety of stakeholders, including international organizations and civil society, as it involves multiple aspects: public awareness; health, social, psychosocial, education, and other dimensions; services; infrastructure; justice and accountability mechanisms; and extensive training and capacity building for all relevant service providers at the national and local levels.

- *Gender life expectancy gap:* A review of global evidence on reducing the gender gap in life expectancy produced as part of this study identifies five key areas of intervention, based on evidence of the key drivers of men's mortality in Mongolia and the experience of global programs: tobacco reduction polices; alcohol reduction policies; improved use of preventive and primary care for men; suicide prevention and increased availability of mental health services; and interventions aimed at shifting gender norms such as public awareness and communication campaigns and safer community spaces.

123. For both areas it will be important to define short-, medium-, and longer-term goals and realistic targets. It is recommended to identify both long-term and intermediary targets in the relevant policy action plans given that results are likely to entail changing social norms and behaviors, which can only be seen over a longer time frame.

124. Develop focused and evidence-based sectoral action plans and targets. As with the areas above, Mongolia should keep refining its sectoral gender equality strategies and targets, focusing on the most prominent drivers of gender gaps. These may include, among others:

- *Health care:* Strengthen suicide prevention and mental health services, reduce discrepancies across rural and urban areas with innovations such as mobile clinics and telehealth, and improve specialized services for transgender individuals.

- *Education:* Intervene to strengthen learning outcomes for boys at primary and secondary levels and increase participation of boys in tertiary education, particularly those in rural areas.

- *Labor*: Better understand and promote equal pay for work of equal value, in order to provide greater incentives for women's labor force participation and participation in higher-earning sectors of the economy through care services and more flexible work arrangements; promote public awareness and better accountability of enforcement of sexual exploitation and abuse / sexual harassment prevention and response in the workplace.

125. Mainstream gender into new strategic policies such as those on climate change mitigation and adaptation. Although Mongolia has already adopted Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and an NAPCC, concrete policies and programs in this area are still to be defined. These will be largely guided by the upcoming Climate Change Law of Mongolia. Integrating gender considerations into climate change legislation, sectoral strategies, and plans will require better understanding and definition of relevant gender vulnerabilities and needs. These are likely to be different for men and women depending on their location, occupation, and age. Government and international partners could cooperate on producing evidence and data on the gender dimensions and based on this, recommend areas of focus with policy actions and targets for mainstreaming gender activities in strategic documents for climate change adaptation and mitigation.

Strengthening the Gender Equality Institutional Mechanism and Capacities

126. Allow NCGE and gender focal points to comment on new legislation, policies, and strategic programs. The NCGE has established a robust mechanism of intersectoral coordination and monitoring to measure implementation of the Gender Equality Law. However, due to its status, NCGE is limited in its ability to influence new legislation and policy. It is recommended that the government establish a structured process for gender review and sensitization of new laws and strategic documents.

127. Strengthen technical capacity within line ministries and aimags. Gender focal points and committees have been formed in all aimags and ministries; however, their technical capacity needs further investment to ensure that they can meaningfully contribute to and monitor sectoral gender targets and plans, as well as contribute to the GRB process. International organizations could also support technical assistance to the gender committees in respective sectors, providing the needed evidence for effective programs and interventions.

128. Strengthen public awareness and administrative capacities to improve implementation of key laws and introduce better accountability mechanisms. While legislation has improved in many areas, administrative mechanisms to implement and enforce it are often lacking. This is the case, for instance, with provisions on the prevention of sexual harassment in the workplace included in the country's new Labor Law. Enforcements of these provisions within public and private enterprises will require increasing the knowledge and awareness of employers and employees and establishing better defined and binding codes of conducts, confidential grievance mechanisms, and accountability procedures to ensure that the principles of sexual harassment prevention are put into practice. NCGE and relevant ministerial focal points could be instrumental in promoting such measures.

Gender Equality Data and Evidence

129. As noted above, availability of gender-disaggregated data has steadily improved in Mongolia. Still there are important areas where data could be improved to better track improvements in gender equality:

- *Business and finance:* Improve data on women's entrepreneurship and access to finance, including data on the number of female-owned businesses, loan

approval rates, loan amounts, business performance metrics, market access, and sectoral participation.

- **Asset ownership:** Improve data on asset ownership for men and women, including ownership of immovable property and financial assets.

- **Gender and climate impacts:** Improve research and data on gender-specific impacts of climate change and disasters-tailored to rural and urban areas-in order to adopt more gender-sensitive policies and responses to adaptation and resilience.

- **Gender and economic opportunities in potential green transitions:** Collect more systematic data on women's participation in sectors of the economy that are expected to grow in the context of green transitions to inform policy actions to enhance women's participation in such sectors. These sectors may include, among others, renewable energy, sustainable mining, tourism, forestry and landscape management, and digital services.

- **GBV and violence against children:** Continue regularly collecting data on GBV prevalence in line with internationally established methodology and analyze results by age groups and locations to refine prevention and response policies and programs, as well as to inform public awareness and communication campaigns.

130. A coordinated effort across government, civil society organizations, and international development partners will be necessary to create a strong basis of knowledge and capacity for gender equality outcomes. As gender norms influence all aspects of social and economic life, only a multifaceted approach can influence meaningful change. Testing and capturing lessons from innovative approaches to shift gender and social norms and conducting rigorous impact evaluations where possible will be valuable to identify and scale up most promising policy actions while making efficient use of limited government resources. For this it would be important to further generate evidence and lessons from international and regional experiences to inform sector-specific programs.

131. A summary of the proposed gender assessment recommendations and their time frames and key responsible agencies is available in Table 3 below.

Table 3. **Short-, medium-, and long-term recommendations for advancing gender equality in Mongolia**

Recommendations	Short/ Medium/ Long time frame	Key responsible agencies
Foundational well-being: ending gender-based violence and elevating human capital		
Continue systematic data collection on GBV through national prevalence studies and administrative records	S / M/ L	MOJHA (CCCP), NSO, NPA, MLSP
Prepare, adopt, and monitor a comprehensive GBV prevention and response strategy with dedicated resources and clear institutional roles and responsibilities	S / M	MOJHA (CCCP), MLSP, NCGE
Adjust scope of GBV and child protection legislation to ensure that it captures the full spectrum of aspects of GBV	S / M	MOJHA, CabSec
Adopt, implement, and regularly update (based on results and lessons learned) a multisectoral action plan to reduce the gender life expectancy gap*	S / M / L	MOH, MLSP, NCGE
Ensure availability and adequacy of health services for LGBTI (specifically transgender) individuals	S / M	MOH
Implement programs targeted at retaining boys in secondary and tertiary education, with a focus on rural areas	S / M	MES
Promote greater diversification in educational and occupational specialization areas among women, for example, by: * Providing targeted scholarships and grants for girls and women in STEM fields * Establishing mentorship and role model programs connecting female students with women professionals in STEM careers * Creating supportive and inclusive learning environments in educational institutions to encourage female participation and retention in diverse specialization areas * Partnering with firms in the industrial sector and STEM fields to offer internships, apprenticeships, and job placement programs for women	S / M / L	MES, MLSP, private sector

Economic participation: expanding and enabling economic opportunities		
Reduce gender-based discrimination in wage determination and hiring practices, for example, by: * Promoting public awareness, building capacity, monitoring and enforcing Labor Law provisions on anti-discrimination, prohibiting sexual harassment, ensuring equal pay for work of value, etc. * Offering nontransferable paid parental leave for both men and women to encourage shared caregiving responsibilities and reduce career interruptions for women * Providing regular training on unconscious bias and discrimination for all employees, especially those in managerial and hiring positions * Establishing programs that support women's career advancement through mentorship and sponsorship by senior leaders within the organization * Promoting broad, cross-sectoral flexible work hours and remote work options for both men and women	S / M / L	MLSP, CabSec, NAOG, private sector
Promote greater accessibility and affordability of quality childcare, for example, by: * Promoting diverse types of childcare provision (for example, direct government provision, financial support for families, incentives for the nonstate sector, and mandated employer-supported childcare) * Prioritizing extending coverage to vulnerable populations such as the poor, informal workers, single parents, and disabled parents and children through low-cost or free options * Improving public funding of childcare facilities and providing financial incentives to increase private sector funding * Implementing clear institutional requirements to ensure child safety, child development, and overall quality * Prioritizing improving access in urban areas to meet the increasing unmet demand * Continuously collecting evidence and evaluating the impacts of different childcare interventions on women's LFPR and respective barriers to labor force participation related to care obligations to inform policy	S / M	MLSP, MES, private sector, NCGE

Enable female entrepreneurship, for example, by: * Mandating the collection and publication of gender-disaggregated data on entrepreneurship and asset ownership, including the number of female-owned businesses, access to finance, ownership of collateral, and business performance metrics * Offering nationwide programs that offer business training, mentorship, legal and regulatory support, and networking opportunities for female entrepreneurs * Providing grants, low-interest loans, and venture capital specifically targeted at female entrepreneurs * Creating platforms and opportunities for women entrepreneurs to access national and international markets, including trade fairs and online marketplaces	S / M / L	MLSP, NSO, BoM, Chamber of Commerce, private sector
Leadership: engaging women as leaders		
Monitor and continue to implement provisions and commitments under the updated election and political party laws (including gradual increase of gender quota)	M / L	NCGE, National Elections Commission, political parties, Parliament
Gender and climate		
Collect data on and evidence of gender vulnerabilities related to disaster risk resilience and climate adaptation (for example, impacts of disasters on GBV and impacts in herder women and girls)	S / M	NCGE, CabSec, MET, MED, NEMA, MOFALI
Incorporate gender-specific actions and goals in national climate change and disaster risk management legislation and strategies	S / M / L	NCGE, CabSec, MET, MED, NEMA, MOFALI
Promote employment and retention for women in the green economy and renewable energy sectors	M / L	MES, MED, MET, MMHI, MOFALI
Facilitate access by female entrepreneurs to green and climate financing	S / M / L	BoM, commercial banks
Strengthening the national gender equality institutional mechanism		
Ensure an institutional mechanism to enable upstream review of new legislation and strategies from a gender lens	M / L	CabSec, NCGE
Expand gender equality legislation to include protection of and nondiscrimination principles for sexual and gender minorities	S / M	CabSec, NCGE

Continue rolling out GRB practices across sectors and aimags and evaluate the results and lessons learned	M / L	MOF, line ministries, provinces (aimags)
Integrate sectoral and aimag gender focal points into policy planning and budgeting departments	S / M	central and line ministries, aimag governor offices
Implement training and capacity building for gender focal points and policy makers (public service officials) for more effective take-up of GRB actions	S / M / L	NCGE, ministries, aimags governor offices, NAOG

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