



IN BRIEF



GENDER EQUALITY BRIEF FOR KIRIBATI

Women's Human Rights

The [Constitution of Kiribati](#) states that every individual is entitled to fundamental rights and freedoms regardless of race, place of origin, political opinion, colour, creed or sex. The Constitution does not protect individuals from discrimination on the basis of gender identity or sexual orientation. In 2014, [the Government rejected a private member's bill](#) to include gender and sexual orientation as prohibited grounds of discrimination in the Constitution.

Kiribati is a predominantly patriarchal society with defined gender roles. In Kiribati's [2019 submission to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women](#), it was noted that some customs and practices in Kiribati are in contravention to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), including the expectation for women to defer to their husbands and male family members, and the exclusion of women from traditional decision-making processes. Amnesty International's [findings](#) in 2010 state that in *Maneabas* (traditional meeting houses), women are not welcomed within decision-making. As noted in the [2019 CEDAW report](#), Kiribati's culture is not homogeneous and, in some instances, cultural practices, norms and values vary between islands.

Kiribati's immigration and citizenship laws [permit female, but not male, foreigners to become Kiribati citizens upon marriage to a Kiribati citizen](#), therefore discriminating against I-Kiribati women who marry foreign citizens. Children of I-Kiribati women and a foreigner spouse are not considered to be of I-Kiribati descent, and therefore must undergo naturalization by the Citizenship Commission if they wish to obtain citizenship. In passport applications, only fathers have the particulars of their wife and children in their passport. Kiribati women married to foreigners can not include their children in their passport.

Traditional family land inheritance customs and laws favour brothers, husbands, and sons. Under the [Native Lands Ordinance 1998](#), estates are distributed such that the eldest son receives a greater share than that of his brothers, and that the shares received by sons exceed the shares received by daughters. Spouses are not considered to be next-of-kin, and so upon a issueless man's death

his land is inherited by his siblings, half-siblings, or his parent's siblings. On Marakei Island, women are not permitted to receive shares in the distribution of an issueless estate. On some islands, [women who relocate following marriage cannot acquire land from their birth family](#).

Under [Kiribati's Penal Code](#), the age of sexual consent in Kiribati is 15. For offences relating to sexual conduct by a person in a position of trust, the age of consent is not less than 18. The original [1977 Penal Code](#) defined rape as an offence that could only be committed against a woman. A [2017 Amendment](#) to the original Code broadens the definition of sexual intercourse in gender neutral terms. The 2017 Amendment also introduces peer exemption in consent laws, whereby individuals between the ages of 13 and 15 can legally consent to sexual acts with an individual less than two years older than them.

As per Kiribati's [2002 Marriage Amendment Act](#), the legal marriageable age is 18 with consent from parents or guardians – or 21 without consent – for both men and women. In the [2020 Census](#), 11.1% of women and 5.7% of men aged 15-19 were married. Among 15-19 year old women who were married or in a union in 2019, [11.9% had a spouse who was at least 10 years older](#).

Legal Marriage Age in Kiribati

Internationally accepted age:



Average marriage age in Kiribati:



Source: [UNDP](#)

Kiribati is not a signatory of the UN Human Rights Council's 2011 [Joint Statement on Ending Acts of Violence and Related Human Rights Violations Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity](#). [Male homosexual sex is illegal](#), technically punishable by 5-14 years' imprisonment, [but this is not enforced](#). Advocacy and awareness activities by groups within Kiribati such as the civil society organisation [Boutokaan Inaomataia ao Mauriia Binabinaine](#)

[Association \(BIMBA\)](#) have improved the visibility of people with diverse sexual orientations, gender identities, gender expressions and sex characteristics in Kiribati in recent years.

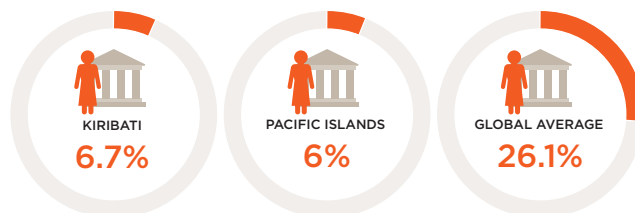
Governance and Participation in Public Life

Kiribati is a unitary republic with two levels of government; national and local. It follows a parliamentary system. The government is divided into three branches: executive, legislative, and judiciary. The head of state and government is the President (*Te Beretitenti*) who is elected following nomination of three candidates from the Members of Parliament (MPs). As of 2022, the [Cabinet](#) consists of 14 members. The first female Vice President and the first female Secretary to the Cabinet were [appointed in 2003](#). Three women have been appointed as Secretary to the Cabinet since.

The Parliament is known as the House of Assembly (*Maneaba ni Maungatabu*) and comprises 44 elected members and one nominated member from the Banaban community in Rabi, Fiji Islands. Each MP is elected in a first-past-the-post system to represent a single constituency. In the [most recent national elections in April 2020](#), four women were successfully elected to Parliament out of 44 elected MPs. Previous elections have seen similar numbers of women winning elections, with three MPs elected in 2007, four in 2011, and three in 2015.

As of March 2022, there are three female MPs in Kiribati, resulting in [6.7% female representation in legislature](#). In addition to elected members, [former female MP Tangariki Reete was appointed as Speaker of Parliament](#) following the 2020 elections. This is the first time a woman has held the position of Speaker in the Kiribati Parliament.

Female Representation in National Parliament in Kiribati



Source: [Inter-Parliamentary Union March 2022](#)

There are [no temporary special measures](#) (TSMs) in place to increase women's political representation in national or local governance in Kiribati. In its [concluding observations](#) in 2020, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women recommended that the Government of Kiribati adopt TSMs including statutory quotas for the representation of women in the parliament and the Government.

Ministries in Kiribati are headed by Permanent Secretaries and by Deputy Secretaries. As noted in the [2018 Voluntary National Review](#), the Secretary to the Cabinet, eight of the 15 Permanent Secretaries (53%) and nine of the 16 Deputy Secretaries (56%) were women in 2018. The Ministry of Internal and Social Affairs is responsible for overseeing [local government](#), which is made up of three town (urban) councils and 23 island (rural) councils. In local elections held in 2020, 13.8% of Island Council seats (8 out of 58) were won by women, as well as 34.8% of Mayor seats (8 out of 23). Following the [2012 local elections](#), 3.4% of councillors were women.

No women have been appointed to the Higher Court or Court of Appeals in Kiribati. The 2018 [Voluntary National Review](#) reports that 22 of the 50 magistrates judges (44.0%) and 32 of the 572 police officers (5.6%) were women in 2015. The Kiribati Police Service has [reportedly](#) taken measures to increase female officer intake, and 50% of the graduation cohort were women in 2017. All three of Kiribati's overseas diplomatic missions were [headed by women in 2015](#).

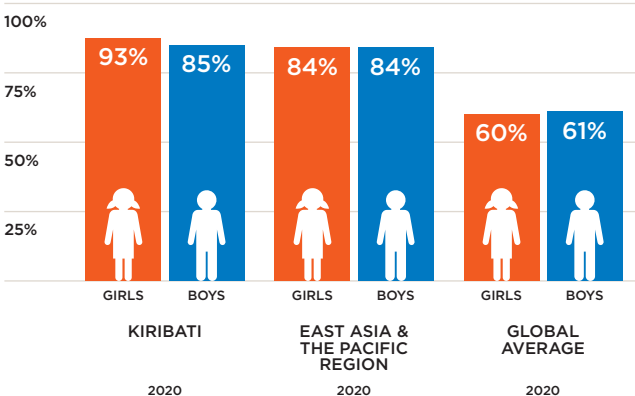
In a 2021 [analysis](#) of women's representation in business leadership, women comprised 22% of Directors, 0% of Board Chairs, and 0% of Deputy Chairs among the 17 analysed organisations in Kiribati. Women's representation as Directors was highest on the boards of state-owned enterprises, at 25%.

Education

Education in Kiribati consists of early childhood, primary, lower and upper secondary, post-secondary (vocational), and tertiary education. Education is free and compulsory for all Kiribati children from the age of 6 to 15, as stipulated in the [Education Act of 2013](#). Some educational institutions such as primary schools are operated by the government, while others involve churches and island councils. In 2019, the [literacy rate among 15-24 year olds was 98.0% for women](#) and 92.8% for men.

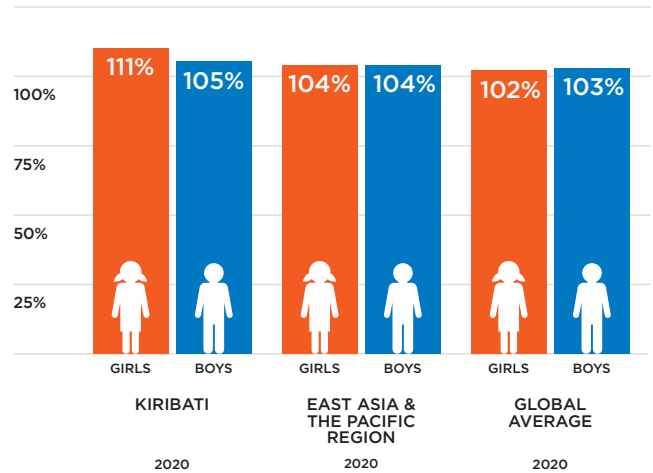
According to data from the [UNESCO Institute for Statistics](#), the gross enrolment ratio for early childhood education was 93.0% for girls and 85.0% for boys in 2020. The gross enrolment ratio for primary education was 111.1% for girls and 105.2% for boys in 2020. In primary education in [2018-19](#), 2.8% of girls and 5.1% of boys were over-age for their current grade, resulting in an adjusted net attendance ratio for primary education of 96.9% for girls and 94.8% for boys in 2018-19. Girls are more likely than boys to complete primary education; the [completion rate](#) for primary education was 96.5% for girls and 92.1% for boys in 2019.

Early Childhood Education Gross Enrolment Rates in Kiribati



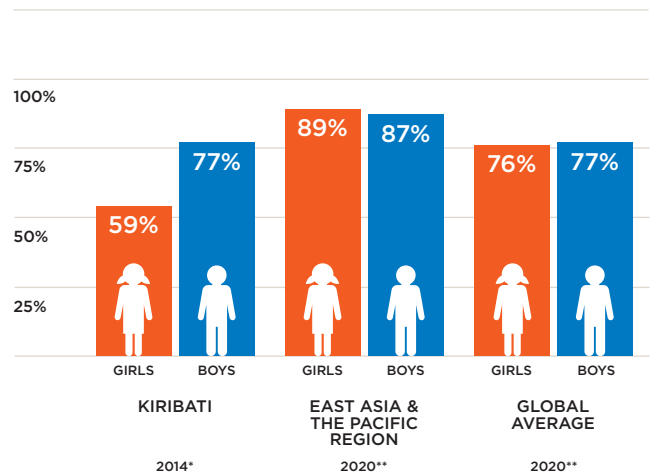
Source: [UNESCO Institute for Statistics](#)

Primary Gross Enrolment Rates in Kiribati



Source: [UNESCO Institute for Statistics](#)

Secondary Gross Enrolment Rates in Kiribati



* Source: [Pacific Community \(SPC\)](#)

** Source: [UNESCO Institute for Statistics](#)

Data collected in the [2018-19 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey](#) show an adjusted net attendance ratio for lower secondary education in 2018-19 was 87.7% for girls and 73.2% for boys. The [net enrolment ratio](#) in secondary education was 59% for boys and 77% for girls in 2014, and the [completion rate](#) for lower secondary was 88.7% for girls and 69.1% for boys. In lower secondary education in the 2018-19 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, 7.7% of girls and 12.2% of boys were over-age for their current grade, while 4.7% of girls and 14.1% of boys were out of school. Among children aged 7-14, 40.5% of girls and 30.5% of boys could demonstrate foundational reading skills, while 24.3% of girls and 18.9% of boys could demonstrate foundational numeracy skills.

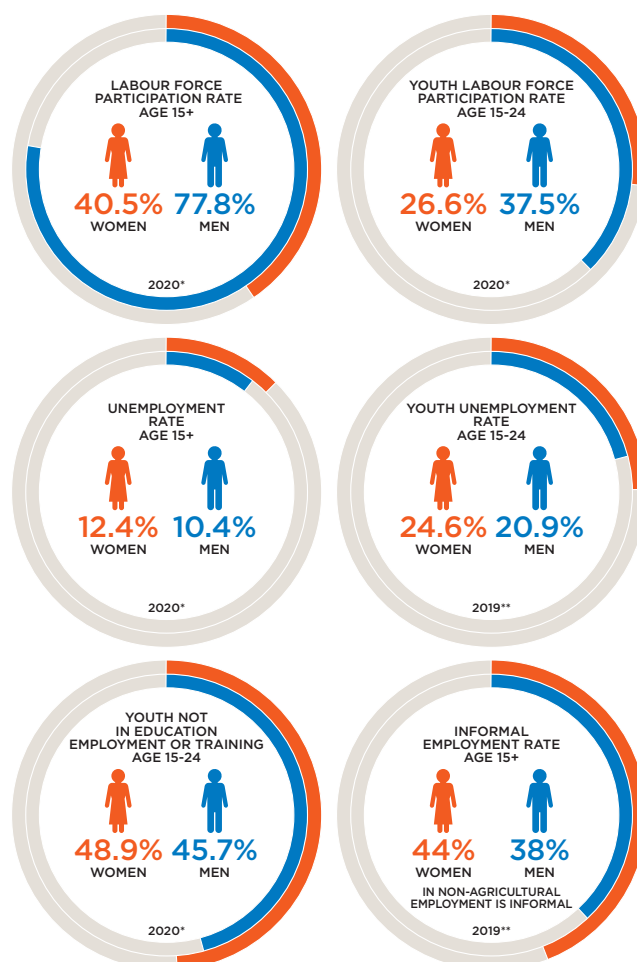
The adjusted net attendance ratio for upper secondary education was 64.3% for girls and 46.4% for boys in the 2018-19 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey. In upper secondary education in 2018-19, 28.7% of girls and 44.2% of boys were out of school. The [completion rate](#) for upper secondary education was 20.7% for girls and 12.8% for boys in 2019.

There are [four tertiary education institutes](#) in Kiribati; the Kiribati Institute of Technology, Marine Training Centre, Kiribati Teachers College, and the University of the South Pacific Kiribati Campus. Approximately 25% of school leavers go on to enrol in tertiary education each year. At the Kiribati Institute of Technology, in 2018, 56.2% of the intake were female. Female students were most highly represented in business, community services, accounting, and nursing courses. In the [2015 Census](#), 62.6% of those currently attending tertiary institutions were female. Among adults aged 25 and older, 3.6% of women and 4.3% of men had a post-secondary educational qualification in 2015. [College scholarships are granted to a higher number of females than males](#). Among university teachers and professors, [43% were female](#) in 2015.

Kiribati has built legal foundations to uphold the basic human right to receive free, quality, and accessible education. The [Education Act of 2013](#) states that a child cannot be refused enrolment at a school on the basis of his or her sex, and that school rules must be applied without discrimination on the basis of sex. A school may not take disciplinary action against a student because the student is pregnant or a parent. The [Inclusive Education Policy of 2015](#) aims to ensure that all school-aged children have full access to relevant, quality education. The Policy aims to increase knowledge and skill in gender and social inclusive teaching and learning for all teachers.

Women's Economic Empowerment

Economic Empowerment Indicators in Kiribati



* Source: [Kiribati National Statistics Office](#)

** Source: [Pacific Community \(SPC\)](#)

Kiribati is a low-income, small island developing state. The majority of public sector and formal private sector jobs are in the urban areas, particularly in South Tarawa. Rural livelihoods rely on subsistence-based and informal economic activities, involving agriculture (copra growing) and fisheries. Most households in the rural areas [rely on coastal fishing for their own consumption or for sale](#).

In the [2020 Census](#), the labour force participation rate was 54.4% for men and 40.5% for women aged 15 and over. The labour force participation rate among 15-24 year olds was 37.5% for men and 26.6% for women. The unemployment rate was 10.4% for men and 12.4% for women in 2020. In urban areas, the unemployment rate was higher for men (15.2%) than for women (14.9%). In rural areas, the unemployment rate was higher for

women (8.6%) than for men (4.6%). In 2020, 45.7% of male and 48.9% of female youth aged 15-24 were not in education, employment or training. Among the employed population in Kiribati, 58.6% of men's and 50.7% of women's main employment was informal. Data published by the Secretariat of the Pacific Community estimate that 44% of female and 38% of male non-agricultural employment was informal in 2019.

Typically, men dominate the fishing activities at sea, [while women are more engaged with shore-based harvesting and processing](#). Other than fishing, women are involved in manufacturing (e.g. cigarette making, handcrafts, and garments) and services such as wholesale and retail trade, education, and public administration. Women also carry out [traditional economic activities](#) such as the production of handcrafts, garments, coconut-based products, smoked fish, and cigarettes from pandanus leaves in both rural and urban areas. In urban areas, women also sell cooked food in response to the growing demand by government offices and schools, and process semi-finished products that are supplied from outer islands.

According to the 2022 Public Service and Office of Private Lawyers Staff Lists, it is estimated that women held 64% of law-related jobs (i.e., people's lawyer, paralegal, state attorney, magistrate class I, magistrate class II, judicial trainer, fisheries legal officer, judicial officer, law librarian).¹

In the [2020 Census](#), 43.9% of those who listed their occupation as 'managers' were women. In a [2021 study](#) of 17 business in Kiribati, 38% of senior management positions – including Chief Executives Officers, Chief Financial Officers, and Chief Operating Officers – were occupied by women. This mirrors [previous findings](#); in 2015, up to 40% of the 163 registered companies in the private sector were owned by women.

[Barriers to women setting up businesses](#) include: lack of available information regarding product demand, difficulty in accessing trainings, weak business infrastructures, burdensome licensing and trade procedures, and limited access to finance. In some villages, women groups in markets have a [revolving fund scheme](#) known as the *Karekare*, whereby group members

regularly give specified amounts and take turns to receive the total amount from the fund. Schemes such as this can help members to afford to buy items for their homes or businesses. This is commonly practiced in South Tarawa, especially by both unemployed women and working women.

Kiribati has been a member of [International Labour Organization](#) (ILO) since 2000. Kiribati has signed all eight of the ILO Fundamental Conventions including the Equal Remuneration Convention and the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention but has not signed the Maternity Protection Convention.

The [Employment and Industrial Relations Code 2015](#) prohibits both direct and indirect discrimination in both recruitment and within employment on the basis of sex, pregnancy, marital status, sexual orientation or family responsibilities. The Code further prohibits sexual harassment and requires employers to take all reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace. Women in both the public and private sector are entitled to 12 consecutive weeks of maternity leave at 25% pay.

Government social benefits are provided equally to both women and men. Under the Kiribati Provident Fund (KPF) scheme, both male and female employees can become members of the KPF. Members contribute at least 7.5% of their salary to a fund that can be accessed once the member reaches the age of 45, or in certain situations under which the member ceases employment in Kiribati. The [total number of members in 2016 was 48,980](#) (61.1% male, 38.9% female). The [Provident Fund \(Amendment\) Act 2008](#) allows the contribution fund of a deceased member to be apportioned by the court between dependents, which can include spouses.

Initiatives to promote women's participation and active engagement in fisheries include the Kiribati Fisheries [Observer Programme](#). The fisheries observers gather information on catches, which is then fed back to the Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA) and national governments. The number of women observers increased

1 Public Service Office Staff List, 2022; and Office of the People's Lawyer Staff List, 2022. Both sources are unpublished online.

from two in 2009 to 19 in 2016. By 2016, the cumulative number of active observers in Kiribati totalled 90, and [19% of them were women](#).

The COVID-19 pandemic and related restrictions have had adverse impacts on businesses throughout Kiribati. Women are more concentrated in [precarious, part-time and temporary jobs](#) and in the services sector, and so are more vulnerable to the economic impacts of COVID-19. Tourism is not a major component of Kiribati's economy, although it is predominantly women whose economic activities are associated with tourism through, for example, handcraft sales and food services. Overall, women are estimated to be disproportionately impacted by the reduced levels of travel due to COVID-19. Further research is required in order to fully understand the long-term impacts that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on women's economic empowerment in Kiribati.

Health/Sexual and Reproductive Health

Health services are [free of charge](#) to all I-Kiribati and working foreigners living in Kiribati. According to the World Health Organization (WHO) [World Health Statistics 2020](#) report, the life expectancy in Kiribati in 2016 was 68.6 for women and 63.6 for men. The top [three causes of death](#) for both sexes as of 2019 are (in order; per 100,000 people): Ischaemic heart disease (150.47), stroke (140.7), and diabetes mellitus (130.6). For women, the top cause of death is diabetes mellitus (130 per 100,000 people). For men, the top cause of death is Ischaemic heart disease (179.78 per 100,000 people). Overall, Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) such as cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes and chronic respiratory disease accounted for [43.7% of female and 58.4% of male mortality](#) in 2019.

Risk factors for NCDs include tobacco use, alcohol consumption, physical inactivity and unhealthy diets. Men in Kiribati are more likely to use tobacco than women; in the [2019 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey](#), 75.6% of men and 40.5% of women aged 15-49 reported smoking cigarettes in the previous month. Alcohol consumption was also more common among men, with 49.0% of men and 10.2% of women who were surveyed stating that they had consumed at least one alcoholic drink in the previous month. In 2016, [76.6% of male and 80.9% of female adults were overweight](#).

Total Fertility Rate in Kiribati

births per woman	births per woman	births per woman
4.1	3.8	3.5
2000	2010	2019

Source: [World Bank Databank](#)

In 2019, the [total fertility rate](#) was 3.5 children per woman. In the [2019 MICS](#), the adolescent fertility rate was 51.0 births per 1,000 women aged 16 to 19. According to the most recent national estimate from 2017, the [maternal mortality ratio](#) was 92 per 100,000 live births. The maternal mortality ratio has therefore decreased significantly from previous ratios of 112 in 2010 and 136 in 2000. Between 2017 and 2019, [91.9% of births were assisted by a skilled attendant](#). In the 2019 MICS, the infant mortality rate was 41 per 1,000 live births, and the under-5 mortality rate was 61 per 1,000 live births.

Adolescent Fertility Rate in Kiribati

Sustainable Development Goal target:	Kiribati:
reduce adolescent fertility rate to	
less than 13 live births per 1,000	51 live births per 1,000
women aged 15-19 by 2030	women aged 15-19 (2019)

Source: [Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey](#)

Maternal Mortality Ratio in Kiribati

Sustainable Development Goal target:	Kiribati:
reduce maternal mortality ratio to	
less than 70 per 100,000 live births	92 per 100,000 live births
by 2030	2017

Source: [World Bank](#)

Under-5 Mortality Rate in Kiribati

Sustainable Development Goal target: reduce under-5 mortality rate to	Kiribati:
less than 25 per 1,000 live births	61 per 1,000 live births
by 2030	2019

Source: [Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey](#)

In 2019, 27.3% of married or in union women aged 15-49 were using a modern method of contraceptive, while 33.6% were using any method of contraceptive. Contraceptive use was more common among rural women (28.7% modern methods, 35.5% any methods) than urban women (26.2% modern methods, 32.2% any methods). An estimated 17.3% of married or in union women aged 15-49 had unmet needs for family planning in 2019, with similar rates observed among rural women (17.1%) and urban women (17.5%).

Among women who reported that they had more than one sexual partner in the 12 months prior to the [2019 MICS](#), 1.2% stated that they used a condom the last time they had sexual intercourse. 44.5% of women and 34.8% of men had a comprehensive knowledge of HIV and could demonstrate knowledge on transmission. Among 15-49 year olds, 19.8% of women and 6.0% of men reported having either a Sexually Transmitted Infection (STI) or having STI symptoms in the 12 months prior to the survey.

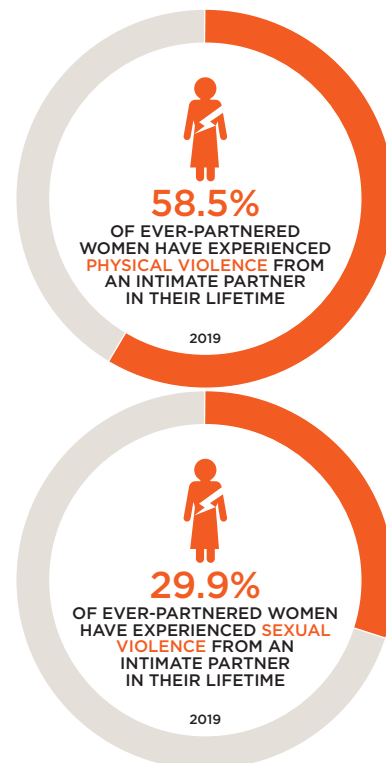
Marurungin te Utu (healthy family program) has been emphasised in Kiribati to control high population growth, with a focus on [increasing access to family planning services](#) for young people and women whose health and wellbeing would be adversely impacted by becoming pregnant. There are eight contraceptive methods available and used in the country. These are: Microgynon, Jadell, Depo Provera, condom, vasectomy, tubal ligation, copper intrauterine device, and the Billings Method. One of the biggest challenges identified by the government in implementing family planning programmes is opposition from some faith-based organisations towards family planning, the use of contraceptives, and promotion of sexual and reproductive health.

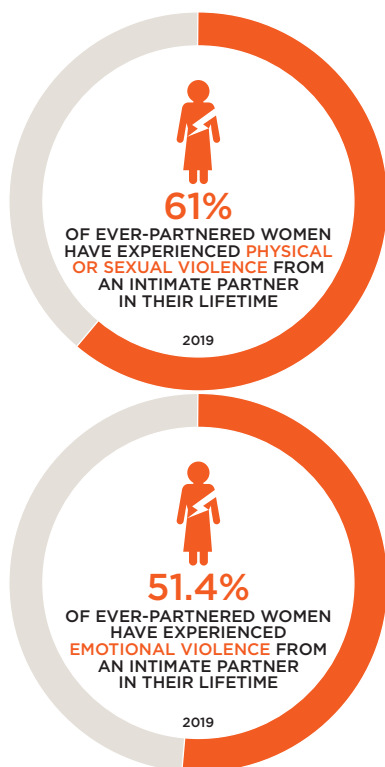
Ending Violence against Women and Girls

According to the [Voluntary National Review](#) of the Government of Kiribati in 2018, 'gender discrimination remains culturally entrenched, despite recent improvements. Gender equality in Kiribati presents a major challenge that will take sustained normalisation over a period of years before noticeable changes can occur.'

The most [recent national survey](#) on violence against women and children in Kiribati was conducted in 2008, and subsequently published in 2010. More recent data on violence against women and girls was collected as part of the [2019 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey](#).

Lifetime Prevalence of Intimate Partner Violence in Kiribati





Source: [2019 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey](#)

In the 2019 MICS, 58.5% of ever-partnered women aged 15-49 reported that they had experienced physical violence from an intimate partner in their lifetime, while 39.4% experienced physical intimate partner violence in the 12 months prior to the survey. In the same survey, 29.9% of ever-partnered women reported experiencing sexual violence from an intimate partner in their lifetime, and 21.4% had experienced sexual violence from an intimate partner in the previous 12 months. 51.4% of ever-partnered women reported experiencing emotional violence from a partner, with 38.6% experiencing emotional violence in the previous 12 months. Overall, 61.0% of ever-partnered women reported experiencing physical or sexual violence in their lifetime, while 67.5% reported experiencing physical, sexual, or emotional violence. All data are from women aged 15-49.

The MICS survey reported that 70.2% of women aged 15 to 49 believe that a husband is justified in hitting or beating his wife in at least one situation. By comparison, 58.5% of men believe that hitting or beating their wife is justified. Among the circumstances that beating is considered acceptable are: *a woman going out without informing her partner; neglect of children; arguing with her partner; refusal to have sex; and burnt food*. Controlling behaviours were also reportedly common, with 78.8% of ever married women reporting that their

husband displays controlling behaviours, most commonly *insisting on knowing where she is at all times (74.4%) and is jealous or angry if she talks to other men (45.0%)*.

In addition to intimate partner violence, 24.1% of women aged 15-49 reported in 2019 that they had experienced physical violence by a non-partner since age 15, while 10.3% reported experiencing sexual violence by a non-partner.

Women living in urban areas were found to be more likely to have experienced physical and sexual violence from any perpetrator; 57.7% of rural and 55.0% of urban women had experienced physical violence since the age of 15, and 29.4% of urban and 31.3% of rural women had experienced sexual violence since age 15. Among ever-pregnant women, 13.5% had experienced physical violence during pregnancy.

Among women who reported that they had experienced physical or sexual violence in the 2019 MICS, 54.8% stated that they never sought help or told anyone about the violence, while a further 16.3% told someone but did not seek help. The most common places for women to seek help were from their own families (70.1% of those who sought help) and their friends (22.0%).

Kiribati's [National Approach to Eliminating Sexual and Gender Based Violence \(2011-2021\)](#) was adopted in 2010 as the government's strategy to end all forms of sexual and gender-based violence. The [Te Rau N Te Mwenga Act](#) (Family Peace Act), passed in 2014, criminalizes domestic violence, outlines the eligibility and application process for Protection Orders, and defines the duties and powers of police as well as health care professionals and social service providers in relation to domestic violence.

Following the enactment of the Te Rau N Te Mwenga Act in December 2014, case records of the Social Welfare Division for 2018 and 2019 revealed that [22 cases of domestic violence had led to convictions](#). The Kiribati Women and Children Support Centre – established in 2017 as part of the provisions of TRNTM – can provide counselling services, legal guidance, court services for survivors, support to the police and medical services and

other assistance to survivors of domestic and gender-based violence.

As noted in the [Voluntary National Review](#), awareness raising programs have been followed by an increase in the number of domestic violence incidents reported to the police, potentially indicating increased awareness of rights and protection under the law. Decision-makers and women's rights advocates identify persistent cultural barriers as a priority issue. Donor partner programs and projects have been supporting advocacy efforts in this regard.

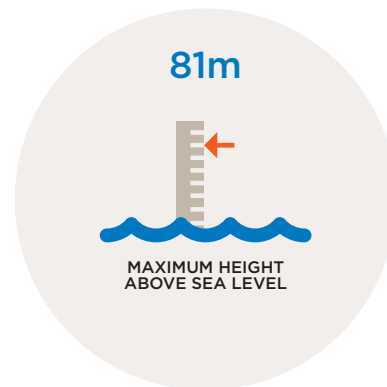
Aside from the Ministry for Women, Youth, Sports and Social Affairs (MWYSSA), the Ministry of Health and Medical Services (MHMS) has also created services to address domestic violence. In 2016, it established Healthy Family Clinics located in hospitals as part of the [Ministry Strategic Plan](#). The Clinics provide services for victims of domestic violence such as counselling services and referral support to appropriate authorities. The Healthy Family Clinics also aim to provide integrated health delivery by providing general health and family planning support. MWYSSA has also established a [Male Advocates Program](#) which aims to contribute to a comprehensive approach towards prevention and eliminating sexual and gender-based violence in Kiribati.

According to the Government of Kiribati's [Voluntary National Review](#), the government states that it supports and works together with NGOs to end violence against women and girls. This includes the Kiribati Family Health Association (KFHA), Our Lady of Sacred Heart (OLSH) Crisis Centre, Alcohol Awareness and Family Recovery centre (AAFR), Aia Maea Ainen Kiribati (AMAK) and the Kiribati Women and Children Support Centre (KWCS). Partnerships with communities and island councils continue via annual campaigns against violence against women and girls, with the support from donor partners (DFAT Australia, UN Women).

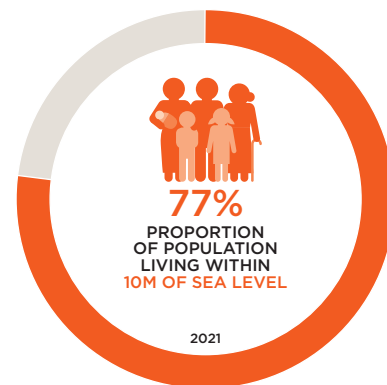
Gender and Protection in Humanitarian Action

Kiribati was ranked 19th in the 2021 [World Risk Index](#) for disaster risk, and was rated 'very high' for exposure to hazards and 'high' for vulnerability, susceptibility, lack of coping capacities, and a lack of adaptive capacities. All of Kiribati's population live within 1km of the coast, and Kiribati is [highly likely to experience tsunamis and coastal flooding](#). The maximum height above sea level is 81m.

Climate and Disaster Profile of Kiribati



Source: [Pacific Community \(SPC\)](#)



Source: [Pacific Community \(SPC\)](#)



Source: [Pacific Community \(SPC\)](#)

Main Climate-Related hazards



Source: [Australian Aid](#)

The effects of climate change are felt first, and more severely, by [vulnerable and marginalised populations](#) - women, children, people with disabilities, the poor, and the elderly. Women may experience [increased care burdens](#) following disasters, and following flooding in the Tebikenikora community near South Tarawa, [women were found to experience stress and health issues](#) related to being forced to live in overcrowded areas. [Violence against women and children increases in times of disasters](#) when normal social protection is absent.

The [Kiribati Joint Implementation Plan for Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management](#) (KJIP) has been adopted to create changes in gender equality and climate adaptation for 2019 to 2028. It was designed to complement the [National Disaster Risk Management Plan](#) and the [National Framework for Climate Change and Climate Change Adaptation](#). The goal of the KJIP is to 'increase resilience through sustainable climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction using a whole of country approach.' The KJIP has 12 major strategies reduce vulnerabilities and respond to climate change and disaster risk, including strengthening good governance,

improving knowledge and information generation, and enhancing resilience through strategic partnerships for community participation and engagement ownership and inclusion of vulnerable groups. Gender equality is one of the guiding principles of the development, implementation and governance of the KJIP, through gender balance in participation and decision making to ensure gender issues are well incorporated. The CEDAW Committee [noted](#) in 2019 that the integration of gender considerations in KJIP represents significant progress, and additionally stated that more work needs to be done to raise awareness among government officials, women's organizations, and communities in terms of the necessary social protection specifically to women and children in times of disasters.

Efforts to improve community participation in environmental matters can be seen in Section 50 of the [Disaster Risk Management and Climate Change Act](#) of 2019, which mainstreams the needs of women, children, and persons with disabilities. Part 8 (5) of the Act supports women's access to sexual and reproductive healthcare and women's safety from violence during disaster preparedness and emergency response. The [Universal Periodic Review](#) report in 2020 regarded the Act as a successful example of a bottom-up approach to developing policies that promote gender equality. The Act was also commended for its integrated consideration of modern and traditional gender values and norms.

Kiribati's [Environment Act](#) of 1999 requires any development proposal to include either an initial environment evaluation report or an environmental impact statement. However, [impact assessments do not require information on how any proposed project could affect human rights](#), including women's rights or the rights of the indigenous communities. As of November 2021, no amendment has been made to address this issue. There are [proposals](#) to update environmental regulations to require public participation in the drafting and development of the environmental assessment. These proposals also require the assessment to be presented to the public before and after approval.

In the [INFORM COVID-19 Risk Index](#), produced by the European Commission, Kiribati is classified as *highly vulnerable* to potential health and humanitarian impacts of COVID-19 that could overwhelm national response capacity. Kiribati was ranked 23rd in the global index, the highest of any Pacific Island country. As [noted](#) by the UN Conference on Trade and Development in 2020, women have been disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic in Kiribati due to the economic impact on precarious and informal employment, increased burden of unpaid caring work, and a higher probability of experiencing violence at home.

Appendix 1: Country Background

Capital	Tarawa
Population	120,740 (2021)
GDP per capita (USD)	\$1,654 (2020)
Human Development Index	Ranked 134th out of 189 countries and territories (2020)
Type of Government	Parliamentary Democratic System
Women in Legislature	Three out of 45 MPs are women (6.7%) as of March 2022. The appointed Speaker of Parliament is also a woman.
Legal System	Common law system supplemented by customary law.
Ratified Human Rights Conventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC) (accession 1995) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Optional Protocol to the CRC on the involvement of children in armed conflict (accession 2015) • Optional Protocol to the CRC on the sale of children child prostitution and child pornography (accession 2015) • Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) (accession 2004) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kiribati has not signed the Optional Protocol (CEDAW-OP) or the Inquiry Procedure under CEDAW-OP • Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) (accession 2013) • Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT) (accession 2019) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inquiry Procedure under CAT (accepted 2019) • Kiribati has not signed the Optional Protocol of CAT. <p>Kiribati has not signed: the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (CCPR); the Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (CED); the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD); the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR); the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.</p>
Urban vs. Rural Women (%)	In the 2020 Census 60.0% of the female population resided in urban areas.
Female-Headed Households (%)	26.5% (2019)
Women in the Workforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the 2020 Census, the labour force participation rate was 40.5% for women and 54.4% for men in 2020. • The unemployment rate was 12.4% for women and 10.4% for men in 2020. • 50.7% of women's employment and 58.6% men's employment was informal in 2020. • In non-agricultural sectors, an estimated 43.8% of women's employment and 37.8% of men's employment was informal in 2019.
Women CEOs	An estimated 38% of senior management positions – including CEO, CFO, and COO – were held by women in 2021.
Women on Boards	22% of Director positions on Boards in Kiribati were held by women in 2021. Among 17 analysed organisations, no women were appointed as Board Chairs or Deputy Chairs.

Appendix 1: Country Background (continued)

Kiribati is a Small Island Developing State located in the Pacific Ocean. It has three island groups: Gilbert Islands, Phoenix Islands, and Line Islands, consisting of 33 distant coral atolls. Kiribati has a [total land area of 810km²](#) and an Exclusive Economic Zone of approximately 3.4 million km². The capital Tarawa is an atoll located in the Gilbert Islands group in the west, with the Republic of the Marshall Islands to the north and Tuvalu to the south. Kiribati's economy has contrasting characteristics between rural and urban areas. The urban economy is reliant on the public and private sectors, while rural economy is dependent on subsistence activities such as fishing, coconut production, and handcrafts making.

Kiribati's population was estimated to be [120,740](#) in 2021. At the time of the [2020 Census](#), Kiribati's population was 119,438. The female population was 60,534, accounting

for 50.7% of the total population. Women were marginally more likely than men to reside in urban areas, with 60.0% of women and 57.9% of men living in urban areas in 2020. The majority (90.5%) of the total population resided in the Gilbert Islands group. The South Tarawa division contained 54.2% of the female and 51.4% of the male total population in 2020 and [is the location of most government, commercial, and education facilities](#). In total, 35.9% of the population were under the age of 15 in 2020, with 53.8% of the population under the age of 25.

In the [2020 Census](#), 99.3% of the population were native-born I-Kiribati; the most common foreign citizenships were Tuvaluan (0.2%) and Chinese (0.1%). 95.7% of the population were of I-Kiribati ethnicity, 3.8% were of mixed Kiribati ethnicity, and 0.2% were of Tuvaluan ethnicity.

Appendix 2: Country Commitments on Gender

International Commitments

Gender Commitments	Status	Actions
Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)	Ratified 2004. The most recent state party report was submitted in 2019.	Legislative progress reported in the first to third reporting cycles includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education Act (2013), which prohibits disciplinary action against female students for pregnancy or parenthood; • Children, Young People and Family Welfare Act (2013), which repealed previous legislation in which custody was automatically granted to the man as the head of a family and established that custody will be determined in the best interests of the child; • <i>Te Rau N Te Mwenga</i> Act (TRNTM) (2014) and Family Peace Act, by which domestic violence is criminalized; • Employment and Industrial Relations Code (2015), which stipulates equal opportunities for women and men, equal pay for work of equal value, and prohibits sexual harassment in the workplace. <p>Additional institutional and policy frameworks aimed at accelerating the elimination of discrimination against women and promoting gender equality include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishment of the Domestic Violence and Child Protection Sexual Offense Unit - DCSU (previously the Domestic Violence and Sexual Offences DVSO Unit) in the Kiribati Police Service in 2004; • Establishment of the Ministry of Women, Youth, Sports and Social Affairs through the Constitution (Amendment) Act, in 2013.
Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration	Signed 2012 Regional review published in 2019.	The <i>Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration Trend Assessment Report 2012-2016</i> recognised the following achievements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of a new Ministry for Women, Youth, Sports and Social Affairs (MWYSSA) in 2013; • The implementation of the Strategic Action Plan to eliminate sexual and gender-based violence (2011-2021); • Legislation, including the Children, Young Persons and Family Welfare Act 2013, the Education Act, and the Juvenile Justice Act 2015. • Between 2014 and 2016, the proportion of seats held by women in parliament decreased from 8.7% to 7.0%, while the proportion of seats held by women in local government remained constant at 3.4%.
Universal Periodic Review	The most recent report was published in 2020.	Progress on gender commitments noted in the 2020 Universal Periodic Review include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Gender Equality and Women's Development Policy was launched in 2019; • The Disaster Risk Management and Climate Change act of 2019 mainstreamed the needs of women, children, and people with disabilities. • The Kiribati Women and Children Support Centre was established in 2017 to offer protection and access to services and support to survivors of domestic violence.

Appendix 2: Country Commitments on Gender (continued)

National Commitments

Gender Commitments	Status	Actions
National Approach to Eliminating Sexual and Gender Based Violence in Kiribati Policy and National Action Plan 2011-2021	2011	<p>The Eliminating Sexual and Gender Based Violence Policy (ESGBV) Policy has five focus areas:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop national leadership and commitments to eliminate sexual and gender based violence; 2. Strengthen legal frameworks, law enforcement and the justice system; 3. Build institutional and community capacity; 4. Strengthen and improve preventive, protective, social and support services; 5. Eliminate and prevent sexual and gender based violence through civic engagement and advocacy. <p>The accompanying National Action Plan was developed to facilitate the implementation of the ESGBV Policy and to provide a framework that outlines the necessary prevention and response activities.</p>
Te Rau N Te Mwenga (Family Peace) Act	2014	<p>Te Rau n te Mwenga Act 2014 criminalizes domestic violence. The Act outlines the eligibility and application process for Protection Orders, and defines the duties and powers of police as well as health care professionals and social service providers in relation to domestic violence.</p> <p>An implementation plan for the Te Rau n te Mwenga Act is also in place, guiding key service providers on their roles in implementing the act.</p> <p>In 2018, an amendment to the Penal Code was passed in support of the TRNTM Act. The Amendment extended the definition of sexual intercourse, increased sentences for sexual and other related offences, and inserted new sexual offenses such as peeping.</p>
Kiribati 20-Year Vision 2016-2036	2016	<p>Kiribati's 20-year vision recognises the disadvantages that women face in the labour market and the vulnerability of women to domestic violence, economic shocks, and environmental hazards.</p> <p>The report states that the government will mainstream gender in policies, plans, budgets and programmes in order to improve equal opportunity for men and women. Additionally, measures will be implemented to support income generating activities including increased coverage of essential healthcare services, equitable distribution of and access to water, sewerage and sanitation services, and delivery of justice.</p>
National Policy on Gender Equality and Women's Development 2019-2022	2019	<p>The Policy represents a commitment from the Government of Kiribati to improve the livelihood of all citizens and to eliminate discrimination across all sectors through providing equal opportunities, equal human rights, and equal access to services and justice so that everyone can reach their potential in economic, political, cultural and social life.</p> <p>The five policy priorities are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To progressively implement a gender mainstreaming approach to achieve gender equality; 2. To improve the economic empowerment of women; 3. To support stronger, informed families; 4. To improve women's political representation and leadership; and 5. To eliminate sexual and gender-based violence.