



IN BRIEF



GENDER EQUALITY BRIEF FOR PALAU

Women's Human Rights

[Palau's Constitution](#) prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex, race, place of origin, language, religion, or belief. Discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity is not explicitly prohibited. Palau is a matriarchal and matrilineal society in which lineage and titles are inherited from the mother's side of the family. Women [traditionally hold positions of power and respect](#), and they play a central role in Palauan society.

As noted in Palau's [2019 review for the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action](#), in the absence of a will land is inherited by the deceased individual's 'oldest legitimate male child of sound mind, natural or adopted', and is inherited by the oldest legitimate female child only if there is no suitable male heir.

According to the [2015 Census](#), 30.7% of household were headed by women. Data from the [2014 Household Income and Expenditure Survey](#) (HIES) found that female-headed households were more highly represented in lower income categories.

The [Palau National Code](#) states that for a marriage between two non-citizens, or between a non-citizen and a citizen, the legal marriageable age is 18 for men and 16 for women. For girls between the ages of 16 and 18, the consent of a parent or guardian is required. For marriages between two citizens of Palau, customary marriages are permitted with no specified minimum age requirement. In the [2015 Census](#), 1.9% of the female population and 0.8% of the male population aged 15-19 years were legally married; among 20-24 year olds, 12.0% of women and 7.6% of men were legally married.

Legal Marriage Age in Palau

Internationally accepted age:



Average marriage age in Palau:



Palau marriage age with parental consent:



Source: [Palau National Code](#)

As per the [Family Protection Act 2012](#), sexual intercourse with a minor under the age of 15 is classified as sexual assault in the first degree. Sexual assault legislation in the Family Protection Act applies equally to men and women. Sexual intercourse with a minor between the ages of 15 and 17 is additionally classed as sexual assault in the first degree, unless the adult is less than five years older than the minor, or the adult is legally married to the minor. This therefore creates an exception to the age of consent legislation that applies to young girls who are married below the age of 18.

Same-sex sexual activity is not criminalised in Palau, however same-sex marriage is prohibited under a constitutional amendment adopted by referendum in 2008. [A citizen-led initiative was launched to legalise same-sex marriage](#) in 2019. There were public protests in Palau in 2015 over the Conference of Pacific Human Rights on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity, which was held in the Kingdom of Tonga. A Hate Crimes Bill, proposed to punish hate crimes including those on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity, was passed by the Senate in January 2015 but was not adopted. Palau is, however, a signatory of the UN Human Rights Council's 2011 [Joint Statement on Ending Acts of Violence Related Human Rights Violations Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity](#).

Governance and Participation in Public Life

Women in Palau [traditionally hold positions of power within their families, clans and communities](#), but there are areas in contemporary life in which they are underrepresented in decision-making roles.

The [National Congress of Palau](#) – the *Olbiil Era Kelulau* (OEK) – is a bicameral parliament. The House of Delegates has 16 members who represent the 16 States of Palau and are elected in a first-past-the-post voting system. The Senate has 13 members who are elected from a national common roll. Elections are held every four years for both Houses. In the 2020 elections, one woman was elected to the OEK Senate and one woman was elected to the OEK House of Delegates. Women therefore held 6.9% of the elected seats in the OEK as of April 2022. Additionally, former Senator J. Uduch Sengebau-Senior was elected as Vice President.

Female Representation in National Parliament in Palau



Source: [Pacific Women in Politics, Inter-Parliamentary Union](#) March 2022

The Palau Government has [reportedly conducted programmes](#) with the Ministry of the Community and Cultural Affairs to encourage more women to stand for election. There are no Temporary Special Measures such as parliamentary quotas to improve the political representation of women in Palau.

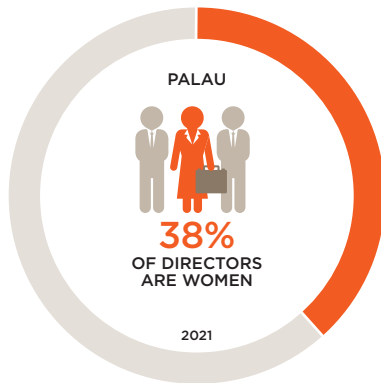
The Council of Chiefs consists of traditional leaders from each of Palau's 16 states. The Council of Chiefs operates separately from the OEK and has an advisory role to the President. The Council [aims to preserve traditional ways of life and to advise on how traditional laws and customs relate to Palau's legal framework](#). No data is available on the gender composition of the Council of Chiefs, however Chiefs are

[traditionally male leaders](#). Mechesil Belau – Women of Palau – is an influential women's group in Palau, composed of traditional women leaders from each state, and has been instrumental in amplifying women's voices on key issues. Mechesil Belau hold an annual Women's Conference, and between 1995 and 2020 they have [successfully advocated for 25 national laws, three constitutional amendments, and one traditional law](#). The Center for Women Empowerment Belau is a non-governmental organisation [dedicated to encouraging and assisting women to run for public office](#).

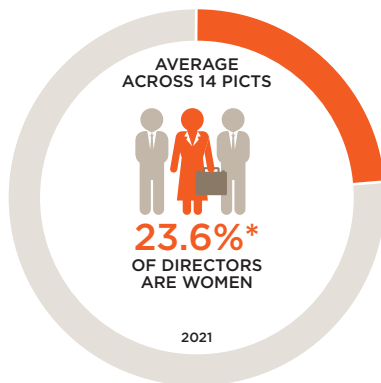
In the [2015 Census](#), the latest data available, 28.1% of chief executives, senior officials, and legislators were women. Overall, 41.2% of the managers in the 2015 Census were women. Women were most likely to be managers in administrative and commercial businesses (56.5% of such managers were female) or in hospitality, retail, and other services (50.4% female). Men were more likely to be Chief Executives, senior officials, and legislators (71.9% male), and production and specialised services managers (58.0% male). There are [no national policies for achieving equal representation in the civil service](#), including at leadership levels.

An [analysis](#) of eight organisations in Palau conducted by the Pacific Private Sector Development Initiative (PSDI) in 2021 found that 38% of Directors on boards were women, while 33% of Deputy Chairs and 20% of Board Chairs were women. Women were most highly represented as Directors on the boards of industry associations (where women comprised 57% of Director positions) and of other private sector organisations (67% women), compared to state-owned enterprises (21% women). Similarly, in 2017, a study of State-Owned Enterprises found that [seven of the 36 board members \(19%\) were women](#).

Women on Boards in Palau



Source: [Pacific Private Sector Development Initiative](#)



Source: [Pacific Private Sector Development Initiative](#)

* Average calculated as the mean value across countries with available data.

In 2018, women made up [49% of all Executive branch personnel](#), 20% of whom held managerial positions. There were [79 women in the roles of CEO](#) for Government and Semi-Government companies and Executive Directors of private companies with more than 100 employees in 2015, accounting for 28% of these positions.

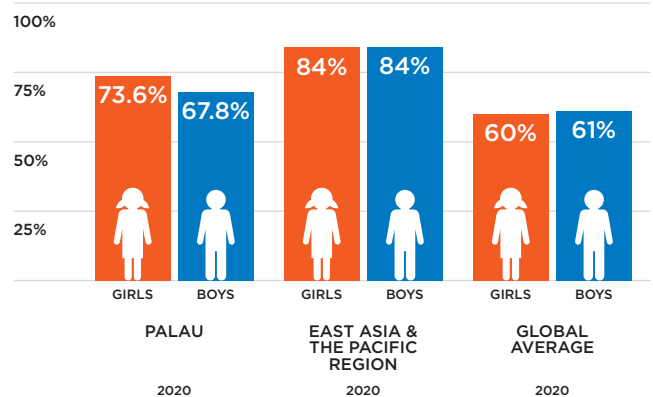
In the judiciary, there were [four full-time female judges](#) and five full-time male judges as of April 2020, plus an additional one female and four male part-time judges; women therefore comprised 36% of the judges in Palau in 2020. [Data from 2015](#) shows that there were 141 police officers in Palau, although the gender composition of the Palau Police is not known. Among new recruits in July 2017, [19.2% were women](#). Of the six individuals who recorded their primary occupation as 'armed forces occupations' in the [2015 Census](#), one was female.

Education

Education is [free and compulsory between the ages of 6 and 18](#). Among the adult population over the age of 15, the [literacy rate](#) was 96.3% for women and 96.8% for men in the most recent data from 2015. Among the 15-24 youth population, the literacy rate was 99.2% for women and 98.2% for men. In the 2020-2021 academic year, approximately [75% of students—girls and boys—were enrolled in public schools](#), with approximately 25% enrolled in private schools.

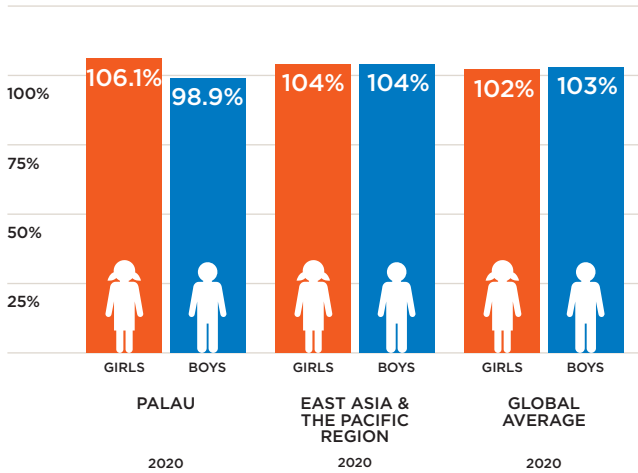
Early childhood education is not compulsory in Palau. The level of enrolment of early childhood education is higher among girls than boys. According to data from the [UNESCO Institute for Statistics](#), the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) for early childhood education was 73.6% for girls and 67.8% for boys in 2020. The 2020 Net Enrolment Rate (NER) for early childhood education was 60.6% for girls and 49.7% for boys.

Early Childhood Education Gross Enrolment Rates in Palau



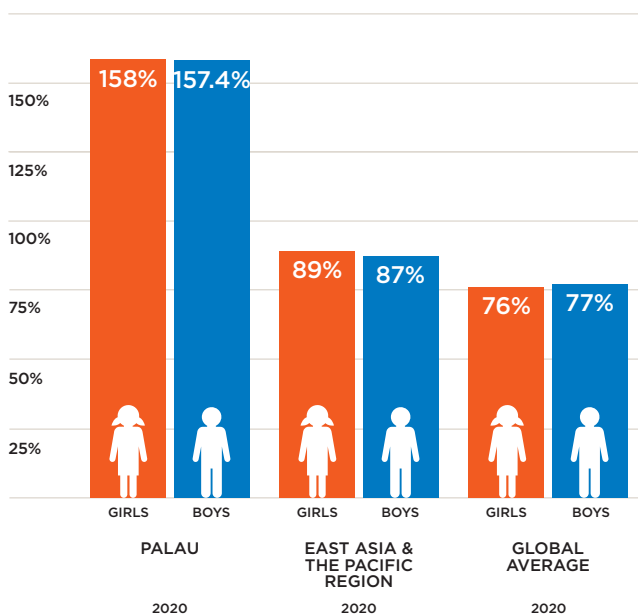
Source: [UNESCO Institute for Statistics](#)

Primary Gross Enrolment Rates in Palau



Source: [UNESCO Institute for Statistics](#)

Secondary Gross Enrolment Rates in Palau



Source: [UNESCO Institute for Statistics](#)

The GER for primary education was 106.1% for girls and 98.9% for boys in 2020. The combined NER for girls and boys was 86.1%, suggesting a significant proportion of students in primary education are not within the official age range. According to [data from the World Bank](#), 12.1% of female primary school students and 14.3% of male primary school students were over-age for their current grade in 2014. In the [2015 Census](#), 4.3% of women over the age of 25 and 6.5% of men had not finished elementary school. The GER for secondary education was 158.0% for girls and 157.4% for boys in 2020.

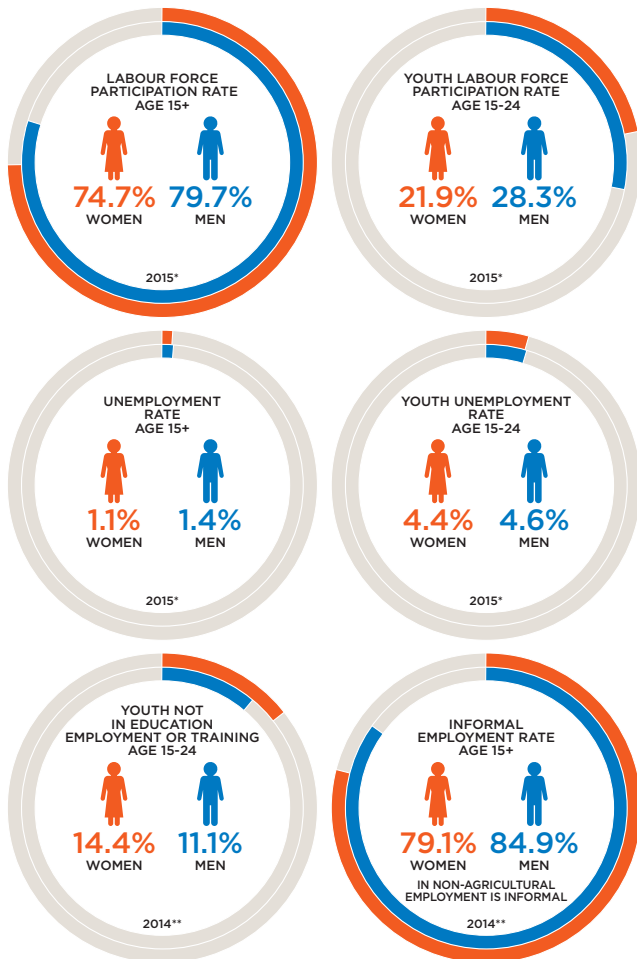
In 2014, the GER for tertiary education was 66.4% for women and 43.9% for men. In the autumn term of 2020, [57.5% of the students at Palau Community College were female](#). Female students were more likely to study full time than their male counterparts; 55.3% of female and 41.3% of male students were studying full time. Data from the [2015 Census](#) shows that 34.0% of women over the age of 25 and 25.4% of men over the age of 25 held an associate college (occupational or academic), bachelor's, or professional degree.

The 2015 Census found that women in tertiary education were more likely to specialise in business, administration and law (34.0% of women and 15.7% of men); education (15.2% of women and 6.7% of men); and health and welfare (11.2% of women and 3.0% of men). Men were more likely to specialise in engineering, manufacturing and construction (2.5% of women and 35.6% of men). In 2015, [77% of students undertaking Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics majors were men](#).

Public school policy [allows pregnant students to continue attending school](#) during their pregnancy. The Palau Community College reportedly has an on-campus day care centre to make tertiary education more accessible to young mothers.

Women's Economic Empowerment

Economic Empowerment Indicators in Palau



* Source: [2015 Census](#)

** Source: [Household Income and Expenditure Survey](#)

According to the [2015 Census](#), the labour force participation rate was 74.7% for women over the age of 15, and 79.7% of men over the age of 15. The unemployment rate was low, at 1.1% for women and 1.4% for men. The rate of unemployment was higher for youths between the ages of 16 and 24, at 4.4% for women and 4.6% for men. In the 2013 Household Income and Expenditure, the [youth labour force participation rate](#) was 21.9% for women and 28.3% for men age 15-24.

Among youth aged 15-24, 14.4% of women and 11.1% of men were [not in education, employment, or training](#) according to data from the 2014 Household Income and Expenditure Survey. In the 2015 Census the rate of youth not in education, employment, or training fell to 3.8% for women and 4.6% for men, although the reason for this

significant decrease is not clear.

The most recent data from 2014 shows that 79.1% of women and 84.9% of men were engaged in [informal employment in the non-agricultural sector](#). Informally employed workers do not benefit from national labour legislation or social protections.

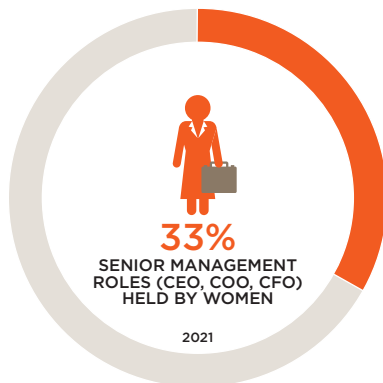
Within the labour force, 73.4% of women and 90.4% of men were in paid employment according to the [2015 Census](#). Men were most likely to be wage employees in the private sector, accounting for 54.1% of male employment and 40.6% of female employment. The rates of wage employment in the public sector were 31.3% for men and 29.2% for women.

Women in the 2015 Census were more likely than men to report that they were unpaid family workers helping with basic household duties; this was the main economic activity of 22.0% of women and 5.6% of men. When asked for reasons for being outside the labour force, men were most likely to cite being a full time student (40.8% of men and 34.7% of women outside the labour force).

According to the 2015 Census, [women held 31% of professional roles within the Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics \(STEM\) sector](#). Women are highly represented in the education and health sectors: in 2015, 68% of those in the education sector were women, 72% of employees in professional health occupations were women, and 71% of all employees in the health sector, including those providing residential care, were women. In 2019, there were more female than male doctors in Palau, although the source does not provide exact figures. While women hold the majority of professional occupations, [previous research](#) shows that men are more likely to occupy certain professional roles such as engineers, architects, and lawyers.

In [analysis](#) of eight organisations in Palau conducted by the PSDI in 2021, women were found to occupy 33% senior management positions, including Chief Executive Officers, Chief Financial Officers, and Chief Operating Officers.

Women in Senior Management in Palau



Source: [Pacific Private Sector Development Initiative](#)

In the [2015 Census](#), women in the public sector were found to earn more, on average, than their male counterparts. The average salary in the 2018 financial year was [reportedly](#) \$11,722 for women and \$11,118 for men. The average income of female-headed households, however, is lower than male-headed households; according to the [2014 HIES](#), the average income of a female-headed household was \$19,130 while the average income of a male-headed household was \$23,480.

According to the [President's State of the Republic Address](#) in 2019, 52.2% of employed persons in Palau in 2018 were non-Palauans. In 2020, [32.9% of foreign workers were women](#).

Current laws [mandate maternity leave for permanent civil servants](#), but there is [no national legislation](#) mandating paid or unpaid maternity leave in Palau. Any such legislation has [reportedly been rejected in the past](#) due to concerns on the potential impact on businesses. As of 2017, there were [no laws to mandate equal pay for equal work or gender non-discrimination](#) in the hiring process. In public employment, the [Palau National Code](#) calls for equal opportunities for all, regardless of sex, race, religion, political affiliation, or place of origin. There is a [lack of legal protections against workplace sexual harassment](#). Palau has been a [member of the International Labour Organization](#) since 2012 and has signed one of the eight Fundamental Conventions, namely the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention in 2019.

Women are recognised to undertake [additional caregiving and customary responsibilities](#). Qualitative findings confirm that [women are generally perceived to be caregivers](#) in Palauan society and are expected to fulfil this role within the family regardless of their education or work outside of the home. During customary events such as funerals or births, women with particular positions within a clan may be expected to take time off work to fulfil their role.

Palau's economy is highly dependent on tourism and was [significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic](#). An estimated [3,200 jobs were lost following the extended border closures](#) that first began in March 2020, approximately 1,200 of which were lost by women. Further analysis is required to understanding the long term impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the economic empowerment of women in Palau.

Health/Sexual and Reproductive Health

As of 2021, [life expectancy](#) in Palau is 77.8 years for women and 68.1 years for men. Non-communicable diseases (NCDs) including heart disease, stroke, and cancers are [responsible for over 70% of deaths](#) in Palau. The [diabetes prevalence rate](#) was 17.9% in 2019.

Risk factors for NCDs include obesity and tobacco smoking. In 2017 and 2018, [36% of school age girls and 40% of school age boys were overweight or obese](#). In 2018, 36.3% of men and 11.2% of women [reported that they currently smoked tobacco](#). In 2019, it was reported that [64% of women aged 25-64 chew betel nut daily](#), compared to 57% of men. Additionally, women are more likely than men to add tobacco to betel nut.

In 2015, among women who were aged 15-49 and married or in a union, [an estimated 38.9% were using any methods of contraception](#), while 34.4% of the total were using modern methods. Overall, 55.4% of the demand for family planning in Palau was satisfied with modern contraception methods. The unmet need for family planning was estimated to be 22.9%. Further data is required in order to understand current contraceptive prevalence rates, particularly among young women. The Bureau of Health [reportedly provides a range of family planning services](#) for free and without

age restrictions. Contraceptives are also available through private clinics and pharmacies. The rates of sexually transmitted infections, particularly chlamydia, is believed to be high, although there is a lack of recent data in this area. Surveys indicate a low level of condom use. During the cessation of non-essential hospital services and health clinics due to COVID-19 restrictions in 2020, [sexual and reproductive health services were not classified as an essential service](#), therefore restricting women's access to healthcare during this time.

Palau has a recorded [maternal mortality rate of 0](#) as of 2016. In the most recent data, from 2018, [100% of births were attended by a skilled professional](#), and Palau's [2019 Voluntary National Review](#) stated that all births in Palau take place in the Palau National Hospital. The [anaemia prevalence](#) in 2019 was 28.5% among women aged 15-49, and 34.3% among pregnant women.

The [total fertility rate](#) was 2.2 births per woman in 2018. Data from 2016 estimates the [adolescent fertility rate](#) to be 27 births per 1,000 women aged 15-19. In the [2015 Census](#), 3.5% of women aged 15-19 had given birth, while 41.7% of women aged 20-24 had given birth. In 2020, 16 of the 213 registered births were to [mothers below the age of 19](#), accounting for 7.5% of births.

Adolescent Fertility Rate in Palau

Sustainable Development Goal target: reduce adolescent fertility rate to	Palau:
less than 13 live births per 1,000	27 live births per 1,000
women aged 15-19 by 2030	2016

Source: [UNICEF](#)

Maternal Mortality Ratio in Palau

Sustainable Development Goal target: reduce maternal mortality ratio to	Palau:
less than 70 per 100,000 live births	0 per 100,000 live births
by 2030	2016

Source: [UNICEF](#)

Under-5 Mortality Rate in Palau

Sustainable Development Goal target: reduce under-5 mortality rate to	Palau:
less than 25 per 1,000 live births	16.9 per 1,000 live births
by 2030	2020

Source: [World Bank](#)

Among [middle school students](#) in 2017, 3.3% of girls and 15.2% of boys reported that they had had sexual intercourse. In the 2014 [Belau Family Health and Safety Study](#), 53% of sexually active women were found to have had their first had sexual intercourse between the ages of 18 and 21, while 26% reported first having had sexual intercourse between the ages of 15 and 17.

The rate of suicide is high in Palau. Between 2008 and 2012 there were [22 deaths by suicide, leading to one of the highest suicide rates in the world](#). Men accounted for 86% of suicides during this time. In 2017, [research on risk behaviours in middle school students](#) found that 52.0% of girls and 24.1% of boys had seriously thought about committing suicide. 36.1% of girls and 19.8% of boys reported that they had attempted suicide. In 2020, the [Ministry of Health in Palau employed two psychiatrists](#) to help improve the country's mental health problems.

Ending Violence against Women and Girls

There is a lack of recent data on the prevalence of violence against women in Palau. The most recent national survey was the [Family Health and Safety Study](#) (FHSS) conducted in 2014. The FHSS found that 35.7% of women in Palau had experienced physical or sexual violence since the age of 15, predominantly from intimate partners or male family members. Among ever-partnered women, 25% reported that they had experienced physical and/or sexual violence by a partner in their lifetime; 23% of ever-partnered women in Palau experienced physical violence from a partner in their lifetime, and 10% experienced sexual violence from a partner in their lifetime. Women aged 20-24 were most likely to report that they had experienced physical partner violence in the 12 months prior to the survey.

Lifetime Prevalence of Intimate Partner Violence in Palau



Source: [Family Health and Safety Study](#)

In the 2014 FHSS, 14% of women reported that they had experienced physical violence by a non-partner in their lifetime. Similarly, 15% of interviewed women reported that they had experienced sexual violence from a non-partner since the age of 15 and 12% of interviewed women reported that they experienced sexual abuse before the age of 15. The most commonly reported perpetrators were male family members and male friends or acquaintances. In 2017, UNICEF [reported](#) that 32% of women who first had sexual intercourse prior to the age of 15 in Palau reported that it was forced.

According to the 2014 FHSS, 23% of ever-partnered women reported experiencing emotional violence in their lifetime, including being scared, intimidated, belittled or humiliated. The highest current prevalence of emotional violence was found among women aged 35-39: 16% reported they experienced emotional violence from a partner in the 12 months prior to the survey.

The [Family Protection Act](#) was passed in 2012. The act introduced a 'no-drop policy' whereby reported incidents of domestic violence are not to be withdrawn due to

reconciliation or community settlement. There is [some evidence](#) to suggest that the Family Protection Act has contributed to an environment in which victims feel more empowered to seek help when experiencing violence. In 2019, there were [26 Civil Action/ Domestic Abuse cases](#) filed under the Family Protection Act. The highest number of cases were filed in 2017, at 78.

According to [2019 Crimes Statistics](#), there were eight reported crimes in the category of ‘sexual abuse and assault’ in 2019, accounting for 4% of total crimes and 27% of felony crimes during this period. The perpetrators were male in all cases. Between 2017 and 2019, the Ministry of Justice crime statistics recorded 35 reports of ‘adultery and sexual assaults’, which include rape, attempted rape, sexual abuse, and sexual assault. The data is not disaggregated by sex of the victim. The perpetrators were male in 80% of the sexual crimes reported during this period, with the remaining 20% involving a female perpetrator.

A total of [69 restraining order cases were filed in 2019](#), 43% of which were filed by women, 20% were filed by men, and 36% were jointly filed by male and female participants.

Intimate partner violence can affect many aspects of women’s lives. Among women engaged in paid work who reported experiencing physical or sexual violence in the [2014 FHSS](#), 38% reported that their work was disrupted due to the violence, most commonly due to them being unable to work or having to take sick leave (22%) or being unable to concentrate at work (20%). Suicidal thoughts were found to be more common among women who had experienced partner violence (19.7%) than among women who had not experienced partner violence (8.0%).

In the 2014 FHSS, 66% of women who experienced intimate partner violence stated that they did not seek help from formal services or authorities, while 37% of women who experienced intimate partner violence reported that they never disclosed the violence to anyone. Women most commonly chose not to seek help because they believed that the violence was normal or not serious.

Similar to other countries in the Pacific, violence against women is considered by many in Palau to be a [private family matter that should be dealt with within the family](#), not through the courts, which prevents women’s ability to access services.

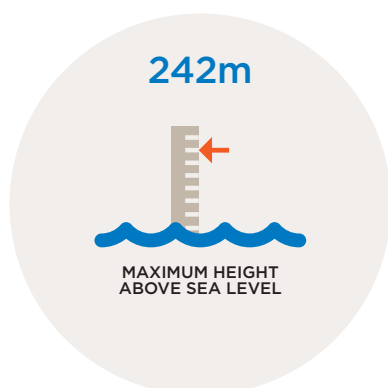
Violence against women in Palau [is related to some aspects of traditional views on gender roles](#). Findings from the 2014 FHSS show that 47.5% of women agreed with the statement ‘a good wife should obey her husband even if she disagrees’, while 35.1% agreed with the statement ‘a man should show he is the boss’.

Globally, intimate-partner violence was found to have increased during the COVID-19 pandemic. An [analysis](#) of the impact of COVID-19 and related restrictions on violence against women and girls in Asia and the Pacific found that factors such as increased exposure to perpetrators during lockdowns, increased triggers for perpetrators during times of stress and uncertainty, and limited support available due to reduced services can all contribute to increased violence. There is a lack of available data on violence against women and girls in Palau during the COVID-19 pandemic, and further research is required in order to identify country-specific trends.

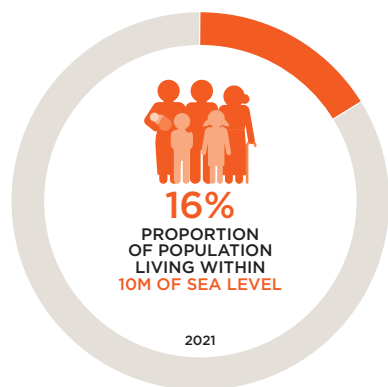
Gender and Protection in Humanitarian Action

The [maximum height above sea level](#) in Palau 242m. As of 2021, [16% of the population live within 10m of sea level](#), with 46% of the population within 20m of sea level. An estimated [93% of the population live within 1km of the coast](#). Palau's [2019 Voluntary National Review](#) noted that much of the country's critical infrastructure is situated in coastal areas and is vulnerable to rising sea levels.

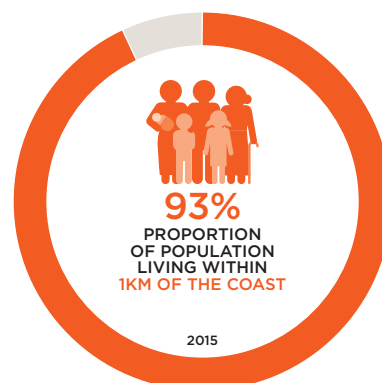
Climate and Disaster Profile of Palau



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



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



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

Main Climate-Related Hazards



Source: [Australian Aid](#)

A lack of available data on key indicators means that Palau is not included within the World Risk Report on disaster risk or the Global Climate Risk Index. The [INFORM Global Risk Index](#) for humanitarian crises and disasters that could overwhelm national response capacity [categorises Palau as low risk](#). However, of all the ratings in the index, Palau scores highest on 'lack of coping capacity'.

The [main hazards](#) in Palau are coastal flooding (medium likelihood), tsunamis (medium likelihood) and landslides (medium likelihood). Future climate projections for Palau predict that typhoons will become less frequent but more intense, average rainfall and annual mean temperatures will increase, and sea levels will rise. Climate change is further predicted to contribute to ocean acidification and coral bleaching. Palau is vulnerable to droughts due to a [reliance on consistent rainfall](#) to maintain the water supply.

The [disproportionate impact that disasters can have on women](#) and children is well documented, for example through women's increased vulnerability to sexual and

gender-based violence following disasters. Women's vulnerability is also impacted by their access to information and their ability to contribute to community and household decision-making. There is a lack of country-specific data examining the impact of disasters and climate change on women and girls in Palau, and more research is required in order to understand and respond to the gendered impacts of humanitarian crises and disasters in Palau.

A [report](#) by the National Environmental Protection Council in 2019 recognised that environmental and conservation initiatives such as Land Use Planning and Protected Areas Management can have a negative impact on particular genders or social groups. Gender mainstreaming has reportedly been included in national projects, and a gender and socially inclusive lens is being applied to environment projects and initiatives. Disaster risk reduction policies and programmes are [reportedly](#) informed by sex-disaggregated data.

The Center for Women Empowerment Belau have worked in partnership with Red Cross to provide [Climate Resilience Training for 200 women in Babeldaob](#) between September 2019 and February 2020. Through the programme 'Women's Empowerment through Emergency Preparedness, Crisis Response and Recovery', women were trained to be first responders and leaders of humanitarian response in their community.

Appendix 1: Country Background

Capital	Melekeok
Population	17,957 (2021)
GDP per capita (USD)	\$14,244 (2020)
Human Development Index	Ranked 50th out of 189 countries and territories (2020)
Type of Government	The National Congress of Palau – the <i>Olbiil Era Kelulau</i> (OEK) – is a bicameral parliament consisting of The House of Delegates and The Senate.
Women in Legislature	Two out of 29 of the elected members of the National Congress (6.9%) are women as of November 2021. The Vice President of the Republic of Palau is a woman.
Legal System	Mixed legal system of civil, common, and customary law.
Ratified Human Rights Conventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (accessioned 1995) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Palau has not signed the Optional Protocol to the CRC on the involvement of children in armed conflict or the Optional Protocol to the CRC on the sale of children into prostitution and child pornography. • Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (signed 2011, ratified 2013) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Palau signed the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2013. • Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT) (signed 2011) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Palau has not signed the Optional Protocol on CAT. • International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) (signed 2011) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Palau has not signed the Second Optional Protocol to the ICCPR. • Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (signed 2011) • Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) (signed 2011) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Palau has not signed the Optional Protocol to CEDAW. • International Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination (signed 2011) • International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (signed 2011) • International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (signed 2011).
Urban vs. Rural Women (%)	81% of the total population was urban in 2020 . Sex-disaggregated data not available.
Female-Headed Households (%)	30.7% of households were headed by women in the 2015 Census .
Women in the Workforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 79.1% of female and 84.9% of male non-agricultural employment was informal in 2014. • 40.6% of female employment and 54.1% of male employment is either formal or informal wage employment in the private sector in 2015. • In 2018, women made up 49% of all Executive branch personnel, 20% of whom held managerial positions. • 41.2% of managers were women in the 2015 Census. • In 2014, 35.5% of senior and middle management positions were occupied by women.
Women CEOs	According to the 2015 Census , 28.1% of chief executives, senior official and legislators were women.
Women on Boards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2021, an estimated 38% of Directors on boards were women, while 33% of Deputy Chairs and 20% of Board Chairs were women. • The Asian Development Bank reported in 2017 that 19% of board members of State Owned-Enterprises were women. • In 2015, there were 79 female CEOs of Government and Semi-Government companies and Executive Directors of private companies with more than 100 employees.

Appendix 1: Country Background (continued)

Palau is located in the most westerly group of the Caroline Islands in Micronesia and consists of over 340 islands, [nine of which are inhabited](#). According to the [2015 Census](#), the majority of the population live on the islands of Koror (64.8%) and Babeldaob (29.4%). The [total land area](#) of Palau is 460 km², and the exclusive economic zone (EEZ) is 603,978 km². The population of Palau was

estimated to be 17,957 in 2021. According to the 2015 Census, 72.0% of the population were born in Palau, and the largest immigrant population come from the Philippines, accounting for 15.3% of the population. The Republic of Palau became member of the United Nations and signed the [Compact of Free Association](#) with the United States of America in 1994. The [official currency](#) in Palau is the US Dollar.

Appendix 2: Country Commitments on Gender

International Commitments

Gender Commitments	Status	Actions
The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action	Signed 1995 +25 year review published in 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key achievements noted in Palau's Beijing +25 national review include the introduction of a National Gender Mainstreaming Policy in 2018 and the establishment of the Bureau of Aging, Disability, and Gender. There has been an increased focus on the collection of sex-disaggregated data in recent years, including in the 2015 National Census and 2014 HIES Survey. Major challenges experienced since the Beijing Declaration include the high prevalence of non-communicable diseases, a lack of sex-disaggregated data, a lack of protective services for women and children, and cultural norms and perceptions that view men's role as leaders and women's role as supportive and less vocal members of the community.
Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)	Signed 2011 Palau has not submitted a review to CEDAW.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Palau signed the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women in 2011 but has yet to ratify the convention. The President urged Congress to take the necessary steps to ratify CEDAW in a State of the Republic Address in 2013. In 2021, Palau stated as part of the Universal Periodic Review process that they were continuing to work towards ratification of CEDAW however were facing challenges with funding, capacity building, and resources.
Pacific Leaders' Gender Equality Declaration	Signed 2012. Regional review published in 2016.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A regional review conducted in 2016 noted the work of women's groups such as the Center for Women's Empowerment Belau and Mechesil Belau in increasing awareness regarding the challenges faced by women in decision-making positions. Free cancer screening and preventative health programmes, including for maternal and women's health, are available in Palau. In 2016 there was a reported lack of services and awareness surrounding health issues for men and boys. The number of incident police reports on domestic violence increased from 23 in 2012 to 48 in 2016. The regional review attributed this trend to the enactment of the Family Protection Act in 2012 and an increased level of awareness of domestic violence issues.

Appendix 2: Country Commitments on Gender (continued)

National Commitments

Gender Commitments	Status	Actions
Family Protection Act	2012	The Family Protection Act criminalized marital rape, introduced a no-drop policy for cases of intimate partner violence, and expanded the definitions of sexual penetration and sexual assault. The Act provides protections for victims of gender-based violence, for example by providing processes through which protective orders can be obtained.
National Gender Mainstreaming Policy	2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The National Gender Mainstreaming Policy (NGMP) was endorsed in 2018. The NGMP defines gender as the socially constructed roles held by women and men in a specific society. It acknowledges that these roles are learned and can differ from one society to another and change over time. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The strategic objectives of the policy are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All women and men participate in decision making in all areas of life; All women and men have the same opportunities to earn incomes and fulfil their needs; All women and men are safe and protected in their home, at school, in workplaces, and all other private and public spaces; All women and men have the resources they need to be healthy and resilient and to support their well-being. The Policy outlines the roles of relevant stakeholders such as the Gender Mainstreaming Committee and the Division of Gender.
Voluntary National Review (VNR)	Palau's first VNR was produced in 2019.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Palau's first Voluntary National Review was produced in 2019. The review identified five key areas of improvement for gender equality in Palau: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Universal mandated maternity leave; Legislation to address sexual harassment in the workplace; Expanded childcare facilities; Improved support services for victims of gender-based violence; Removal of gender discriminatory marriage and inheritance laws.
Universal Periodic Review (UPR)	Palau's most recent UPR was produced in 2021	<p>As reported in the most recent Universal Periodic Review (UPR), produced in 2021, Palau has made progress on gender equality and women's empowerment through the Palau National Gender Mainstreaming Policy and Palau Country Plan. The UPR recognises the gender-based violence awareness community outreach activities conducted in Palau, including the annual <i>16 Days of Activism Against Gender-based Violence</i>.</p> <p>The United Nations country office recommended in 2021 that Palau ratify CEDAW without delay. Additionally, it was recommended Palau increase the number of women in the legislature, the executive, and the judiciary, and address social factors that stand in the way of women's full participation in public and political life, particularly in relation to participation in decision-making.</p> <p>The United Nations country office noted in 2021 that although Palau had established a national human rights committee and Office of the Ombudsman, the role of Ombudsman had not yet been filled and there was little clarity regarding the mandate and powers of the human rights committee.</p>