



Mapping Gender Equality in Moldova

*(Module 1: Foundation of Gender Equality
in the EU Context)*

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Introduction

Gender equality is a fundamental principle of human rights and a cornerstone of sustainable development. In recent years, the Republic of Moldova has made significant efforts to promote equality between women and men across political, economic, social, and educational spheres. These efforts align with the European Union's Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2025 and the Gender Action Plan III (GAP III)¹, which aim to close gender gaps, ensure equal participation in decision-making, and combat discrimination at all levels. Moldova has implemented comprehensive legal frameworks, introduced gender quotas in political representation, and adopted national strategies designed to empower women, enhance their leadership participation, and address structural inequalities.

The Republic of Moldova has achieved considerable progress in gender equality in recent years. According to the World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Index 2025, Moldova entered the top 10 for the first time, ranking 7th overall with an overall gender parity score of 81.3%, up 2.3 points from 2024. Since the index was launched, Moldova has narrowed its overall gender gap by 10 percentage points, achieving its highest score to date. The most significant advances are seen in Political Empowerment, which increased by 7.5 points to a parity score of 42.5%, reflecting higher representation of women in ministerial positions and top leadership roles.

Economic participation has also improved by 1.6 points, while parity in education and health remains largely stable².

The objective of this study is to map the current state of gender equality in Moldova, examining key areas such as political representation, legal frameworks, education, gender-based violence, and institutional mechanisms.

This study draws on statistical data, legislative frameworks, and national strategies to provide a comprehensive overview of both the progress achieved and the persistent challenges faced by women in Moldova. By identifying gaps and best practices, the authors aim to inform actionable recommendations for strengthening gender equality, supporting the objectives of the ERIK (Equality, Rights and Inclusion Knowledge) project, and promoting alignment with EU standards in governance, decision-making, and inclusive policy-making

¹ European Commission (2020). Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2025: A Union of Equality. European Commission. Available at: https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/gender-equality/gender-equality-strategy_en/

² World Economic Forum. (2025, June 11). Global Gender Gap Report 2025: Benchmarking gender gaps, 2025. World Economic Forum. URL: https://www.weforum.org/publications/global-gender-gap-report-2025/in-full/benchmarking-gender-gaps-2025/?utm_source

Methodology

This study employs a mixed-methods approach to ensure a comprehensive and evidence-based assessment of gender equality in the Republic of Moldova. The methodology integrates both quantitative and qualitative analytical tools, allowing for a nuanced understanding of trends, institutional frameworks, and structural challenges.

The research includes quantitative analysis of national statistical data provided by the National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova, as well as relevant administrative records from public institutions. These data are used to examine trends over time, gender gaps across sectors, and differences between population groups and regions.

In parallel, a systematic review of legal and policy documents is conducted, covering key laws, government decisions, national strategies, and action plans related to gender equality, non-discrimination, education, political participation, economic empowerment, and the prevention of gender-based violence. This review assesses both the scope of existing frameworks and their alignment with European Union standards and international commitments.

The study also relies on secondary analysis of reports and datasets produced by international organizations, including UN Women, UNFPA, the OECD, and the World Economic Forum. These sources provide comparative indicators, contextual insights, and internationally recognized benchmarks.

A comparative perspective is applied to position Moldova's progress within a broader European context, with selected comparisons to EU Member States such as Poland and Sweden. This allows for identification of relative strengths, gaps, and transferable good practices.

The analysis focuses on several key thematic areas: political and business representation, access to education, gender-based violence, and institutional mechanisms for promoting gender equality. Methodological limitations are acknowledged, particularly those related to underreporting of gender-based violence, data gaps at the regional level, and differences in data collection methodologies across sources.

I. Political representation and other participation

1.1. Percentage of women in national parliament and local councils

Political representation is a key indicator of gender equality, reflecting the extent to which women participate in decision-making processes at both national and local levels. In the Republic of Moldova, recent electoral reforms have played a significant role in improving women's participation in political life, particularly through the introduction of mandatory gender quotas in electoral legislation.

Thus, according to Article 68(3) of the Electoral Code No. 325/2022³, candidate lists for parliamentary and local elections must comply with a minimum gender representation quota of 40% for each sex. In addition to numerical balance, the law regulates the placement of candidates on electoral lists, requiring at least 4 candidates of the same sex for every 10 positions. Non-compliance with these requirements may result in the refusal to register an electoral competitor, thereby strengthening enforcement mechanisms and contributing to increased female representation in both the national parliament and local councils.

Against this legislative background, it is important to examine how gender quotas have influenced actual political representation. The figure 1 below illustrates the share of women in the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova by year, highlighting key trends and changes over time.

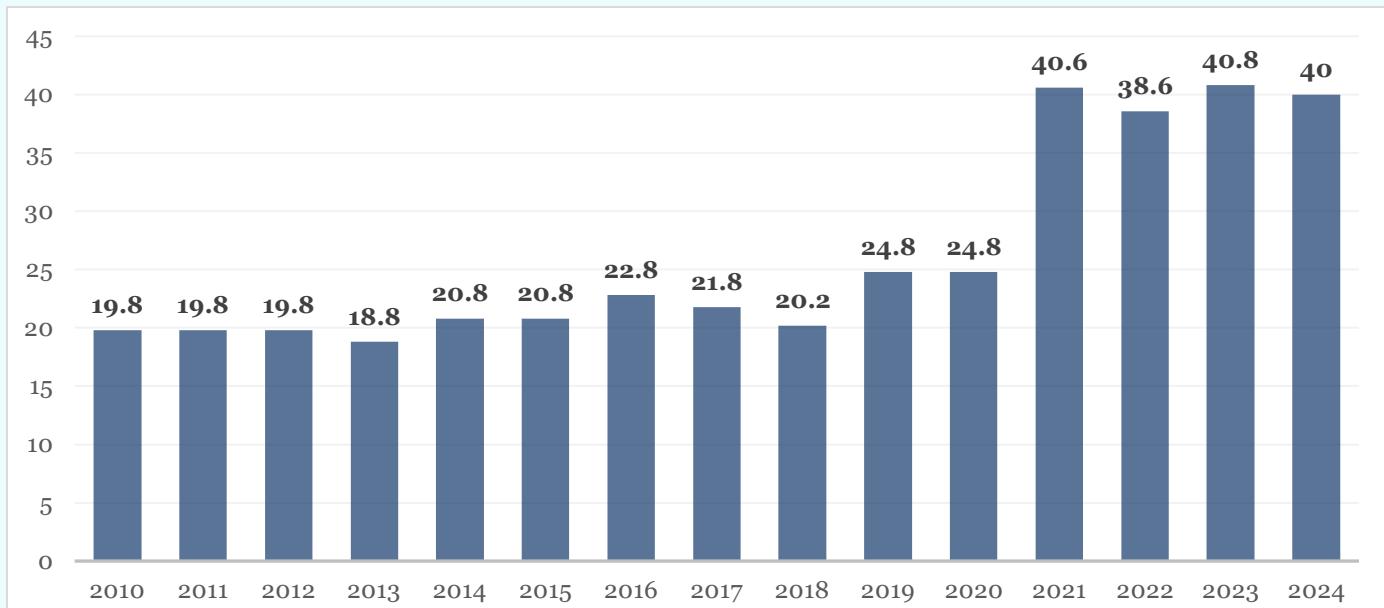


Fig. 1. Share of women in the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova (%), by year

Source: National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova. n.d. Gender Statistics Database. Statbank. <https://statbank.statistica.md/PxWeb/pxweb/en/50%20Statistica%20gender/?rxid=2345d98a-890b-4459-bb1f-9b565f99b3b9>.

³ Parliament of the Republic of Moldova. (2022). *Electoral Code (Law No. 325 of 8 December 2022)*. Official Monitor of the Republic of Moldova, No. 426–427, Art. 770. URL: https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=134589&lang=ro

The data illustrate a gradual increase in the share of women deputies in the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova over the period 2010–2024. Between 2010 and 2019, women's representation remained relatively stable, fluctuating between approximately 19% and 25%, indicating slow but steady progress. A notable milestone was reached in 2020, when Moldova elected its first female President, marking a significant step forward in women's political leadership. This period of change continued in 2021, when the country registered the highest number of elected women MPs in its history (40.6%), reflecting the impact of electoral reforms and mandatory gender quotas.

Although a slight decrease occurred in 2022, women's representation has remained close to 40% in subsequent years, reaching 40.0% in 2024. These trends demonstrate not only quantitative progress in parliamentary representation but also broader advances in women's leadership and decision-making, highlighting the ongoing efforts to promote gender equality and ensure inclusive participation in Moldova's political life.

Overall, Moldova's recent gains place it above Poland but slightly below Sweden in women's parliamentary representation (fig.2)

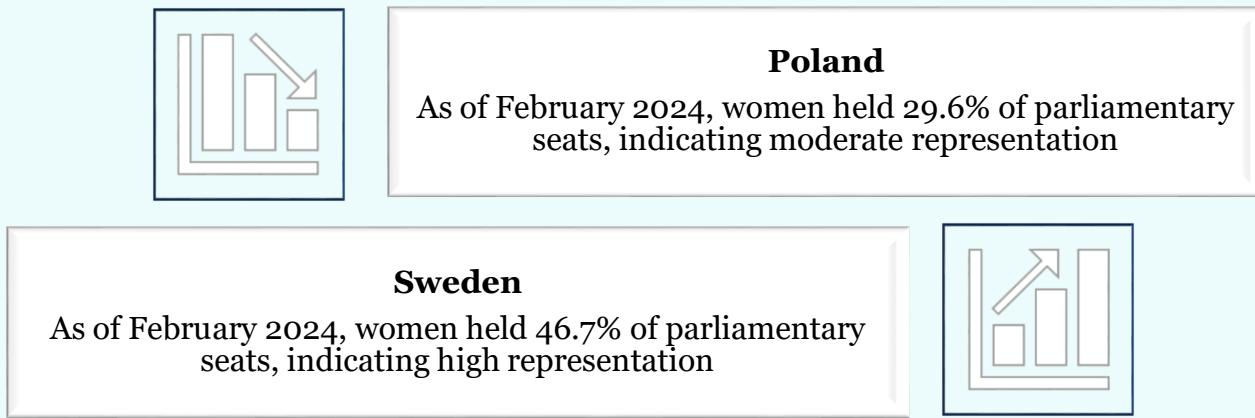


Fig. 2. Women in Parliament (Poland and Sweden, 2024)

Source: UN Women. "Sweden and Poland: Women in Politics." UN Women Data Hub, 2024, <https://data.unwomen.org/country/sweden>.

Although the overall numerical presence of women on candidate lists for parliamentary elections is relatively balanced, a closer analysis of their placement reveals certain disparities. In the first ten positions—considered the most competitive and with the highest chances of securing a parliamentary mandate—women account for 40.7% of candidates, while in the next decile (positions 11–20) their share slightly increases to 42%. Despite compliance with the gender quota, men continue to dominate the top positions on the lists, whereas women are more often concentrated in positions with lower chances of election⁴.

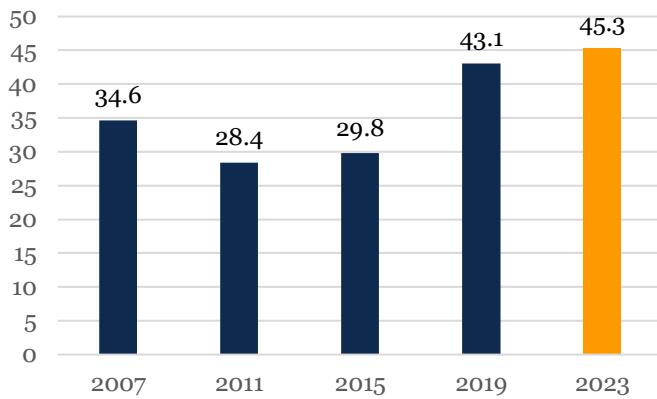
Women also remain less involved in electoral debates and media appearances. Although candidate lists are becoming more balanced, women have fewer opportunities to present their political views in debates. Less than a third (28.6%) of participants in electoral debates were women, and among

⁴ UNDP Moldova. (2025). *Analysis of the 2025 parliamentary elections: Detailed study of representation of women and men on candidate lists*. UNDP Moldova. URL: <https://www.undp.org/moldova/press-releases/analysis-2025-parliamentary-elections-detailed-study-representation-women-and-men-candidate-lists>

participants in talk shows, women candidates accounted for only 30.1%, compared to 69.9% for men. This reduced media presence is often linked to the dominance of a masculine image of politics, which reinforces social perceptions that discourage women from active participation in the political sphere⁵.

At the local level, gender quotas continue to play a crucial role in ensuring fair representation of women in the electoral process (fig. 3).

Regional/municipal councils



Local councils

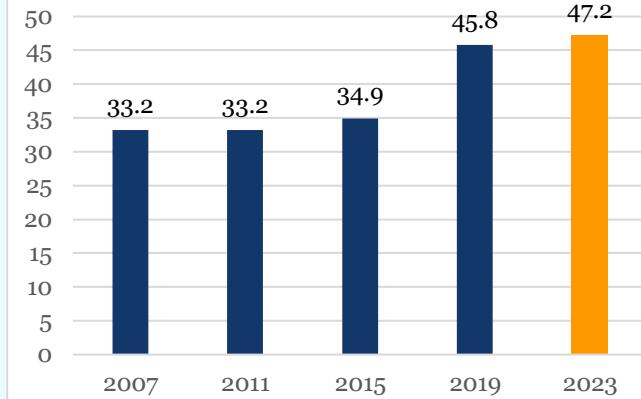


Fig. 3. Share of women candidates for the position of district/municipal and local councilor, %

Source: UN Women Moldova. 2024. *Local Elections 2023: Between Perceptions and Realities – An Analysis of Local Elections in the Republic of Moldova from a Gender Equality Perspective*. URL: <https://moldova.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2024/04/local-elections-2023-between-perceptions-and-realities-an-analysis-of-local-elections-in-the-republic-of-moldova-from-gender-equality-perspective>

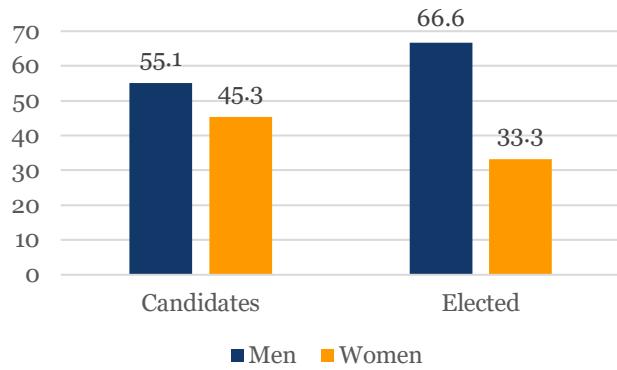
In the 2023 local elections in Moldova, women accounted for 45.3% of candidates for district/municipal council positions and 47.2% for local council positions, showing a positive trend compared to previous elections. Compared to 2015, the share of women candidates increased by over 15% in district/municipal councils and by approximately 12% in local councils. Compared to 2019, the increase was more modest, at 2% for district/municipal councils and 1.4% for local councils⁶.

Women participated and were predominantly elected in villages and communities. Regarding male and female candidates, the 40% quota has been observed and we have a fair representation for both genders in all administrative-territorial units of level I and II. However, the data show significant differences between district/municipal and local councils (fig.4).

⁵ United Nations in Moldova. (2025). *The electoral screen: Analysis of the representation of men and women candidates in the media during the 2025 parliamentary elections* (Preliminary report). Chișinău: United Nations in Moldova. URL: https://moldova.un.org/sites/default/files/2025-12/v-media_en.pdf

⁶ UN Women Moldova. 2024. *Local Elections 2023: Between Perceptions and Realities – An Analysis of Local Elections in the Republic of Moldova from a Gender Equality Perspective*. URL: <https://moldova.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2024/04/local-elections-2023-between-perceptions-and-realities-an-analysis-of-local-elections-in-the-republic-of-moldova-from-gender-equality-perspective>

Share of the candidates and elected members in district/municipal councils



Share of the candidates and elected representatives in local councils

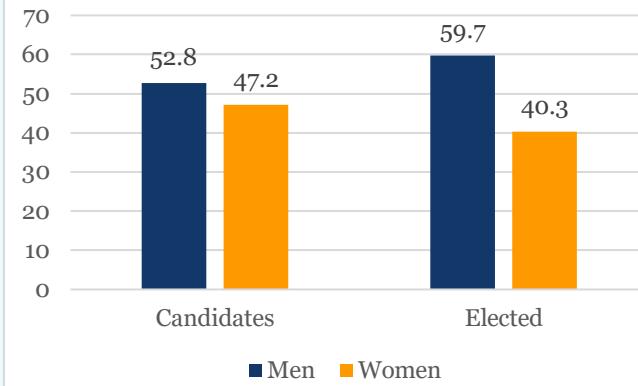


Fig. 4. Share of the candidates and elected representatives for the position of district/municipal and local councilor, by gender, %;

Source: UN Women Moldova. 2024. *Local Elections 2023: Between Perceptions and Realities – An Analysis of Local Elections in the Republic of Moldova from a Gender Equality Perspective*. URL: <https://moldova.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2024/04/local-elections-2023-between-perceptions-and-realities-an-analysis-of-local-elections-in-the-republic-of-moldova-from-gender-equality-perspective>

According to the results of the 2023 local elections, men are significantly overrepresented in district and municipal councils, making up 66.6% of elected officials, while women account for only 33.3%. In contrast, local councils show a more balanced gender distribution, with men comprising 59.7% and women 40.3% of council members.

Data for the period 2007–2023 local elections show that in the Republic of Moldova, men have traditionally held the overwhelming majority of mayoral positions (fig.5).

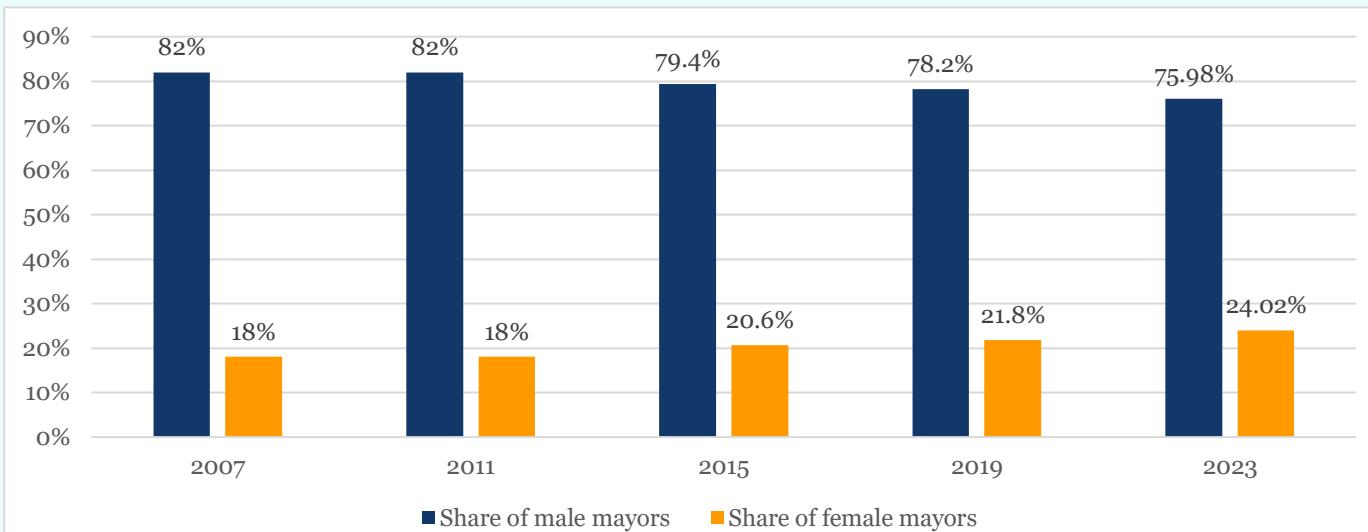


Fig. 5. Gender Distribution of Mayors by Local Election Years, 2007–2023

Source: "Alegeri Locale 2023: Profilul Primarilor Aleși." ZdG, October 31, 2023. Access <https://www.zdg.md/stiri/alegeri-locale-2023-profilul-primarilor-alesi>

In the 2007 and 2011 elections, the share of male mayors was 82%, while women accounted for only 18%. Over time, there has been a gradual increase in female representation at the local government level. In the 2015 elections, the share of female mayors rose to 20,6%, while the share of men decreased to 79,4%. This trend continued in subsequent elections: in 2019, women made up 21,8%, and in 2023, they reached 24,02%, representing nearly a quarter of all mayors in the country. Although men still occupy the majority of mayoral positions (75,98% in 2023), there is a steady and gradual growth in the number of women in leadership roles in local government in Moldova. The data clearly show a positive trend towards gender equality, although the pace of change remains moderate.

At the same time, women have a more significant presence in the positions of mayor at the rural level, which indicates a trend that they not only participate in elections but also win more frequently in small settlements. This can be explained by the fact that political parties tend to nominate more women in villages and communities, where the level of decision-making is lower, compared to cities and municipalities, which involve higher-level decision-making and more resources.

1.2. Women in ministerial or high-level government positions

The representation of women in ministerial and equivalent positions in Moldova has shown a clear upward trend in recent years, reflecting ongoing efforts to promote gender equality and increase women's participation in high-level decision-making.

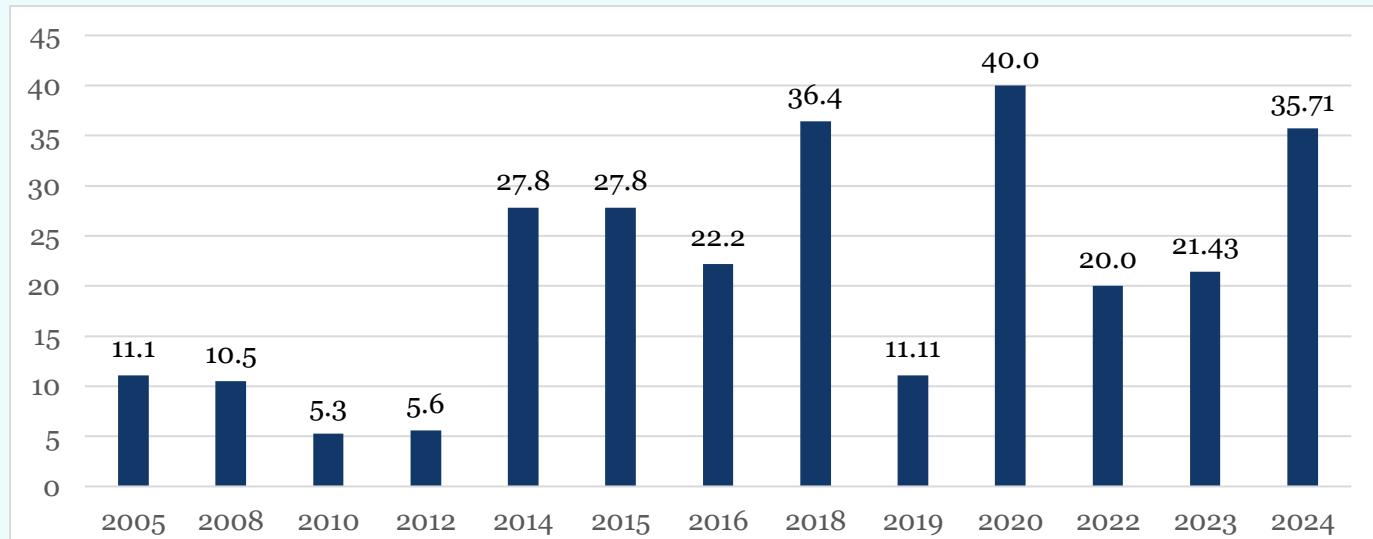


Fig. 6. Proportion of women in ministerial (or equivalent) level positions, %

Source: Statbase Visualization Platform. Proportion of women in ministerial (or equivalent) positions – Moldova. URL: https://statbase.org/data/mda-proportion-of-women-in-ministerial-level-positions/?utm_source

In 2024, the proportion of women in ministerial (or equivalent) positions reached 35.71%, up from 21.43% in 2023, marking two consecutive years of growth. Over the entire period of Inter-Parliamentary Union statistics since 2005, this indicator has increased more than threefold. The

lowest share was recorded in 2010 at 5.30%, while the highest was in 2020, when women held 40.00% of these positions.

As with Moldova, the proportion of women in ministerial-level positions in Sweden and Poland reveals varying patterns, reflecting each country's achievements and remaining challenges in promoting gender equality in high-level government roles (fig. 7)



Proportion of women in ministerial level positions of **Poland** in 2024 amounted to 35.00 % of the total. In 2023, the value was 30.00%. It has been growing in this country for already 3 years in a row. Over the entire period of Inter-Parliamentary Union statistics since 2005, this indicator has increased in 5.93 times.

The lowest share of woman in ministerial positions was recorded in 2020, when it was 4.76. The maximum was in 2024, when number of female ministers in Poland reached 35.00 %.



Proportion of women in ministerial level positions of **Sweden** in 2024 amounted to 47.83 % of the total. In 2023, the value was also 47.83%. Over the entire period of Inter-Parliamentary Union statistics since 2005, this indicator has decreased in 1.10 times.

The lowest share of woman in ministerial positions was recorded in 2010, when it was 45.00. The maximum was in 2020, when number of female ministers in Sweden reached 57.14 %.

Fig. 7. Proportion of Women in Ministerial-Level Positions in Sweden and Poland

Source: Statbase Visualization Platform. Proportion of women in ministerial (or equivalent) positions – Poland, Sweden. URL: <https://statbase.org/data/pol-proportion-of-women-in-ministerial-level-positions/>

In 2024, Moldova ranked **38th** out of 189 countries in terms of the proportion of women in ministerial-level positions, ahead of Poland (**44th**) but behind Sweden (**11th**), showing relatively good progress while still leaving room for improvement compared to top-performing countries.

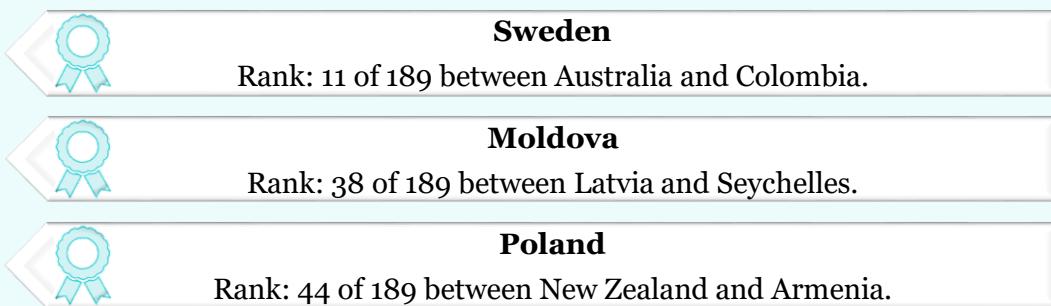


Fig. 8. 2024 Ranking by Proportion of Women in Ministerial-Level Positions – Moldova, Poland, Sweden

Source: Statbase Visualization Platform. Proportion of women in ministerial (or equivalent) positions – Poland, Sweden. URL: <https://statbase.org/data/pol-proportion-of-women-in-ministerial-level-positions/>

1.3. Women in leadership roles in business and public administration

Women's participation in leadership roles in business and public administration has become an increasingly important topic in the context of gender equality and sustainable development. Leadership positions held by women contribute to more inclusive decision-making processes and stronger public institutions. In public administration, particular attention should be paid to women's leadership in the police and the judicial system.

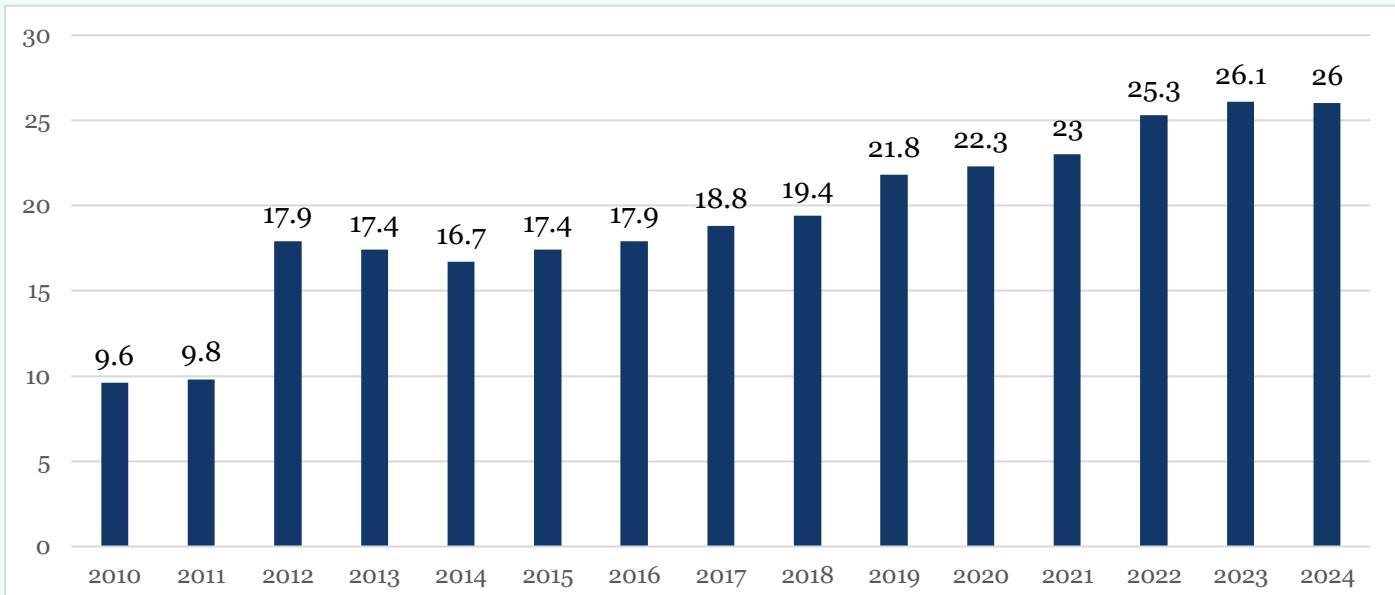


Fig. 9. Share of Women in the Police in the Republic of Moldova (2010–2024)

Source: National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova. n.d. Gender Statistics Database. Statbank. <https://statbank.statistica.md/PxWeb/pxweb/en/50%20Statistica%20gender/?rxid=2345d98a-890b-4459-bb1f-9b565f99b3b9>.

The share of women in the police in the Republic of Moldova demonstrates a clear upward trend over the period 2010–2024. In 2010, women accounted for only 9.6% of police personnel, indicating a relatively low level of female representation in law enforcement institutions. A significant increase can be observed starting from 2012, when the share almost doubled to 17.9%.

Between 2013 and 2017, the indicator remained relatively stable, fluctuating between 16.7% and 18.8%, which suggests a period of gradual consolidation rather than rapid growth. From 2018 onwards, a steady and continuous increase is evident, reaching 21.8% in 2019 and exceeding 25% by 2022.

By 2024, the share of women in the police of the Republic of Moldova reached 26.0%, reflecting substantial progress in gender inclusion within public administration. Overall, the data indicate positive dynamics and an expanding role of women in the police, including their growing participation in leadership and decision-making positions.

In addition to law enforcement institutions, the judicial system represents another key component of public administration (fig.10).

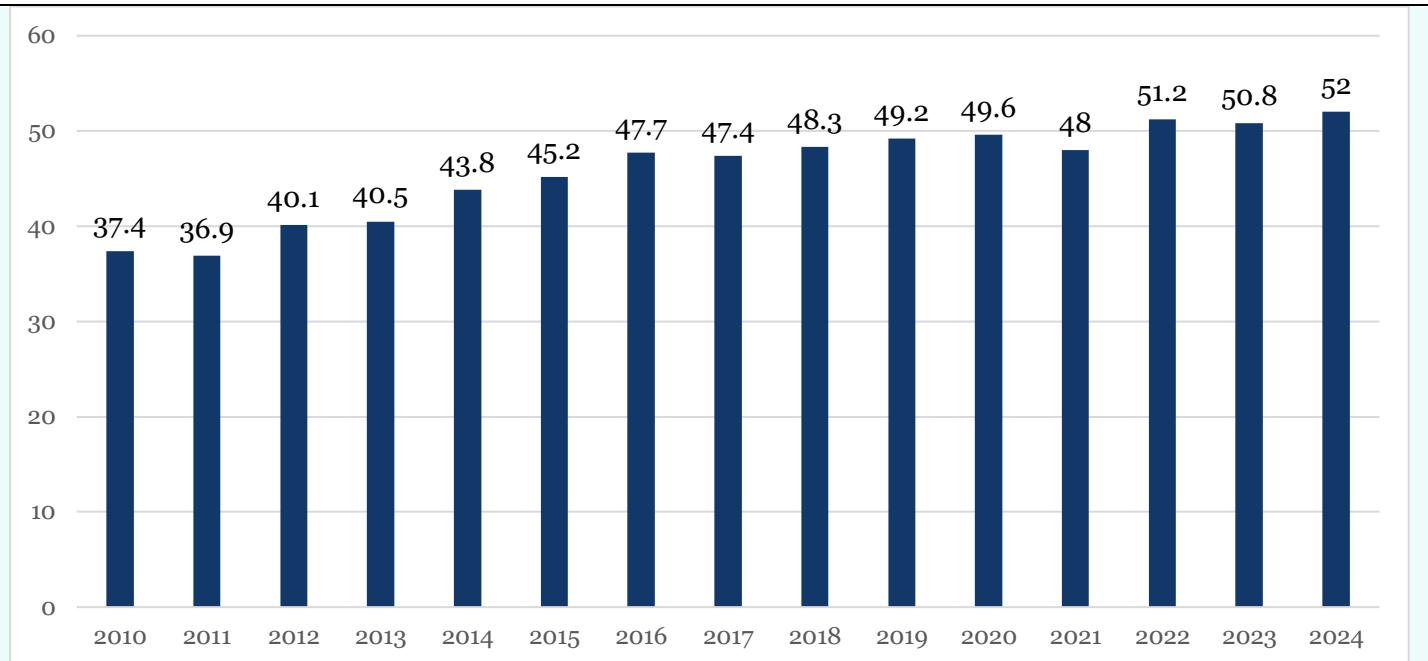


Fig. 10. Dynamics of Women's Representation in the Judiciary of the Republic of Moldova (2010–2024)

Source: National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova. n.d. Gender Statistics Database. Statbank. <https://statbank.statistica.md/PxWeb/pxweb/en/50%20Statistica%20gender/?rxid=2345d98a-890b-4459-bb1f-9b565f99b3b9>.

The share of women judges in the Republic of Moldova demonstrates a consistently high and increasing trend over the period 2010–2024. In 2010, women accounted for 37.4% of the total number of judges, indicating a relatively strong initial level of female representation compared to other public institutions.

From 2012 onwards, a steady growth can be observed, with the indicator exceeding 45% by 2015 and approaching gender parity in 2019–2020, when the share reached nearly 50%. Despite minor fluctuations in 2021, the overall upward trend continued.

By 2024, the share of women judges reached 52.0%, reflecting not only gender balance but also the increasing role of women in leadership and decision-making positions within the judicial system. Overall, the data highlight the advanced level of gender inclusion in the judiciary compared to other sectors of public administration in the Republic of Moldova.

In addition to law enforcement and the judicial system, women's participation in business and entrepreneurship represents another important area where they take leadership and influence economic development.

According to Logos Press (2025)⁷, approximately 34 % of small and medium-sized enterprises in Moldova are run by women. Women's participation rate in the labor market is lower than men's, as the lack of care services limits Moldovan women's access to the labor market. The care of children,

⁷ Logos Press. (2025, May 20). In Moldova, one third of companies are managed by women. <https://logos-pres.md/en/news/in-moldova-one-third-of-companies-are-managed-by-women>

the elderly and people with disabilities most often falls on women's shoulders, especially in rural areas. This has a direct impact on their participation in the economy. For the sake of domestic care, women are often forced to either give up their professional careers or choose flexible work, which limits their opportunities for career advancement. Studies have shown that having one or more children reduces a woman's labor force participation by 20% if she is between the ages of 29 and 45.

Thus, the issue of women's economic habilitation is acute in Moldova. It implies the expansion of their rights, ensuring their full participation in the economic life of society, the possibility to develop business and make decisions on an equal footing with men.

Another important indicator of women's participation in business is the share of firms with a female top manager (fig.11)

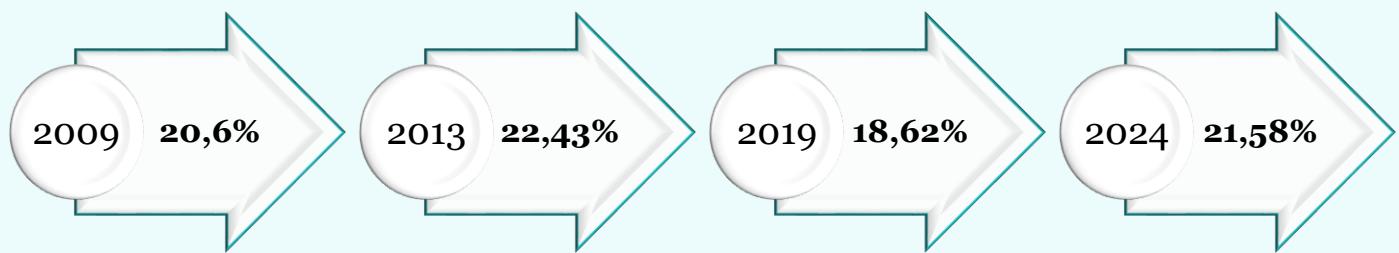


Fig. 11. Share of firms with a female top manager in the Republic of Moldova

Source: *Statbase Visualization Platform. Firms with female top manager | Moldova – yearly data, chart and table. Retrieved January, 2026, from <https://statbase.org/data/mda-firms-with-female-top-manager/>*

According to available data, the share of firms with a female top manager in the Republic of Moldova has shown some fluctuations over the past 15 years. In 2009, the share was 20.6 %, rising to 22.4 % in 2013. A slight decline was observed in 2019, with 18.6 %, followed by an increase to 21.6 % in 2024. This indicates that women continue to occupy a significant portion of top management positions, although representation remains below parity.

In 2024, Moldova ranked 18th out of 50 countries in terms of firms with female top managers, placing it between Canada and Bhutan. This international comparison highlights Moldova's relatively strong performance in promoting women's leadership in business, despite ongoing challenges in achieving full gender equality in management roles.

The figure below complements the Moldovan data by showing the evolution of female top managers in selected European countries (fig. 12)

Poland & Sweden

Poland

The share of firms with a female top manager in Poland has varied over the past decade. In 2009, the share was 31.1 %, decreasing to 20.4 % in 2013, and then rising to 27.8 % in 2019. This indicates that women occupy a notable portion of top management positions, though representation fluctuates over time.

In 2019, Poland ranked 7th out of 39 countries, between Bulgaria and Croatia, reflecting a relatively strong position in promoting women's leadership.

Sweden

In Sweden, the share of firms with a female top manager has been relatively low. In 2014, 12.5 % of firms had a female top manager, slightly increasing to 14.0 % in 2020, but then declining to 12.9 % in 2024.

In 2024, Sweden ranked 34th out of 51 countries, between Spain and Belgium, indicating persistent challenges in achieving gender parity in business leadership.

Fig. 12. Share of firms with a female top manager in Poland and Sweden

Source: Statbase. (n.d.). Firms with female top manager | Sweden, Poland – yearly data, chart and table. Statbase. Retrieved January 2026, from <https://statbase.org/data/swe-firms-with-female-top-manager>

Figure 12 shows that Moldova performs relatively well in promoting women's leadership, with a stable share of female top managers compared to other countries. While some countries like Poland show fluctuations and others like Sweden remain low, Moldova's experience highlights the importance of continuing efforts to support women in senior management roles.

II. Legal and policy framework

2.1. Existence of gender equality laws and anti-discrimination legislation

1. Law No. LP5/2006 of 9 February 2006 on ensuring equal opportunities for women and men. Monitorul Oficial No. 47–50, Article 200, 24 March 2006. Republic of Moldova.

This law aims to guarantee equal rights and opportunities for women and men in political, economic, social, cultural, and other spheres of life, preventing and eliminating all forms of gender-based discrimination.

2. Law No. 121/2012 of 25 May 2012 on ensuring equality (Anti-discrimination Law). Monitorul Oficial No. 103/355, 29 May 2012. Republic of Moldova.

This law regulates the prevention and elimination of all forms of discrimination and guarantees equality of rights and opportunities for all individuals in political, economic, social, cultural, and other spheres of life.

3. Law No. LP121/2012 of 25 May 2012 on ensuring equality. Monitorul Oficial No. 103, Article 355, 29 May 2012. Republic of Moldova.

This law regulates the prevention and elimination of all forms of discrimination and guarantees equality of rights and opportunities for all individuals in political, economic, social, cultural, and other spheres of life.

4) Law No. 298/2012 of 21 December 2012 on the activity of the Council for the Prevention and Elimination of Discrimination and Ensuring Equality. Monitorul Oficial No. 48, Article 148, 5 March 2013. Republic of Moldova.

This law regulates the establishment, functions, and activities of the Council for the Prevention and Elimination of Discrimination and Ensuring Equality, as an independent body responsible for preventing discrimination and promoting equality in the Republic of Moldova.

2.2. National gender equality strategies/action plans

1) Strategy for Ensuring Equality between Women and Men (2023–2027) - Government Decision No. 246 of 26.04.2023.

The document focuses on five general objectives, aimed at reducing gender-based wage gaps for equal work or work of equal value, increasing social protection for people involved in long-term care activities for family members through the creation of new support services, and promoting women in leadership positions and decision-making. It also aims to increase the number of men promoting gender equality.

2. National Programme for the Implementation of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security for 2023–2027. Approved by Government Decision No. 152 of 22 March 2023. Republic of Moldova.

The National Programme for the Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2023–2027) aims to strengthen women's participation in peace and security, promote gender equality

in the security and defence sector, and prevent and respond to violence and discrimination. It focuses on four pillars—representation, prevention, protection, and rehabilitation—while ensuring coordination between state authorities, civil society, and international partners.

3. National Human Rights Action Plan (PNADO)

Promoting and ensuring respect for fundamental human rights and freedoms is a priority of the state, confirmed in government policies and the framework program of the National Action Plan in the field of Human Rights (PNADO). PNADO for 2018-2022 (PNADO III) contains actions regarding facilitating access to justice, ensuring freedom of expression, promoting equality, protecting the rights of people with disabilities, those from the localities on the left side of the Dniester River, and those who are part of national, ethnic minority groups, religious, and linguistic. According to the Evaluation Report on the implementation of the PNADO 2018-2022, 8 progress was noted in the areas of preventing and combating human trafficking, gender equality and domestic violence, and children's rights. At the same time, PNADO 2024-2027 ensures the complementation of sectoral policies, focusing on ensuring human rights are prioritised in a participatory manner through the broad consensus between public authorities, civil society, and national institutions for the protection of human rights and strengthening the institutional mechanisms for implementation, coordination and monitoring the commitments in the field⁸.

4. The “European Moldova 2030” Strategy (Law No. 315 of 17 November 2022) sets long-term national development priorities, including promoting gender equality and ensuring equal rights for women in all spheres of public, economic, and political life. The strategy emphasizes empowering women, reducing gender-based disparities, and integrating a gender perspective into sectoral policies and governance frameworks.

⁸ UN Women. (2024). *Republic of Moldova: Gender Equality and Human Development Report*. United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. Retrieved from https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2024-09/b30_report_moldova_en_o.pdf

III. Education

3.1. Female enrollment rates in primary, secondary and tertiary education

Female enrollment rates at different education levels are recognized internationally as a key indicator of gender equality in education. According to Sustainable Development Goal 4 — one of the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals — countries should ensure inclusive and equitable quality education for all, eliminate gender disparities, and guarantee equal access to all levels of education, including tertiary education, by 2030. SDG 4 explicitly calls for equal access to affordable and quality technical, vocational, and higher education for women and men, and for the elimination of gender disparities in education⁹.

Female enrollment rates at different education levels in the Republic of Moldova reflect access to education as a key indicator of gender equality, in line with global practices and Sustainable Development Goal 4 on inclusive and equitable quality education (table 1)

Table 1. Gross Enrolment Ratio of Females by Educational Level and School Year, 2014/15–2024/25

School Year	2014/2015	2015/2016	2016/2017	2017/2018	2018/2019	2019/2020	2020/2021	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025
Gross enrolment ratio in tertiary education	57,3	57,1	58,4	59,9	62,5	65,2	71,7	79,5	81,7	84,8	89,0
Gross enrolment ratio in upper secondary education	67,3	68,9	73,3	75,5	76,6	80,5	81,8	83,5	83,6	84,8	84,1
Gross enrolment ratio in lower secondary education (gimnasiu m)	105,9	106,0	106,9	106,8	105,1	103,9	103,6	103,5	102,5	107,4	109,2
Gross enrolment ratio in primary education	105,1	103,7	102,9	102,3	102,3	105,3	105,9	106,6	104,2	107,0	109,4

Source: National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova. n.d. Gender Statistics Database. Statbank. Access: <https://statbank.statistica.md/PxWeb/pxweb/en/50%20Statistica%20gender/?rxid=2345d98a-890b-4459-bb1f-9b565f99b3b9>

The data in the table Gross Enrolment Ratio of Females by Educational Level and School Year, 2014/15–2024/25 show the trends in female enrollment at different levels of education in the Republic of Moldova over 11 school years.

⁹ United Nations. (2015). *Sustainable Development Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all*. United Nations. Retrieved from <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal4>

In tertiary education, there is a significant increase in female enrollment, rising from 57,3% in 2014/15 to 89,0% in 2024/25. The most notable growth occurred after the 2020/21 school year, when the ratio increased from 71,7% to 79,5%, continuing to rise in the following years. This indicates a consistent predominance of women in higher education and a growing number of girls pursuing studies beyond secondary school.

In upper secondary education, female enrollment also shows an upward trend, though less pronounced. The ratio grew from 67,3% in 2014/15 to 84,1% in 2024/25, with a peak of 84,8% in 2023/24. This reflects the high participation of girls in continuing education after lower secondary school.

In lower secondary education (gymnasium), the ratios exceed 100%, which is related to the GER calculation method (including students outside the official age range). The ratio fluctuated between 102,5% in 2022/23 and 109,2% in 2024/25, indicating a high level of female participation at this education level.

In primary education, the situation is similar: female GER ranges from 102,3% in 2018/19 to 109,4% in 2024/25, showing that almost all girls of primary school age are enrolled, and in recent years, the number even exceeds the official school-age population, possibly due to late enrollment or older children attending school. Overall, the table demonstrates a consistently high level of female enrollment across the education system, especially at secondary and tertiary levels. The most significant growth is observed in higher education, where women gradually become the majority, which aligns with official statistics showing a predominance of women among university and master's degree students.

While female enrolment rates illustrate access to education, a more precise assessment of gender equality in education is provided by the Gender Parity Index (GPI), which compares female and male participation across educational levels (table 2)

Table 2. Gender Parity Index (Females to Males) by Educational Level and School Year, 2014/15–2024/25

School Year	Primary education	Lower secondary education	Upper secondary education	Tertiary education
2014/15	0,99	1,00	1,03	1,30
2015/16	0,99	0,99	1,03	1,31
2016/17	0,99	0,99	1,00	1,28
2017/18	0,98	0,99	0,99	1,30
2018/19	0,95	0,98	1,00	1,32
2019/20	0,98	0,98	1,03	1,37
2020/21	0,99	0,99	1,00	1,40
2021/22	0,99	0,99	1,01	1,40
2022/23	0,98	0,97	0,99	1,35
2023/24	1,00	1,00	1,00	1,32
2024/25	0,99	0,98	1,00	1,27

Source: National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova. n.d. Gender Statistics Database. Statbank. Access: <https://statbank.statistica.md/PxWeb/pxweb/en/50%20Statistica%20gender/?rxid=2345d98a-890b-4459-bb1f-9b565f99b3b9>

Overall, for the period 2014/15–2024/25 school years, the gender parity index (GPI) in the education system remains close to 1,0, indicating almost equal participation of females and males at most levels of education. However, gender balance varies depending on the educational level, and official statistics show that women generally attain higher educational levels than men.

In primary education, the GPI mostly fluctuates between 0,98–0,99, indicating a slight predominance of boys. The lowest value was recorded in the 2018/19 school year – 0,95, after which the index recovered, reaching 1,00 in the 2023/24 school year. In the 2024/25 school year, it slightly decreased again to 0,99. According to official statistics, men tend to leave the educational system earlier than women, which may partially explain these small variations.

In lower secondary education, GPI values are also close to parity, ranging from 0,97 to 1,00. The minimum value occurred in the 2022/23 school year – 0,97, indicating a moderate predominance of boys. In the 2023/24 school year, full parity was achieved (1,00), but in the 2024/25 school year, the index slightly dropped to 0,98. Official data show that the majority of both men and women in the 25–64 age group have medium-level education (56,7% of men vs 51,9% of women), supporting the observed near-parity at this level.

In upper secondary education, GPI demonstrates relative stability and is mostly equal to or slightly above 1,00, with maximum values of 1,03 in the 2014/15 and 2019/20 school years, reflecting a slightly higher proportion of girls. This aligns with official data showing that girls tend to choose educational tracks related to services and social sciences, while boys prefer engineering, manufacturing, and ICT-related fields. In the 2023/24 and 2024/25 school years, exact parity (1,00) was achieved.

The most pronounced gender imbalance in favor of females is observed in tertiary education, where GPI exceeds 1,25 throughout the period. It increased from 1,30 in the 2014/15 school year to a maximum of 1,40 in the 2020/21 and 2021/22 school years. In the 2024/25 school year, it slightly decreased to 1,27, but still indicates a sustained predominance of women.

Official statistics confirm that women constitute 58,5% of all tertiary students in 2024/25, and 66,4% of students in master's programs, reflecting a real and persistent advantage of women in higher education. Women predominantly enroll in fields such as education, social sciences, public services, production technologies, philology, and arts, while men are concentrated in engineering, ICT, and sports.

3.2. Gender parity in STEM fields

Gender parity in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) education and professions remains a challenge in the Republic of Moldova. Women are significantly underrepresented in ICT and technical fields, both in education and in the labor market. For example, in higher education, only a small proportion of female students choose STEM specializations (table 3).

Table 3. First Cycle (Licentiate / Bachelor) – Share of Female STEM Graduates (%)

Field of Study	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Mathematics and Statistics	58,3	71,4	64,7	78,6	83,3	100,0	50,0	87,5
Information and Communication Tech	21,5	28,3	20,8	20,2	23,7	23,4	26,0	21,0
Engineering and Engineering Trades	19,9	27,5	22,0	21,3	19,0	19,2	16,8	14,7

Source: National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova. (2025). Graduates from higher education institutions by fields of study, cycles and sex, 2017–2024 [Statistical database]. Statbank. Retrieved from https://statbank.statistica.md/PxWeb/pxweb/en/30%20Statistica%20sociala/30%20Statistica%20sociala_07%20INV_INV060/INV060070.px/

The table shows that gender parity in STEM at the first cycle (Bachelor) level remains uneven across fields in Moldova. Women are relatively well represented in Mathematics and Statistics, with the share of female graduates ranging from 50% to 100% over the period 2017–2024. In contrast, female participation in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and Engineering remains low, consistently below 30%, and even declining in Engineering from 19.9% in 2017 to 14.7% in 2024.

For the Second Cycle (Master) level, the trends in female participation in STEM fields show a similar pattern, though the overall share of women is generally lower than in the first cycle (tab. 4).

Table 4. Second Cycle (Master) – Share of Female STEM Graduates (%)

Field of Study	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Mathematics and Statistics	71,4	71,4	40,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	50,0	60,0
Information and Communication Tech.	28,3	28,3	30,1	30,1	29,8	30,5	26,0	26,0
Engineering and Engineering Trades	27,7	27,8	26,2	22,6	21,7	30,5	19,2	22,0

Source: National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova. (2025). Graduates from higher education institutions by fields of study, cycles and sex, 2017–2024 [Statistical database]. Statbank. Retrieved from https://statbank.statistica.md/PxWeb/pxweb/en/30%20Statistica%20sociala/30%20Statistica%20sociala_07%20INV_INV060/INV060070.px/

The data for the Second Cycle (Master) level highlights persistent gender disparities in STEM fields. Women are relatively well-represented in Mathematics and Statistics, though the percentages fluctuate widely between 40% and 100%. In Information and Communication Technologies, female participation remains low, ranging from 26% to 30.5%, reflecting similar trends seen at the first cycle level. Engineering and Engineering Trades also show limited female representation, varying between 19% and 30.5%.

In addition to the trends observed in higher education, gender disparities in STEM are also evident in the labor market and access to technology in Moldova.

In addition to the trends observed in higher education, gender disparities in STEM are also evident in the labor market and access to technology in Moldova.

Women in ICT earn substantially less than men and represent only 19% of digital professions, despite accounting for 31% of all ICT jobs.

The 2023 data on the gender pay gap across industries highlights this disparity: the largest gap is observed in Information and Communication (38%), followed by Financial and Insurance Activities (34.6%) and Health and Social Assistance (25.6%). In contrast, sectors such as Administrative Service Activities (-7.5%), Extractive Industry (-3.1%), and Education (0.2%) show little to no pay gap, and in some cases, women earn more than men.

Overall, the total gender pay gap in Moldova is 15.6%, indicating that while some sectors approach parity, high-tech and STEM-related industries continue to exhibit pronounced gender inequality, emphasizing the need for targeted policies to increase women's participation and reduce pay disparities in ICT and other STEM fields.

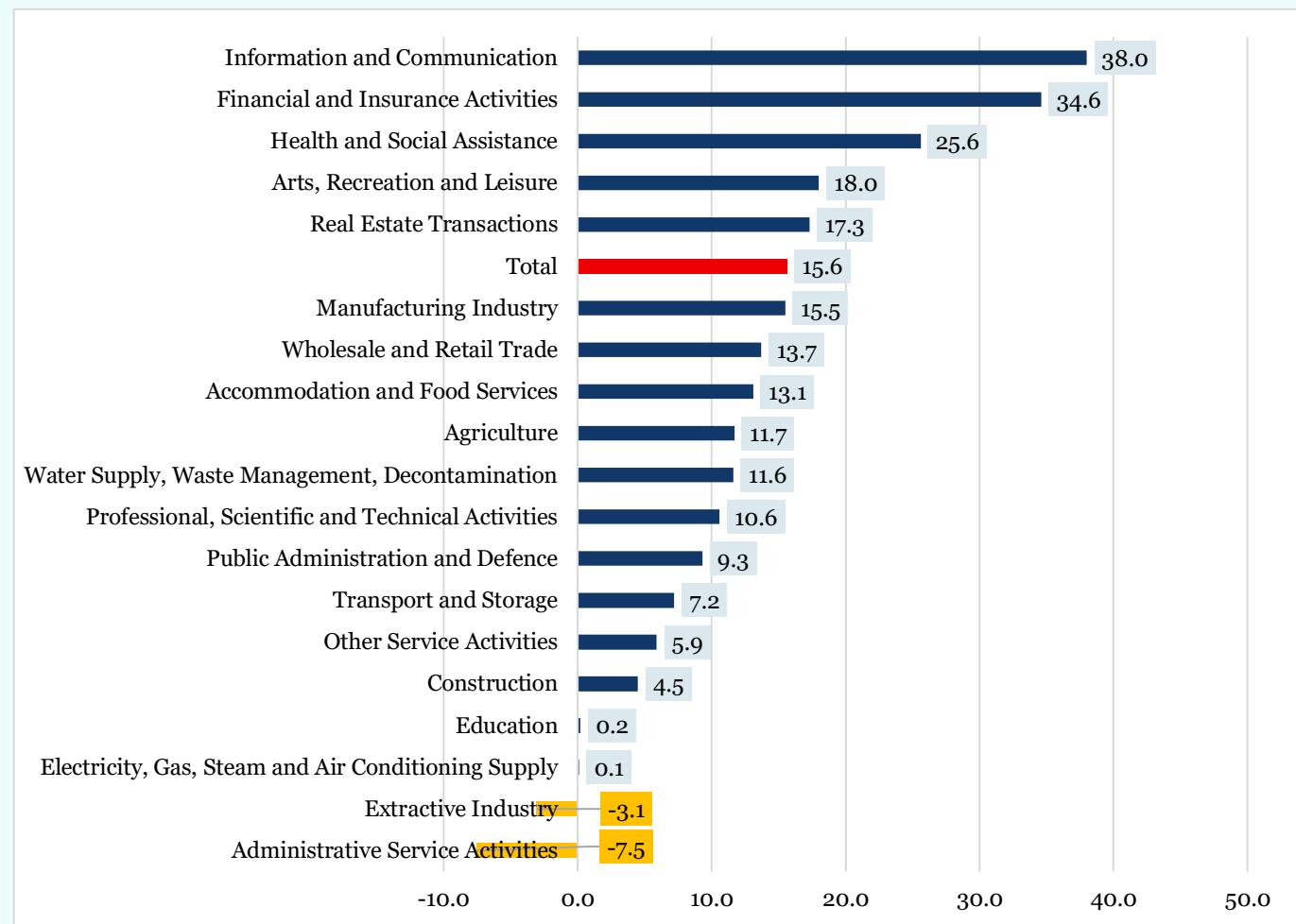


Fig. 13. Gender Pay Gap by Industry, 2023 (%)

Source: National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova. (2025). *Moldova in figures 2025* (Breviar). https://statistica.gov.md/files/files/publicatii_electronice/Moldova_in_cifre/2025/breviar_ro_2025.pdf

Access to computers and the Internet is also unequal, with households led by women having 11.7% lower access than those led by men, and the gap widening over time.

Women entrepreneurs are underrepresented in management positions, although 67% of women-led businesses operate in IT compared to 56% of men, and the growth of women-owned ICT companies between 2015 and 2017 (28%) outpaced that of men (24%).

Cultural perceptions further limit participation, with around one-third of female secondary students believing programming is “not appropriate for girls,” rising to 39% in rural areas. Initiatives such as ITU’s Girls in ICT and local programs like GirlsGoIT are actively addressing these barriers to improve female participation in ICT and STEM fields¹⁰.

¹⁰ International Telecommunication Union (ITU). (2022). *Digital development country profile: Republic of Moldova*. https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Regional-Presence/Europe/Documents/Publications/2022/Digital%20Development/Digital%20Development%20Country%20Profile_Moldova_final_02.22.pdf

IV. Gender-Based violence

4.1. Prevalence of domestic violence

The data on registered domestic violence victims in Moldova clearly show the persistent gendered nature of this problem. Women consistently constitute the majority of victims, with some age groups particularly affected (fig. 14).

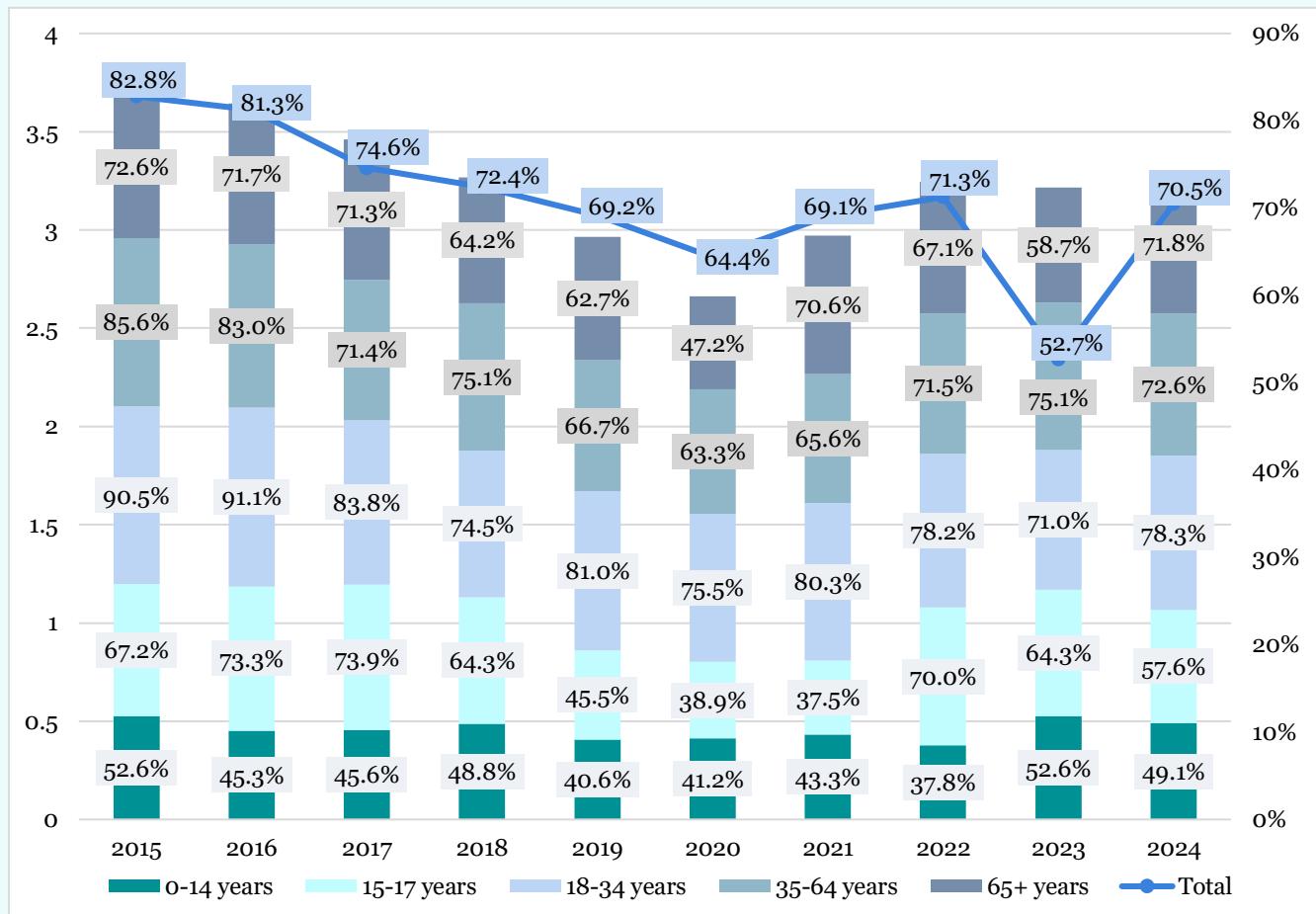


Fig. 14. Share of women among registered domestic violence victims in Moldova, by age group, 2015–2024

Source: National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova. Registered victims of domestic violence by age and sex. Statbank Moldova. Available at: <https://statbank.statistica.md>

In 2024, 70.5% of all registered victims were women (491 out of 926 cases). The most alarming figures are observed among adults: women aged 18–34 years account for 78.3% of victims (166 individuals), and those aged 35–64 years make up 72.6% (341 individuals). This highlights that women of working and reproductive age remain the most vulnerable to domestic violence.

Adolescents (15–17 years) show notable fluctuations over the decade, with 57.6% (19 individuals) being female in 2024, but in some years their share exceeded 70%, indicating variability in reporting or exposure. Children aged 0–14 years accounted for 49.1% of victims (53 individuals), suggesting that while violence against children occurs, the majority of registered cases involve

adults. Seniors (65+) also remain affected, with women representing 71.8% (74 individuals) of victims in 2024.

One particularly striking anomaly is in 2023, when the share of women among all registered victims dropped sharply to 52.7%, the lowest in the decade. This could reflect reporting patterns, underreporting, or other socio-demographic factors affecting registration of cases.

Overall, while these percentages reflect registered cases rather than population-wide prevalence, the data underscore the urgent need for targeted interventions aimed at adult women, especially those in the 18–64 age range, as well as continued support for adolescents and seniors exposed to domestic violence.

The marital status of the victim is correlated with the experience of violence cases. Divorced or separated women report more cases of violence committed by their husband/partner (84%), while the lowest prevalence of violence is registered for women that cohabit with a partner but are not married (53.1%). The data also suggest that experience of husband/partner violence seems to decrease slightly when a woman's level of education increases. The higher the woman's educational level is, the lower is the probability for her to experience violence committed by the husband/partner. While about 58% of women with higher education reported cases of violence, this rate is even higher for women with completed lower secondary and secondary specialized education, 69% and 68% respectively.

The relationship between partner violence and occupational status of the victim shows some influence on women's exposure to partner violence. Housewives and unemployed women (57.7% and 59.9%) report fewer cases of violence committed by husbands/partners than those who are employed and have their own income. The lowest prevalence rate among the employed women is registered by those self-employed in non-agricultural activities (63%), followed by employees (65%), the most affected being those who work on their own account in the agricultural sector (67%). When referring to the cumulative prevalence of all those three forms of violence committed by the current or most recent husband/partner, it is noted that 12.3% of women have experienced over their lifetime all the three forms of violence. Just like in the case of the general prevalence rate of violence, rural women reported more cumulative experiences of all the three forms of violence, 14% as compared to 10.3% of urban women.

The occurrence of multiple violence cases was reported more frequently by women aged 55-59 years old, and those who divorced or separated from the most recent husband/partner. Housewives seem to be exposed to a lower risk of being victims of multiple violence (5.8%) as compared to women who are involved in other categories of activities¹¹.

4.2. Legal protections and enforcement mechanisms

1. Law No. 45 on the Prevention and Combating of Domestic Violence. Parliament, 1 Mar. 2007. Official Gazette No. 55-56, 18 Mar. 2008, art. 178. Republic of Moldova.

The Law No. 45-XVI on Preventing and Combating Family Violence aims to protect and support the family unit by ensuring the human rights of women and men to a life without violence. It

¹¹ National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova. (2011). *Violence against women in the family in the Republic of Moldova* (English edition). https://statistica.gov.md/files/files/publicatii_electronice/Violenta/Raport_violenta_fem_eng.pdf

provides the institutional framework to address GBV through an Inter-ministerial Coordinating Council to ensure coordination and cooperation across ministries and other central administrative authorities. It establishes victim protection (a court can issue a protection order within 24 hours by applying a restraining order), encourages the establishment of centers/services for the rehabilitation of survivors and perpetrators, and allows third parties to file complaints on behalf of survivors.

2. Law No. 144 on the Ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence. Parliament, 14 Oct. 2021. Official Gazette No. 256-260, 22 Oct. 2021, art. 320. Republic of Moldova.

By ratifying, Moldova commits to preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, protecting and supporting victims, prosecuting perpetrators, and adopting comprehensive, integrated policies to address all forms of gender-based violence

3. Government Decision No. 315, Approving the National Programme on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence for 2023–2027. 24 May 2023. Government of the Republic of Moldova.

The Government of the Republic of Moldova approved Decision No. 315 on May 24, 2023, establishing a five-year National Programme aimed at preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence.

The Programme is victim-centered, emphasizes gender equality, and aligns with the Istanbul Convention, reflecting the priorities of the National Development Strategy “European Moldova 2030.”

The Programme is structured around the four pillars of the Istanbul Convention:

- *Prevention* – raising awareness, promoting gender equality, and implementing educational and social measures to reduce violence.
- *Protection* – strengthening services for victims, including specialized support, crisis intervention, and rehabilitation.
- *Punishment* – ensuring an effective justice system that investigates, prosecutes, and holds perpetrators accountable while also providing opportunities for their re-education.
- *Integrated policies* – coordinating actions among public authorities, civil society, and international partners to deliver a comprehensive response to violence.

Key objectives and actions include:

- Promoting zero tolerance for all forms of violence against women and domestic violence.
- Implementing a multidisciplinary approach to victim protection and assistance.
- Developing a National Agency to coordinate the implementation of measures and policies.
- Enhancing the capacity of the justice system to ensure effective prosecution and accountability.
- Engaging all relevant stakeholders, including government institutions, NGOs, and international partners such as UN Women, UNFPA, and Sweden.

Overall, the Programme provides a comprehensive framework to prevent violence, support victims, strengthen accountability, and promote gender equality across Moldova over the 2023–2027 period.

4.3. Availability of support services for victims

According to the requirements of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention) and the recommendations of the Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO), approximately 260 places for the rehabilitation of victims of violence should be ensured in the Republic of Moldova, based on the current population size. At present, the national capacity remains limited, with only 182 places available.

In response to these challenges, important institutional and financial measures have been undertaken in recent years. In 2024, the position of specialist in preventing and combating domestic violence and in the rehabilitation of victims of crime was introduced within local social services. As part of capacity-building efforts, 145 new specialists in the field of child rights protection were recruited, and approximately 450 professionals were trained in the prevention of domestic and gender-based violence.

Furthermore, in 2025 the Government allocated nearly MDL 40 million for the social protection of persons affected by violence, with the support of development partners. These efforts aim to strengthen the availability, accessibility and quality of support services for victims across the country.¹²

The table below provides an overview of the main government and social support services currently available for women affected by violence in the Republic of Moldova.

Table 5. Government and social support services for women affected by violence in Moldova

Service name	Target group	Main services provided	Access / Duration	Contact information
Social Service “Maternal Center”	Mothers affected by violence and their children	Psychological support, legal assistance, vocational guidance, social reintegration	Maximum stay: up to 12 months, with possible extension in exceptional cases	Tel.: +373 22 922 555, +373 671 001 44 (24/7) Centers in Cahul, Hîncești (“Pro-Femina”), Căușeni (“Pro Familia”)
Helpline for Women and Girls	Women and girls’ victims of violence	Counselling and support in cases of emotional, economic, physical, social and sexual violence	Free national hotline	Tel.: 0800 88 008
Legal Support Hotline for Women with Disabilities (WhatsApp)	Women with disabilities affected by violence	Free legal information, explanation of protection measures (protection orders, complaints), documentation of	Ongoing support; does not replace emergency services	WhatsApp: +373 67 777 380 Implemented by AEFL Moldova and Legal Support Center

¹² Kovalenko, Irina. “‘Greater Financial Resources’ to Protect Victims of Violence.” *Logos-Press*, 12 Aug. 2025, logos-pres.md/en/news/greater-financial-resources-to-protect-victims-of-violence/?utm_source

		violence, step-by-step guidance when contacting police and social/medical services		
Shelters for Survivors of Gender-Based Violence	Women and their children, including refugees	Safe temporary accommodation, psychological counselling, legal assistance, safety planning, social and employment support	Short- and medium-term stay; up to 6 months, extendable to 12 months in exceptional cases	Access through social services, NGOs or emergency services (112)
Ungheni Shelter for Survivors of Gender-Based Violence	Survivors of gender-based violence and their children, including refugee women	Accommodation (18 beds), legal support, social assistance, psychological and vocational counselling	Up to 6 months; up to 12 months in exceptional cases	Implemented with support of UNDP, IOM and Government of Japan (opened 2023)
Multi-sectoral Support Units for GBV Survivors (Emergency Departments)	Survivors of gender-based violence	Immediate medical, psychological and legal assistance in a safe environment; prevention revictimization	Immediate access through hospital emergency departments	Units located in Chișinău, Bălți, Edineț, Cahul, Comrat, Căușeni, Soroca, Florești, Hîncești, Orhei Coordinated by Ministry of Health with UNFPA support
Community Centers	Women, children and families	Safe spaces, psychosocial support, information, referral to specialized services	Access through local centers	Locations: Bălți (Terre des Hommes, +373 68 221 084), Dondușeni (CCF Moldova), Căușeni (NGO "Partnership for Every Child") Websites: https://tdh-moldova.org , https://www.ccfmoldova.org

Source: Compiled by the authors

As shown in the table above, geographic disparities persist, and access to long-term rehabilitation, especially in rural areas and for women with disabilities, continues to be limited. While a range of services exists, they often lack sufficient capacity, and there are regional differences in both awareness of services and actual availability.

The main gaps in service provision in Moldova include:

- Social assistance, particularly support for victims of domestic violence, economic empowerment, and social housing;
- Long-term mental health and psychosocial support;
- Access to state-funded legal counselling and representation.

Further investments are therefore required to expand shelter capacity, strengthen community-based services, and ensure sustainable, nationwide coverage.¹³ In addition to the services listed in

¹³ UN Women Moldova. (2016). *Report on the costing of domestic violence and violence against women in the Republic of Moldova* (Brief). United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. https://moldova.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Field%20Office%20Moldova/Attachments/Publications/2016/Report_Costing%20f%20Violence_Brief_eng.pdf

the table above, Moldova has been expanding its support infrastructure for survivors of domestic and gender-based violence:

- Shelters and rehabilitation centers exist and continue to expand. For example, a modern shelter, “Magnolia”, for survivors of domestic violence was recently opened in northern Moldova (UNFPA-Moldova).
- Specialized services providing medical, psychological, social, and legal support have been established, including centers dedicated to survivors of sexual violence (Ministry of Labour and Social Protection).
- A network of multisectoral response units has been set up within hospital emergency departments across multiple districts to provide coordinated care and reduce revictimization (The United Nations in Moldova).

Legal and counselling support:

- Partnerships between international organizations (e.g., UN Women, UNFPA) and local civil society groups are strengthening access to legal counselling and representation for survivors (The United Nations in Moldova).
- Case-management approaches combining coordinated social and legal support are being developed to improve responses to domestic and gender-based violence cases (UNFPA-Moldova).

Hotlines and reporting mechanisms:

- Services such as the national Women and Girls Trust Line (0800 88 008) register thousands of calls related to violence and serve as a key first point of contact for survivors seeking help.

These measures complement the services outlined in the table, helping to address geographic disparities and gaps in access, especially in rural areas and for women with disabilities.

V. Institutional mechanisms

5.1. Existence of gender equality bodies or ombudsman

Ombudsman - an independent national human rights institution in Moldova that protects human rights and freedoms

The Ombudsperson's office:

- monitors and reports on human rights, including issues of discrimination and equality based on sex/gender;
- reviews complaints related to violations, including by public institutions or private actors, and can recommend legal and policy changes;
- Council for Preventing and Eliminating Discrimination and Ensuring Equality - mandated to prevent and protect against discrimination and to ensure equality across various grounds, including gender/sex. This council deals with complaints on discrimination, including those related to women and gender equality.

Role and Function:

- Receives and examines complaints of discrimination, including gender-based discrimination;
- Promotes equal opportunities and non-discrimination;
- Works as an institutional body under the broader human rights and equality mechanism

Gender focal points within ministries - mandated to integrate gender considerations into public policies, strategies, and programmes. **Civil society network:** The platform for Gender Equality - advocacy and monitoring role, influencing institutional policy and accountability for gender equality

5.2. Budget allocation for gender equality initiatives

Understanding the distribution of funding for programs addressing gender-based violence and harmful practices is crucial for evaluating the role of different actors and the sustainability of these initiatives. The following data illustrate how financial resources are allocated among NGOs, UNFPA, the UN, and the government in Moldova in 2024 (table 5).

Table 5. Funding for Gender-Based Violence and Harmful Practices Programs in Moldova, 2024

Implementing Organization	Amount (USD)	% of Total
NGOs	3,444,829	53%
UNFPA	3,075,753	47%
UN	239	0%
Government (GOV)	4,346	0%
Total	6,525,167	100%

Source: United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). UNFPA Moldova Republic – Transparency Portal. UNFPA, 2025, https://www.unfpa.org/de/data/transparency-portal/unfpa-moldova-republic?utm_source

The largest share of funding goes to NGOs (3,444,829 USD, 53%) and UNFPA (3,075,753 USD, 47%), which together deliver the full scope of program activities. Contributions from the UN (239

USD) and the government (4,346 USD) are negligible, showing that international organizations lead program implementation.

The total funding amounts to 6,525,167 USD, representing a significant investment in programs addressing gender-based violence and harmful practices.

The dominance of NGOs and UNFPA indicates reliance on international organizations rather than national authorities. Minimal government involvement suggests limited local financial support. Heavy dependence on external funding could affect the long-term sustainability of these programs if donor priorities change.

The analysis of funding sources highlights the heavy reliance of Moldova on external support for programs addressing gender-based violence and harmful practices. Only a small fraction of resources comes from core or domestic funding (2%), while the vast majority (98%) is provided through non-core, externally funded contributions (fig. 15).

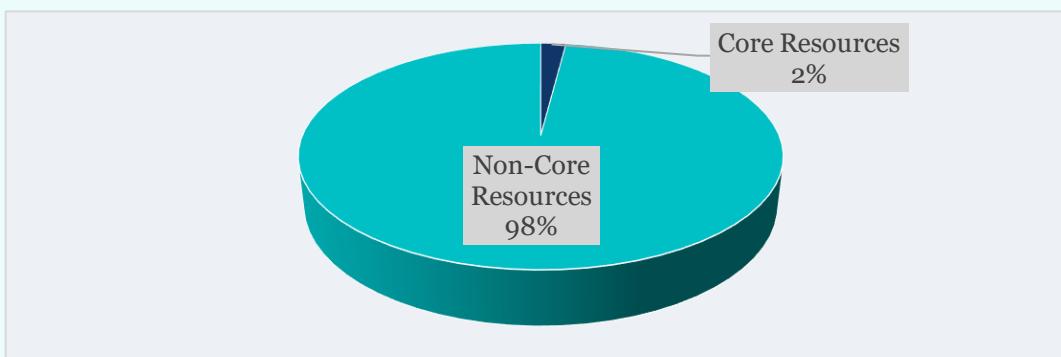


Fig. 15. Share of Funding Sources for Gender-Based Violence and Harmful Practices Programs in Moldova, 2024

Source: United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). UNFPA Moldova Republic – Transparency Portal. UNFPA, 2025, https://www.unfpa.org/de/data/transparency-portal/unfpa-moldova-republic?utm_source

This indicates that national financial support is minimal, and the sustainability of these initiatives largely depends on international donors.

VI. Conclusions and Key Findings

The analysis of gender equality in the Republic of Moldova demonstrates substantial progress over the past decade, positioning the country as one of the regional leaders in advancing women's rights and gender parity. Moldova's entry into the top 10 of the Global Gender Gap Index 2025 (7th place) confirms the effectiveness of recent reforms, particularly in political empowerment, education, and legal frameworks. However, despite these achievements, significant structural and sectoral challenges persist, requiring sustained policy attention and institutional commitment.

1. Political Representation and Decision-Making

One of the most notable achievements is the significant increase in women's political representation, largely driven by mandatory gender quotas in electoral legislation. Women currently account for around 40% of Members of Parliament, placing Moldova above several EU countries, such as Poland, and close to high-performing states like Sweden. The introduction of placement rules on electoral lists has strengthened enforcement and reduced symbolic compliance with quotas.

Nevertheless, gender disparities remain evident in leadership positions. Men continue to dominate the most competitive positions on party lists and key decision-making roles. At the local level, women are better represented in village councils and rural mayoral positions, while their presence in district and municipal councils and urban mayoralties remains limited. This reflects persistent gender stereotypes, unequal access to political resources, and the tendency of parties to nominate women for lower-level positions.

2. Women in Executive Power and Public Administration

Women's representation in ministerial and high-level government positions has improved considerably, reaching 35.7% in 2024. Moldova ranks ahead of Poland in this area, although it still lags behind countries with long-standing gender-balanced governance, such as Sweden. These trends indicate progress but also highlight the fragility of gains, as representation fluctuates depending on political cycles.

In public administration, women are increasingly present in the police and judiciary. The judiciary stands out as a sector where gender parity has not only been achieved but surpassed, with women representing 52% of judges in 2024. In contrast, law enforcement remains more gender-imbalanced, although steady progress is visible. These differences underline the uneven pace of gender inclusion across public institutions.

3. Women's Leadership in Business and the Economy

Women play an important role in Moldova's business sector, with approximately one-third of SMEs led by women and over 20% of firms having a female top manager. In international comparisons, Moldova performs relatively well in terms of women's access to top management positions.

However, women's economic participation is constrained by structural barriers, particularly unpaid care responsibilities, limited childcare and eldercare services, and persistent gender

norms. These factors reduce women's labor market participation and limit career advancement, especially for women with children. The data clearly show that motherhood significantly reduces women's employment rates, reinforcing economic dependency and vulnerability.

4. Education: High Female Participation, Persistent Segregation

Moldova has achieved near-complete gender parity in education, with women outperforming men in upper secondary and tertiary education. Female enrollment rates in higher education are particularly high, and women dominate master's level studies.

Despite these achievements, strong gender segregation persists by field of study. Women remain underrepresented in STEM disciplines, especially ICT and engineering, both at bachelor's and master's levels. This educational segregation translates directly into labor market inequalities, contributing to occupational segregation and large gender pay gaps in high-tech sectors.

5. Gender Pay Gap and Digital Inequality

The overall gender pay gap in Moldova remains significant at 15.6%, with the widest disparities observed in ICT, finance, and high-skilled sectors. Women are underrepresented in digital professions, earn less than men in the same sectors, and face unequal access to technology, particularly in rural areas and female-headed households.

Cultural perceptions and gender stereotypes continue to discourage girls from pursuing STEM careers, reinforcing long-term inequalities in income, innovation, and economic power.

6. Gender-Based Violence: Persistent and Gendered

Gender-based and domestic violence remain critical challenges. Women consistently represent more than 70% of registered victims, particularly those aged 18–64. While Moldova has established a comprehensive legal framework aligned with the Istanbul Convention, implementation gaps remain.

Support services have expanded, including shelters, hotlines, and multisectoral response units, yet capacity remains insufficient, especially in rural areas and for women with disabilities. Long-term psychosocial support, legal assistance, and economic reintegration services remain limited.

7. Institutional Mechanisms and Governance

Moldova has developed a solid institutional architecture for gender equality, including the Ombudsperson, the Equality Council, gender focal points in ministries, and active civil society platforms. However, coordination, monitoring capacity, and enforcement mechanisms require further strengthening to ensure effective policy implementation.

8. Financing and Sustainability of Gender Equality Policies

A critical finding of the study is the heavy reliance on external funding for gender equality and GBV-related programs. In 2024, 98% of funding came from international donors, primarily NGOs and UNFPA, while government contributions were negligible. This funding structure raises

serious concerns about long-term sustainability and national ownership of gender equality initiatives.

In conclusion, Moldova has made remarkable progress in advancing gender equality, particularly in political representation, education, and legal alignment with EU and international standards. However, persistent inequalities remain in economic participation, leadership positions, STEM fields, and protection from gender-based violence. The sustainability of progress depends on increased national financial commitment, stronger institutional coordination, targeted policies addressing care responsibilities and economic empowerment, and continued efforts to challenge gender stereotypes.

Strengthening domestic ownership of gender equality policies and ensuring adequate public funding will be essential for consolidating achievements and aligning Moldova's gender equality agenda with EU governance and inclusive development standards.

VII. Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, further progress in advancing gender equality in the Republic of Moldova requires a combination of legislative consolidation, institutional strengthening, targeted sectoral interventions, and increased national ownership of gender equality policies. The following recommendations are proposed to address the identified gaps and support alignment with European Union standards.

1. Strengthen Women's Participation in Political and Public Decision-Making

- 1.1. Ensure strict and consistent enforcement of gender quota requirements, with particular attention to the placement of women in electable positions on party lists at both national and local levels
- 1.2. Introduce additional incentives or sanctions to discourage the concentration of women in lower or less competitive electoral positions.
- 1.3. Promote leadership development programmes, mentoring schemes, and political training for women candidates, especially at district, municipal, and urban levels where representation remains low.
- 1.4. Encourage political parties to adopt internal gender equality strategies and transparent nomination procedures to reduce informal barriers to women's advancement.

2. Address Structural Barriers to Women's Economic Empowerment

- 2.1. Expand access to affordable and quality childcare, eldercare, and care services, particularly in rural areas, to reduce the unequal burden of unpaid care work borne by women.
- 2.2. Promote flexible and family-friendly work arrangements for both women and men, including parental leave policies that encourage greater involvement of fathers.
- 2.3. Strengthen active labour market policies aimed at women, including reskilling and upskilling programmes, entrepreneurship support, and access to finance for women-led businesses.
- 2.4. Integrate gender equality objectives into economic development, employment, and SME support strategies.

3. Promote Gender Balance in STEM Education and Employment

Although women in the Republic of Moldova have broad and equitable access to education and are well represented in tertiary education overall, significant gender imbalances persist in STEM education and related employment sectors. This imbalance is not rooted in limited educational opportunities, but rather in gender stereotypes, traditional role expectations, and structural barriers that influence educational choices and labour market transitions. Promoting gender balance in STEM education and employment is therefore crucial for improving women's economic opportunities and ensuring more inclusive and innovative growth.

- 3.1. Strengthen career guidance and counselling at secondary and upper secondary education levels to encourage gender-balanced choices, with particular emphasis on increasing girls' participation in STEM-related fields.

Introduce targeted support measures, such as scholarships, mentoring schemes, and paid internships, aimed at facilitating women's entry into STEM education and employment, especially in ICT, engineering, and applied sciences.

- 3.2. Enhance cooperation between higher education institutions, vocational education providers, and employers to support smoother school-to-work transitions for women graduating from STEM programmes.
- 3.3. Integrate gender-sensitive approaches into STEM curricula, teaching materials, and teacher training programmes in order to challenge stereotypes and promote inclusive learning environments.
- 3.4. Promote visibility of female role models in STEM through awareness campaigns, public events, and partnerships with the private sector, particularly in regions where traditional gender norms continue to shape educational and career choices.

4. Narrow the Gender Pay Gap and Promote Equal Economic Outcomes

- 4.1. Enhance transparency in wage-setting practices and strengthen monitoring of the gender pay gap across sectors, particularly in ICT, finance, and high-growth industries.
- 4.2. Encourage employers to adopt gender-responsive human resource policies, including equal pay audits and gender-neutral job evaluation systems.
- 4.3. Support women's access to leadership and decision-making roles in both public and private sectors to reduce vertical segregation.

5. Strengthen Prevention and Response to Gender-Based Violence

- 5.1. Increase national budget allocations for the prevention and combating of gender-based and domestic violence to reduce reliance on external donor funding.
- 5.2. Expand the geographic coverage and capacity of shelters, crisis centres, and rehabilitation services, with special attention to rural areas and women with disabilities.
- 5.3. Ensure sustainable access to free legal assistance, long-term psychosocial support, and economic reintegration services for survivors.
- 5.4. Strengthen data collection, inter-institutional coordination, and monitoring mechanisms to improve the effectiveness of GBV policies and services.

6. Enhance Institutional Capacity and Governance for Gender Equality

- 6.1. Strengthen the mandates, resources, and coordination mechanisms of key gender equality institutions, including the Equality Council, the Ombudsperson's Office, and gender focal points within ministries.
- 6.2. Improve monitoring and evaluation frameworks to assess the impact of gender equality policies and strategies at national and local levels.
- 6.3. Institutionalize gender mainstreaming across all public policies, budgets, and sectoral strategies through mandatory gender impact assessments.

7. Increase National Ownership and Sustainable Financing

- 7.1. Gradually increase domestic public funding for gender equality initiatives and GBV prevention to ensure long-term sustainability.
- 7.2. Integrate gender-responsive budgeting into national and local public finance systems.

7.3. Strengthen partnerships between government institutions, civil society organizations, and international partners to ensure coordinated and effective implementation of gender equality policies.

8. Promote Social and Cultural Change

- 8.1. Implement nationwide awareness campaigns aimed at challenging gender stereotypes related to leadership, care responsibilities, and professional roles.
- 8.2. Engage men and boys as active partners in promoting gender equality, including through education, media, and community-based initiatives.
- 8.3. Support civil society organizations and local communities in promoting inclusive attitudes and behavioural change.