



IN BRIEF



GENDER EQUALITY BRIEF FOR SOLOMON ISLANDS

Women's Human Rights

Under the [1978 Constitution](#), every person in Solomon Islands is entitled to fundamental rights and freedoms of the individual regardless of race, place of origin, political opinion, colour, creed, or sex.

Citizenship in Solomon Islands is acquired either by birth or by naturalisation. Discriminatory legislation in the 1978 Citizenship Act – such as the [acquisition and loss of nationality according to marital status only for women](#), and the ability for male but not female Solomon Islands citizens to transmit nationality to jointly adopted children – was repealed in the [2018 Citizenship Act](#). The 2018 Citizenship Act allows individuals who have previously lost or renounced their citizenship to resume their birth citizenship, and states that any individual of 'good character' – man or woman – who is over 18 and has been married to a birth citizen for at least 5 years is eligible for citizenship.

Solomon Islands has a [pluralistic legal system](#) of State law and Customary law that both operate at the national and local level. In State law, both men and women have equal opportunity to acquire land. The majority of the land in Solomon Islands is, however, held in accordance with Customary law or *kastom*. The capital city of Honiara follows the Constitution in land ownership but most land outside the city boundary uses Customary law. Under Customary law, decisions regarding land matters are made through a consultative group comprised of male chiefs and elders. In some instances, customary law also dictates that [women must 'stand behind' men](#) when it comes to public discussions of land matters. There are provinces within Solomon Islands where [women are not able to use or hold land independently from their husbands](#). Commercial operations view male chiefs as the relevant custodians to approach in seeking rights to land use, thus side-lining women economically. Property and land-related disputes are [often dealt with locally](#), placing women at a disadvantage since local-level adjudicators are male chiefs or elders, with few exceptions. Land ownership in rural areas determines access to credit and agricultural support services as well as the social power to negotiate access to other resources.

Under the [1945 Islanders' Marriage Act](#) the legal marriage age is 15 for both men and women. Individuals under the age of 18 require consent from a parent, guardian, or a judge. Efforts in recent years to increase the legal marriage age to 18 have been led by the National Action Committee on Children, although currently – as of May 2022 – the [legal marriage age remains at 15](#).

Incidents of domestic violence reportedly [sometimes arise as a result of the practice of bride price](#) in Solomon Islands, although the prevalence of this is not known. Research from 2018 states that bride price contributes to and legitimises a culture in which men are perceived as superior and women have a duty to obey their husbands. Bride price practices are found throughout Solomon Islands, [for example in the patrilineal community in Malaita](#).

Legal Marriage Age in Solomon Islands

Internationally accepted age:



Solomon Islands with parental consent:



Solomon Islands without parental consent:



Source: [Solomon Islands National Parliament](#)

The minimum age of consent to sex is 15 for both boys and girls. Sexual offence legislation was amended in 2016 under the [Penal Code \(Amendment\) \(Sexual Offences\) Bill](#). The Bill specifically criminalises marital rape and replaces previous legislation on sexual offences in gender neutral terms.

[Same-sex sexual acts are criminalised](#) in Solomon Islands, with the act of 'unnatural offences' punishable by up to 14 years in prison. In general, [authorities are not believed to enforce these laws](#). There are no protections in law against [discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation](#) or gender identity. Solomon Islands

is not a signatory to 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](#).

Governance and Participation in Public Life

Solomon Islands has a [unicameral Parliament](#). Elections are held every four years, with the 50 Members of Parliament (MPs) elected in a [first-past-the-post system](#). Women have equal rights to men to stand as candidates and to vote in Solomon Islands.

In the 2019 national election, 7.8% of the 333 candidates were female. Two women were successfully elected. By-elections held in December 2019 and November 2020 resulted in the election of two more female MPs; as of April 2022, [four out of 50 MPs \(8.0%\) are women](#). This is the highest rate of female participation in elected legislature that Solomon Islands has ever achieved. Prior to the 2019 elections, only four women had been elected as MPs since the country's independence: the first female MP was elected in 1989, and subsequent female MPs were elected in 2012, 2014, and 2018.

In addition to the National Assembly, each of Solomon Islands' nine provinces has a Provincial Assembly. Following elections in 2021, four of the 172 Members of Provincial Assembly (MPAs) (2.3%) are women. The Honiara City Council, which falls under the mandate of the Ministry of Home Affairs, has one female Elected Councillor out of 12 Elected Councillors and one female Appointed Councillor out of four Appointed Councillors.¹

Female Representation in National Parliament in Solomon Islands



* Source: [Pacific Women in Politics](#) May 2022

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

The [2014 Political Parties Integrity Act](#) states that in order for a political party to contest an election, at least 10% of the party's candidates must be women. If a political party does not receive enough applications from female candidates to fulfil this obligation, then the obligation does not apply. Data on compliance rates is not publicly available. There are no reserved seats for women in Parliament.

The [2016-2035 National Development Strategy](#) aims to improve the social and economic lives of all Solomon Islanders. The Strategy aims to improve gender equality through actions such as community engagement programmes and establishing targets for the representation of women in parliament, ministries, state-owned enterprises and in local government. In 2021, 17% of the 24 Permanent Secretaries of the 24 government ministries were women. For Deputy Secretaries, 14% were women and 86% were men. At the Director level, 18% were women and 82% were men.²

Women in Government Ministries in Solomon Islands in 2021



Source: Advice from the Ministry of Public Services, 2022

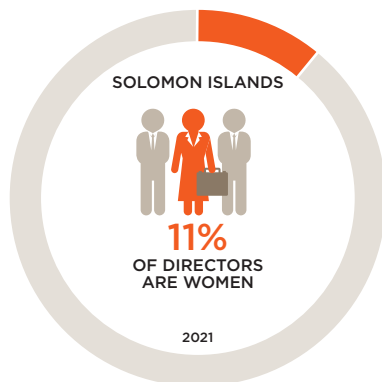
In a 2021 [analysis](#) of 31 Solomon Islands organisations by the Pacific Private Sector Development Initiative, 11% of Directors were women. Women held 0% of Board Chair and 33% of Deputy Chair positions. Women were most highly represented on the boards of organisations in the media and communications sector (21%), followed by the utilities sector (18%) and the agriculture and fisheries sector (18%). 11% of the Directors on the boards of state-owned enterprises were women. Reforms made under the [2007 State-Owned Enterprises Act](#) – such as the advertisement of board vacancies and increased independent oversight of boards – have [provided more transparency around the appointment process of board members](#) and increased the accountability of the boards of state-owned enterprises. The Act does not contain any specific measures to improve women's representation on the boards of state-owned enterprises. In the [National](#)

¹ Advice from the Ministry of Provincial Government and Institutional Strengthening, 2022.

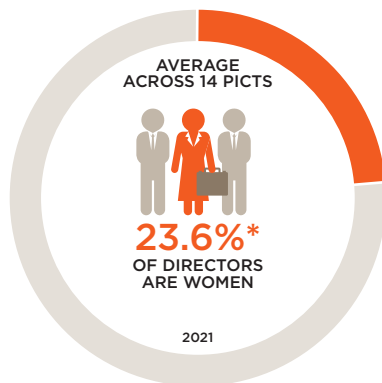
² Advice from the Ministry of Public Services, 2022.

[Strategy for the Economic Empowerment of Women and Girls](#), the Government proposed to develop networks and mentoring systems to champion and support women to attain senior positions in businesses.

Women on Boards in Solomon Islands



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



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

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

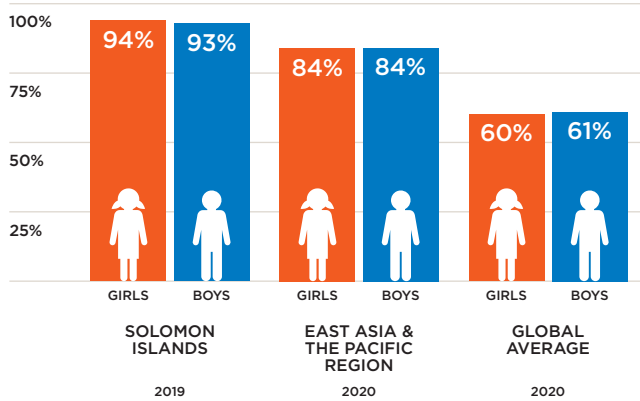
The [most recent annual report](#) of the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force from 2018 reported that 23% of police officers in Solomon Islands were women. The [first local female High Court judge](#) was appointed in 2019. Prior to this, [two foreign female judges](#) had served on the High Court of Solomon Islands. The first female Chief Magistrate was appointed in 2017. Furthermore, the [Constitution Amendment Electoral Reform Act 2018](#) mandates representation in the Electoral Commission of one female commissioner, and in [2020](#) a woman was appointed Chief Electoral Officer.

Education

The 1978 Education Act [does not specify the years of entry and exit for education](#), and education is not compulsory by law. The Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development's 2015 [Education White Paper](#), however, defined 'basic education' as comprising primary and lower secondary education (Year 1-9) and discussed making 'basic education' free. Under the [draft Education Act of 2014](#), the compulsory age of schooling is 6-14, although the Act has [yet to be legislated](#). In the [2009 Census](#), the literacy rate among the population aged 15 and over was 89% for men and 79% for women, and 11% of men and 21% of women had not completed any formal schooling. Educational levels were significantly higher in the urban area than in rural areas.

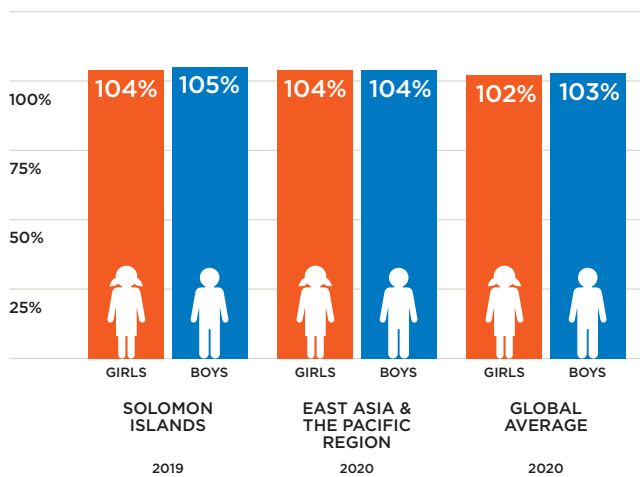
Currently, there is [no legal mandate for free or compulsory early childhood education](#). In 2019, [data from the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development](#) (MEHRD) shows that the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) for early childhood education was 82.0% for both girls and boys. The GER was highest in Honiara province (115.7% for girls, 122.4% for boys) and Temotu province (115.9% for girls, 116.3% for boys) in 2019. The early childhood education GER was lowest in Choiseul province (52.3% for girls, 49.5% for boys) and Western province (52.0% for girls, 52.5% for boys). For the same year, the Net Enrolment Rate (NER) was 32.0% for girls and 30.4% for boys in early childhood education. According to international comparable data from the [UNESCO Institute for Statistics](#) (UIS), the GER for pre-primary education was 94.3% for girls and 92.3% for boys in 2019, while the NER for early childhood education was 43.3% for girls and 40.8% for boys.

Early Childhood Education Gross Enrolment Rates in Solomon Islands



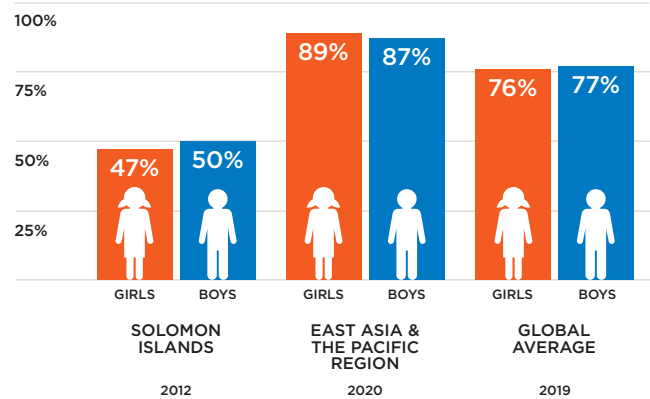
Source: [UNESCO Institute for Statistics](#)

Primary Gross Enrolment Rates in Solomon Islands



Source: [UNESCO Institute for Statistics](#)

Secondary Gross Enrolment Rates in Solomon Islands



Source: [UNESCO Institute for Statistics](#)

Primary school education is [free but not compulsory](#) in Solomon Islands. The GER for primary education was 112.4% for girls and 116.4% for boys in 2019 [data from MEHRD](#). The primary education GER was highest in Malaita province (128.6% for girls, 138.6% for boys), Temotu province (129.6% for girls, 125.4% for boys), and Honiara province (121.0% for girls, 121.5% for boys). The national primary education GER was 76.5% for girls and 77.7% for boys in 2019. The out-of-school rate for primary education was 13.0% for girls and 13.1% for boys. In 2018, 96% of both girls and boys in Year 6 [achieved minimum proficiency numeracy skills](#), while 73% of girls and 66% of boys achieved minimum proficiency in literacy. In [UNESCO data](#) from 2019, the GER was 103.9% for girls and 104.7% for boys, while the NER was 66.4% for girls and 61.4% for boys.

Solomon Islands' free primary education has proven to be effective in improving access to education for girls and boys. However, challenges remain at the secondary and higher education level to engage and keep more students in schools. In [data from MEHRD](#), the junior secondary school (Year 7–9) the GER was 70.0% for girls and 66.2% for boys in 2019. The NER for junior secondary school was 18.9% for girls and 16.5% for boys in 2019. In senior secondary education (Year 10–13), the GER was 32.1% for girls and 32.2% for boys in 2019. The NER was 19.3% for girls and 17.7% for boys. In [UNESCO's most recent secondary school data](#) from 2012, the GER was 47.0% for girls and 49.5% for boys. By senior secondary level, 76.3% of girls and 80.7% of boys were [overage for their current grade](#) in 2019.

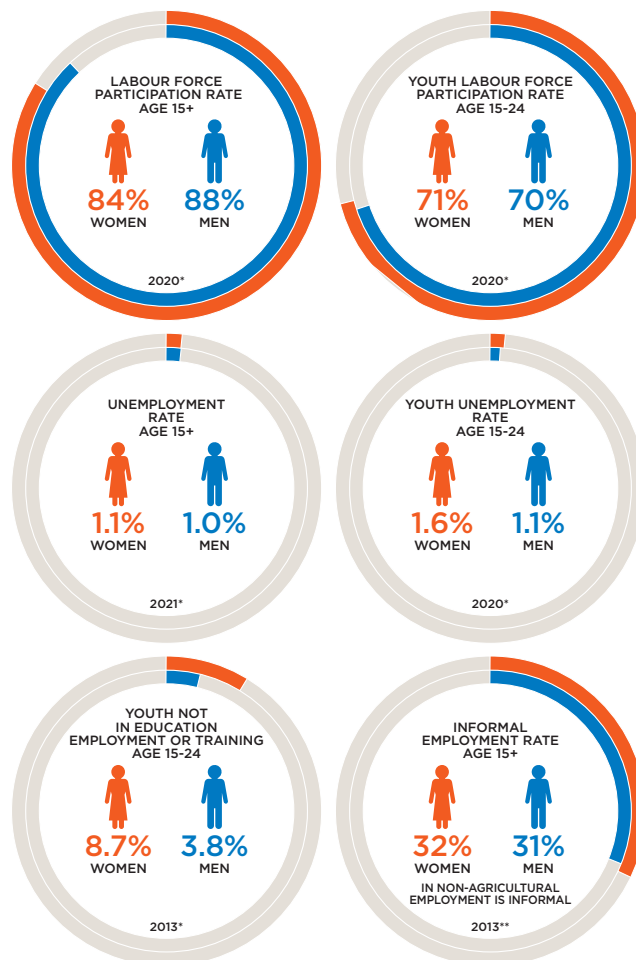
In the [2009 Census](#), 6% of men and 3% of women had completed tertiary education. There is a lack of data on the current rate of female participation in tertiary level education and technical vocational education and training. Regarding technical vocational education and training, [young men predominate in regional training centers and TVET](#), accounting for 73% of students, compared to just 27% of young women.

There are [multiple barriers to girls' and women's education](#) in Solomon Islands, such as a lack of basic sanitary facilities in schools, a lack of dormitories for girls in rural areas, and the long distances that some girls must walk in order to attend school and the subsequent increased risk of violence they face during this journey. There are a number of indirect costs associated with sending a child to school, including transport, books, and stationary, and parents with limited means may give priority to boys' education over the education of girls. High rates of adolescent pregnancies are believed to cause a number of girls to drop-out of school, although exact data on this is not publicly available. The [draft 2014 Education Act](#) states that no one may be refused admission or treated less favourably in schools and tertiary education institutes on the basis of their gender or pregnancy status.

Globally, [girls' access to education has been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic](#) and the associated restrictions and economic consequences. Further research is required in order to understand the long-term impacts of the pandemic on the education of girls and boys in Solomon Islands.

Women's Economic Empowerment

Economic Empowerment Indicators in Solomon Islands



* Source: [World Bank](#)

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

There is a lack of recent data on basic labour and employment indicators in Solomon Islands. The [2012/13 Household Income and Expenditure Survey](#) is the most recent source of national data. Modelled estimations by the International Labour Organization (ILO) provide indications of the current situation and trends.

According to [ILO estimates](#), the labour force participation rate was 83.9% for women and 87.9% for men in 2020. Among young adults aged 15-24, the labour force participation rate was estimated to be 70.6% for women and 69.8% for men in 2020. An estimated 0.9% of both the female and male labour force were unemployed in 2020. For youth aged 15-24, an estimated 2.0% of the female labour force and 1.4% of the male labour force were unemployed in 2020. In the most recent national

data from 2013, 8.9% of female youth and 5.1% of male youth were not in education, employment, or training.

In 2013, [31.6% of female non-agricultural employment was classified as informal](#), compared to 31.3% of male non-agricultural employment. In 2020, Solomon Islands Government [reported](#) that 85% of women relied on informal selling, and 71% of women and 51% of men are engaged in subsistence agriculture. Women spend more time than men every day on agricultural work, and women's workload is estimated to be three times that of men. Women working in informal employment have limited access to social protection coverage including insurance and pension funds. Participation in the informal economy does, however, [offer women flexibility](#) without the need to comply with regulatory requirements.

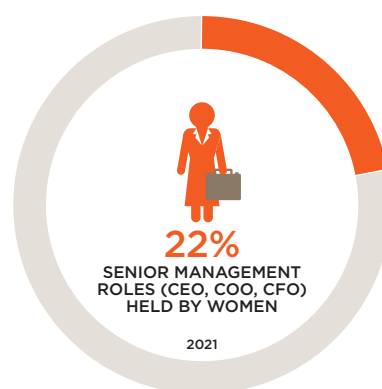
If subsistence work, self-employment, and unpaid family work are categorized as vulnerable employment, [75.3% of women and 54.1% of men were classified as being in vulnerable employment](#) in 2009. In urban areas, 40.7% of women and 21.0% of men were classified as being in vulnerable employment; in rural areas, 81.5% of women and 61.8% of men were classified as in vulnerable employment. Men are more likely to hold a wage job: in 2009, women held 25% of private sector and 36% of public sector wage jobs. In the [2009 Census](#), women were found to be highly concentrated in occupations which had a low percentage of wage and salary jobs: women comprised 89.2% of sale and services elementary occupations workers and 86.1% of personal services workers. By sector, 37.5% of female employment was in the agriculture sector in 2009. Women comprised 42.9% of agriculture sector workers; 44.1% of wholesale trade and retail workers; and 44.1% of workers in the education sector.

A 2020 survey by the [World Bank](#) found that women were more likely than men to lose jobs and income due to COVID-19 in Solomon Islands, with female heads of households more likely to report stopping work to care for an ill relative.

Gender norms, particularly in rural areas, dictate that [women are primarily responsible for unpaid care work](#). In 2018, adult women were found to spend 12.5 hours per day on unpaid care work, compared to 3.5 hours for men.

In a 2021 [analysis](#) of 31 Solomon Islands organisations by the Pacific Private Sector Development Initiative (PSDI), 7% of Chief Executive Officers were women. In total, women held 22% of senior management positions (Chief Executive Officers, Chief Financial Officers, and Chief Operating Officers).

Women in Senior Management in Solomon Islands



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

Women's lack of technical business skills and financial training in areas such as savings, financial management and investment have been [identified as barriers](#) to engaging in more economic opportunities. The [Companies Act 2009](#) introduced a single shareholder company structure, which allows women to establish a company alone: [previously, a woman would be required to find another company director or shareholder](#) in order to establish a company, and this would often be her husband or partner. Prior to the introduction of the Business Names Act 2014, women were required to provide the names of their husbands to complete the business registration process. Between 2013 and 2015, the number of women shareholders is reported to have increased by 41%. Women remain under-represented as business owners, comprising [23% of business name owners](#) in 2020.

Women and men have unequal access to formal financial services. In 2015, [20% of women and 32% of men had a commercial bank account](#). To address the disparity, Solomon Islands Government included *inclusion of women* in its Financial Inclusion Programme under its 2016–2020 National Financial Inclusion Strategy,

which aimed to provide fair, transparent, and affordable financial services in Solomon Islands to those who remained financially excluded. Financial services were made available for more women from disadvantaged and low-income segments to meaningfully participate in economic and productive activities.

Between 2017 and 2019, the International Finance Cooperation through the World Bank in collaboration with Solomon Islands Chamber of Commerce Industry (SICCI) supported the '[Waka Mere Programme](#)' to improve business outcomes through advancing workplace gender equality. Launched in July 2017 at the Australian and Solomon Islands Business Forum, 15 of the largest companies in Solomon Islands, employing 6,685 people, made a commitment to improve gender equality in three target areas: (a) promoting women's leadership; (b) adopting measures to address workplace bullying and sexual harassment and support staff impacted by domestic and sexual violence; and (c) increase training and placement opportunities for women to take on jobs traditionally held by men.

ILO membership

Solomon Islands has been a member of the [International Labour Organization](#) (ILO) since 1984, and between 2012 and 2013 ratified a number of ILO conventions, including the Equal Remuneration Convention and the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention. Solomon Islands has not signed the ILO's Maternity Protection Convention or Violence and Harassment Convention.

Solomon Islands Chamber of Commerce and Industries is [working to improve women's economic empowerment](#) through the establishment of Solomon Islands Professional Women's Network as well as through efforts to increase the number of private sector companies which have gender-based violence policies.

Parental Leave Entitlements in Solomon Islands



12 weeks

maternity leave at 25% pay



0 days

paternity leave

Source: [International Labour Organization](#)

In 2018, Solomon Islands amended its Public Service Act 1988 to include a sexual harassment policy, but no such provisions apply to the country's private sector. The Labour Act 1960 provides for [12 weeks of maternity leave](#) and antenatal care but pay is only guaranteed at 25% of the previous earnings, and funding falls under the liability of employers. The practice falls short on several fronts with regard to International Labour Standards on maternity protection. The right to return to work is not guaranteed, which means that women can be dismissed if they do not return to work after the entitled 12-week period. If women do not return to work after maternity leave or resign within a certain time, they are required to pay a contract termination fee or repay wages collected during leave. However, statutory nursing breaks are offered. The rate of compliance with these laws is unclear. There is no paternity leave and, since employers are liable for maternity leave payments, there is no maternity leave for self-employed women. Under the labour law, there is no non-discrimination prohibition based on maternity.

Health/Sexual and Reproductive Health

The [life expectancy](#) at birth in Solomon Islands was 74.9 years for women and 71.3 years for men in 2019. The [mortality rate attributed to cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes, and chronic respiratory disease](#) was 44.1% for men and 33.9% for women in 2019. According to [World Health Organization \(WHO\) data](#) from 2016, 62.5% of women and 48.8% of men were overweight in Solomon Islands, while 30.5% of women and 19.6% of men were classified as obese. In 2016, 39.0% of women and 29.0% of men were classified as physically inactive. [Alcohol consumption and tobacco use](#) are both more common among men than women. In 2019, men consumed an average of 2.87 litres of pure alcohol per year compared to 0.59 litres for women. An estimated 55.9% of men and 19.8% of women smoked tobacco in 2020.

The [malaria incidence rate](#) was 247.85 per 1,000 population in 2019. The tuberculosis incidence was 65 per

100,000 population in 2020. Sex-disaggregated data on communicable diseases is not publicly available.

The [total fertility rate](#) was 4.4 births per woman in 2019. The adolescent fertility rate was 78.8 births per 1,000 population aged 15-19 in 2019. The median age at first birth in Solomon Islands was 22.1, according to the [2015 Demographic and Health Survey](#) (DHS). Women in the highest wealth quintile, urban women, and women with more than a secondary level education tend to have their first child at a later age than other women. The 2015 DHS found that 28.7% of women aged 19 had begun childbearing. Among adolescent women aged 15-19, childbearing was more common in rural areas (12.9%) than in urban areas (9.7%).

Adolescent fertility Rate in Solomon Islands

Sustainable Development Goal target: reduce adolescent fertility rate to	Solomon Islands:
less than 13 live births per 1,000	78.8 live births per 1,000
by 2030	2019

Source: [World Bank](#)

Maternal Mortality Ratio in Solomon Islands

Sustainable Development Goal target: reduce maternal mortality ratio to	Solomon Islands:
less than 70 per 100,000 live births	104 per 100,000 live births
by 2030	2017

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

Under-5 Mortality Rate in Solomon Islands

Sustainable Development Goal target: reduce under-5 mortality rate to	Solomon Islands:
less than 25 per 1,000 live births	17 per 1,000 live births
by 2030	2019

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

The [maternal mortality ratio](#) was 104 per 100,000 live births in 2017. The infant mortality rate was 18.4 for males and 15.2 for females in 2019. The under-5 mortality rate was 21.4 for males and 17.8 for females in 2019. In the most recent data, from [2019](#), 90.2% of births were attended by skilled health personnel.

In the [most recent data on contraceptive prevalence rates](#), from 2015, 29.3% of married women aged 15-49 were using a method of contraception, while 24.3% were using a modern method of contraception. An estimated 34.7% of married women aged 15-49 had unmet needs for family planning in 2015.

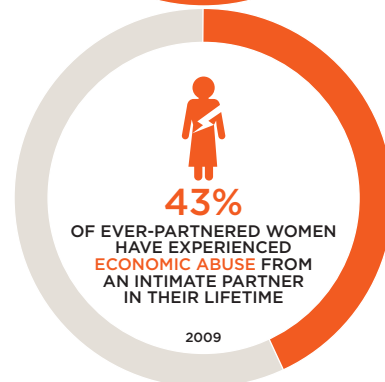
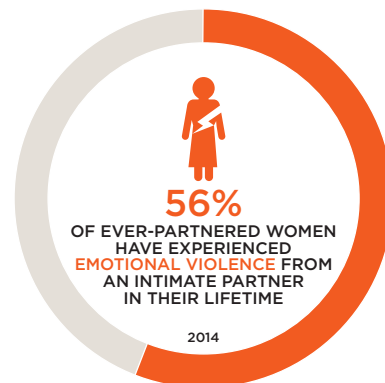
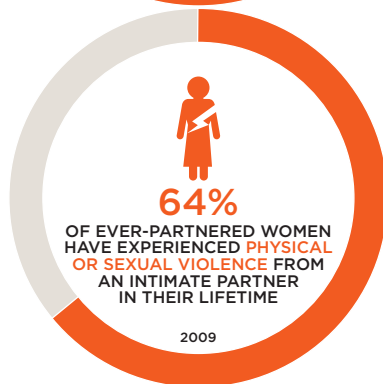
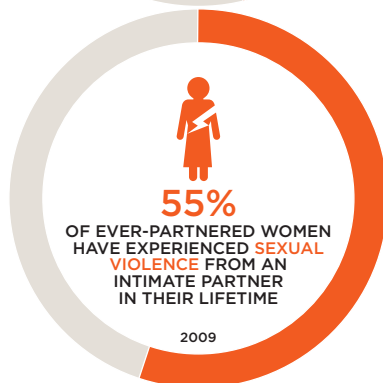
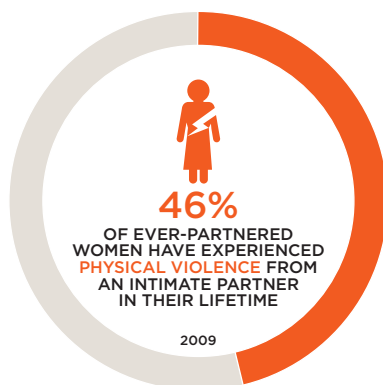
There is a lack of recent data on the prevalence of sexually transmitted infections in Solomon Islands. The number of people living with HIV is not known.

Women are faced with several [challenges accessing healthcare](#) in Solomon Islands, including medication shortages and transportation issues for remote communities. In general, however, [women are more likely to seek health care](#) compared to men. COVID-19, travel restrictions between provinces, and refocussing of the health sector on COVID response are likely to have negatively affected both women's and men's access to health services. Overall, [poor health outcomes of women](#) are linked to such factors as poor nutrition, gender-based violence, the burden of heavy housework, and limited control over financial resources.

Ending Violence against Women and Girls

The most recent nationally representative study on violence against women is the [Family Health and Safety Study](#) (FHSS) in 2009, which surveyed 2,882 women between the ages of 15 and 49 in addition to conducting key informant interviews and focus group discussions.

Lifetime Prevalence of Intimate Partner Violence in Solomon Islands



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

Among ever-partnered women in the 2009 FHSS, 45.5% reported that they had experienced physical violence from an intimate partner in their lifetime. 54.7% of ever-partnered women reported that they had experienced sexual violence from an intimate partner in their lifetime, including 52.4% of ever-partnered women who reported that they had experienced forced sexual intercourse. In total, 63.5% of ever-partnered women reported in 2009 that they had experienced either physical or sexual violence from an intimate partner, while 41.8% reported that they had experienced this violence in the 12 months prior to the survey.

According to the 2009 FHSS, 56.1% of ever-partnered women reported that they had experienced emotional abuse from an intimate partner in their lifetime, while 42.6% reported that they had experienced emotional abuse in the 12 months prior to the survey. Women most commonly reported that they were insulted by a partner (42.0%), intimidated or scared (26.6%), belittled or humiliated (24.3%), or threatened with harm by a partner (17.4%). In addition to emotional abuse, 57.8% of ever-partnered women reported that they had experienced at least one form of controlling behaviour from a partner, who most commonly 'wants to know where she is at all times' (41.8%); 'becomes angry if she speaks with other

men' (32.0%); 'controls her access to healthcare' (31.6%); and 'is often suspicious that she is unfaithful' (31.2%). A significant proportion of ever-partnered women reported experiencing financial control from an intimate partner: 14.9% of ever-partnered women reported that their partner had refused to give them money for household expenses even when he had money for other things, and the rate rises to 20.8% among women who had experienced intimate partner violence. Among ever-partnered women, 14.0% reported that their partner had taken their earnings or savings against their will, while 5.9% reported that they had given up work or refused a job because their partner did not want them to work.

According to Solomon Islands [Demographic and Health Survey](#) (DHS) in 2015, 76.7% of women aged 15-49 agreed with at least one specific situation in which they thought it was justified for a man to hit his wife. This represented a notable increase from 69% in the 2006–2007 DHS and 73% in the 2009 DHS. According to the 2009 FHSS, 73.2% of women agreed with at least one situation in which they believed a man is justified in hitting his wife: most commonly 'if he finds out she has been unfaithful' (63.2%) and 'if she disobeys him' (41.3%). According to a 2019 [UNDP survey](#) of 2,633 adults across Solomon Islands, 55% of respondents reported that it was common for men to use violence to resolve issues with women in Solomon Islands, while 5% stated that they believed this use of violence was justified.

Solomon Islands have adopted policies and laws to eliminate violence against women and girls in line with commitments under CEDAW and the Beijing Platform for Action. However, despite the multiple laws, policies, and commitments, the prevalence of violence against women and girls remains high in the country. In a 2019 [study](#) by UNDP, 46.3% of women and 25.9% of men stated that if they or someone in their family were a victim of violence at the hands of a partner, they would initially choose to go to the police for help. The report also found, however, that police presence was low in Solomon Islands and was not sufficiently dispersed throughout the country. Among survey respondents who reported that they had taken action against domestic violence, the most common first-step was to consult with a village chief. Women

taking part in the study expressed feelings of fear about interacting with male chiefs, elders, and church pastors with regard to domestic violence conflicts. They also reported that they felt isolated from formal services through which they could seek help.

As [noted](#) by UNDP, in 2013 although 74% of interviewed women viewed the formal state justice system as the most effective way of pursuing justice, just 33% of women reported primarily using the state justice system to pursue justice, while 30% of women reported primarily using Local Custom systems, and 26% primarily pursued justice through the church.

The Royal Solomon Islands Police Force (RSIPF)'s *Sexual Assault Investigation (Victim Protection) Policy* was [first introduced in 2007](#) to ensure that all sexual offences must be pursued with the intention of prosecution. The Policy stipulates that criminal investigation and prosecution should not be stopped by reconciliation under customary law. The National SAFENET Referral Network (SAFENET) was [established in 2013](#) as a network of six frontline providers of services for survivors of gender-based violence. Since its inception, the network has been strengthened through the introduction of standard operating procedures and guidelines, the development of a response and referral pathway, and the addition of case management services. As of 2019, SAFENET was operating in the provinces of Honiara, Malaita, Western, Temotu and Isabel.

Gender and Protection in Humanitarian Action

Solomon Islands is highly vulnerable to disasters and to climate change. The [maximum height above sea level](#) in Solomon Islands is 2,335m. An estimated 65% of the population live within 1km of the coastline, while 17% of the population live within 30km of one of the country's eight volcanoes.

Climate and Disaster Profile of Solomon Islands

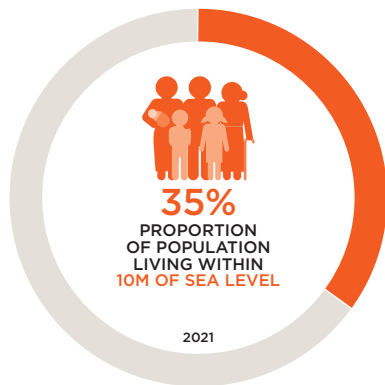


Source: [Australian Aid](#)

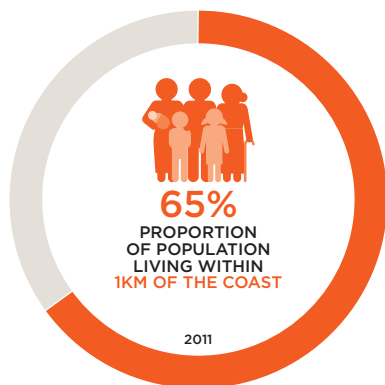
Main Climate-Related Hazards



Source: [Australian Aid](#)



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



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

In the [2021 World Risk Index](#) on disaster risk, Solomon Islands has the second highest disaster risk in the world, exceeded only by Vanuatu. Solomon Islands was categorised as having very high exposure, susceptibility, and lack of adaptive capacities, as well as having high vulnerability and lack of coping capacities. Solomon Islands has a [high likelihood of experiencing earthquakes, volcanoes, landslides, cyclones, coastal flooding, and tsunamis](#). In 2020, the total average annual losses due to disasters were calculated to be equivalent to 8.7% of GDP. In the future, Solomon Islands is predicted to experience less frequent but more intense cyclones, as well as continued sea-level rise, increased rainfall, rising temperatures, and a continued threat of ocean acidification and coral bleaching. Between 2000 and 2019, Solomon Islands was the [71st most impacted country](#) by extreme weather events in terms of direct losses and fatalities.

The majority of the women in Solomon Islands rely on the environment for their livelihood. Training and information can enable women to consider the impact of climate change on their economic activities. A successful example of this is the [development of a new women's market in Gizo](#) in Solomon Islands that incorporated a climate resilient design to withstand Category 5 cyclones with enforcements on the seaside of the market to mitigate erosion. Gizo Market also includes some gender-appropriate facilities for women and girls to trade in a safe and secure environment; such as improved fencing

and lightings, access to clean water, and improved sanitation facilities.

The Government recognises the disproportionate impact of the rising sea-level and increase in weather-related disasters on rural women, who are engaged in subsistence agriculture and fisheries. In its [National Climate Change Policy 2012–2017](#), the government encouraged women’s participation in the implementation of the policy, promoting the inclusion of women in decision-making and reduction of risks and vulnerabilities related to disasters.

Rates of sexual and gender-based violence are known to increase following natural disasters. During Gizo Tsunami in 2007 and Solomon Islands floods in 2014, [women and children faced heightened risks](#) due to poor facilities in the evacuation centres. To address this, humanitarian responders and the government improved the toilets and bathrooms in evacuation centres by making them lockable, well-lit, and separated by gender.

Solomon Islands’ [National Disaster Management Plan 2018](#) includes provisions to involve women in preparedness and response arrangements at all levels to promote effective disaster management. This includes women’s involvement in operational processes and decision-making. The plan recommends the inclusion of two women in each committee, working group or team, established under the disaster management plan. This requirement is mandatory for all arrangements addressing welfare and protection, relief distribution and shelter. This plan, however, does not guarantee a set proportion of women in decision-making as proportional representation will vary depending on the overall size of the committee, working group, or team.

In June 2021, the Ministry of Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs conducted a four-day joint mission in each province to establish a [Provincial Protection Committee](#) and Gender Based Violence in Emergency Training in the country. The creation of local protection committees at the provincial level is meant to support the integration of gender equality and inclusiveness into humanitarian planning and response.

Appendix 1: Country Background

Capital	Honiara
Population	728,041 (2021)
GDP per capita (USD)	\$2,250.60 (2020)
Human Development Index	Ranked 151st out of 189 countries and territories (2020)
Type of Government	Constitutional multiparty parliamentary democracy.
Women in Legislature	<p>Four out of 50 MPs (8.0%) are women as of March 2022.</p> <p>The 2014 Political Parties Integrity Act states that in order for a political party to contest an election, at least 10% of the party's candidates must be women. If a political party does not receive enough applications from female candidates to fulfil this obligation, then the obligation does not apply. Data on compliance rates is not publicly available. There are no reserved seats for women in Parliament.</p>
Legal System	Solomon Islands has a pluralistic legal system with the coexistence of customary law and the formal justice system.
Ratified Human Rights Conventions	<p>Solomon Islands has signed the following international treaties:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (succession 1982) International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (succession 1982) Convention on the Rights of the Child (accession 1995) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Solomon Islands signed the Optional Protocol to the CRC on the involvement of children in armed conflict and the Optional Protocol to the CRC on the sale of children child prostitution and child pornography in 2009) Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (accession 2002) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Solomon Islands accepted the Optional Protocol and the Inquiry Procedure under the Optional Protocol to CEDAW in 2002. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (signed 2008, not ratified) <p>Solomon Islands has not signed the following treaties: Convention against Torture and Other Cruel Inhuman or Degrading Treatment (CAT); International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (CCPR); Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (CED); International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.</p>
Urban vs. Rural Women (%)	In the 2013 Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES), 18.6% of the total population resided in urban areas. In 2020, the country's urban population was estimated at 24.7%. Sex-disaggregated data is not available.
Female-Headed Households (%)	10.1% of households were headed by women in the 2013 HIES, including 13.2% of urban and 9.4% of rural households.
Women in the Workforce ³	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> According to ILO estimates, the labour force participation rate was 83.9% for women and 87.9% for men in 2020. The unemployment rate was 0.9% for both women and men in 2020. In 2013, 31.6% of female and 31.3% of male non-agricultural employment was classified as informal.
Women CEOs	In 2021, an estimated 7% of CEOs and 22% of senior management personnel (including CEOs, COOs, and CFOs) were women.
Women on Boards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In 2021, women held an estimated 11% of Director positions, 33% of Deputy Chair positions, and 0% of Board Chair positions on the boards of Solomon Islands organisations. Women were most highly represented as Directors on the boards of organisations in the media and communications sector (21%) and utilities sector (18%). 11% of directors on the boards of state-owned enterprises were women.

³ Unless otherwise stated, labour force statistics are measured in the population aged 15+.

Appendix 1: Country Background (continued)

Solomon Islands is an independent Pacific Island country consisting of six larger islands (Guadalcanal, Choiseul, Santa Isabel, New Georgia, Malaita, and Makira) and approximately 990 smaller islands and atolls. The country is located to the southeast of Papua New Guinea. The capital Honiara is situated on the north coast of the island of Guadalcanal. Solomon Islands has a [total land area](#) of 27,990km² and an exclusive economic zone covering 1,553,440km².

The population of Solomon Islands was estimated to be [712,071](#) in 2020, 49.5% of whom were female. 39.4% of the population were under the age of 15 in 2020. The annual population growth rate was 2.24% in 2021, and the population density was 26 persons per km².

In the [2013 Household Income and Expenditure Survey \(HIES\)](#), 18.6% of both men and women lived in urban areas. The World Bank estimate that in 2020, [24.7% of the country's population lived in urban areas](#). Sex-disaggregated urban data from 2020 is not available. In the 2013 HIES, 10.1% of households were headed by women. A higher proportion of households are headed by women in urban areas (13.2%) than in rural areas (9.4%). According to the [2009 Census](#), 95.3% of the population were of Melanesian descent, 3.1% were of Polynesian descent, and 1.2% were of Micronesian descent.

Appendix 2: Country Commitments on Gender

International Commitments

Gender Commitments	Status	Actions
Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)	<p>Accession 2002</p> <p>The last reporting cycle for CEDAW in Solomon Islands took place between 2013 and 2017.</p>	<p>In its Concluding Observations on the Combined Initial to Third Periodic Reports of Solomon Islands in 2014, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women noted the following areas of progress under CEDAW:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Legislative measures including the Family Protection Act (2014), which criminalised domestic violence, and the Correctional Services Act (2007) and Police Act (2013) which allowed women the same employment opportunities as men in the police and correctional services. Policy measures including: National Strategy on the Economic Empowerment of Women and Girls; National Development Strategy; National Health Strategic Plan; National Policy on Eliminating Violence against Women (currently under review); and the National Policy on Gender Equality and Women's Development (currently under review). <p>The Committee noted areas of concern, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A lack of visibility and awareness of the Convention and the Optional Protocol, particularly in remote rural areas The existence of legislation not in line with the Convention, such as the allowances in the Constitution that permit customary law practices in areas such as marriage, divorce, tenure, and acquisition of land. The lack of access to effective remedies for women in both the customary law and formal justice systems.
The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA)	<p>Signed 1995</p> <p>Solomon Islands' +25 National Review Report was submitted in 2019.</p>	<p>Key achievements noted in the 2019 national review included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The development of the National Development Strategy 2016-2035, the National Strategy on Economic Empowerment of Women and Girls, the Women Peace and Security National Action Plan Action to end violence against women and girls including the development of 2014 Family Protection Act as well as 2016 Penal Code (Amendment) (Sexual Offences). The recognition of women and girl's sexual and reproductive rights in healthcare strategies such as the National Health Strategy 2016-2020, the National Reproductive and Child Health Strategic Plan 2016-2020, and the National Population policy 2017-2026. Key setbacks and challenges identified in the review included: Lack of comprehensive sex-disaggregated data to support evidence-based decision making Low representation of women in Parliament Isolation, lack of services, and poor infrastructure in rural areas Lack of funding and human resources in the Women's Development Division.

Gender Commitments	Status	Actions
Universal Periodic Review (UPR)	The most recent National Report was submitted in 2021	<p>Key achievements noted in the 2021 UPR:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reform of the Penal Code with provisions to criminalize all forms of sexual violence under the Penal Code (Amendment) (Sexual Offences) Act 2016. The Penal Code (Amendment) (Sexual Offences) Act 2016 complies with the spirit and purpose of CEDAW. These covers matters relating to the definition of consent and strengthening the provisions for rape. • Solomon Islands Public Service has sensitised Gender in Governance, specifically on women’s leadership, organizing a workshop to incorporate “Women in Leadership” in the Public Service Strategy • The Political Parties Integrity Act 2014 which states that 10% of candidates contesting elections on behalf of any given political party should be women. • A draft Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Policy (GESI) has been put together by the Ministry of Public Service with the goal of increasing women’s representation in decision making and leadership positions • Customs Facilitation Bill - The proposed bill is to promote, preserve and recognize traditional norms, values and practice: especially the matrilineal system practiced by a number of diverse ethnic and tribal populations in the country. The proposal is to have customary law reflect the matrilineal system in the decision making of traditional governance structures. • Solomon Islands established a National SAFENET referral network in 2013. The SAFENET network assists victims of gender violence with obtaining access to justice, health, legal and related support services.
Pacific Leaders’ Gender Equality Declaration	Regional review published in 2016.	<p>Key areas of progress noted under the 2016 regional review:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The introduction of the Political Party Integrity Act 2014 which includes a provision under which political parties should reserve at least 10% of the total number of candidacy places for women in any given election. • The introduction of the Family Protection Act in 2016. • An increase in the number of women attending antenatal care check-ups and an associated decrease in maternal mortality from 550 in 1992 to less than 100 in 2015. • The number of domestic violence police reports increased from 806 in 2014 to 965 in 2015. • Noted challenges included a lack of production and use of sex-disaggregated data across the whole of the government, and stagnation in the use rates of contraceptives and family planning services. Between 2012 and 2016 there was no change in the representation of women in Parliament, local government, or in senior management in the public sector.

Appendix 2: Country Commitments on Gender (continued)

National Commitments

Gender Commitments	Status	Actions
Family Protection Act	2014	<p>The Family Protection Act (FPA) criminalised domestic violence – including physical, sexual, economic, and psychological abuse – and introduced police safety notices and protection orders to protect survivors of abuse.</p> <p>As noted in the BPfA +25 report, Solomon Islands faced a number of challenges implementing the Act, including a lack of financial and human resources to spread awareness and provide trainings, and a high number of inactive local courts.</p>
National Development Strategy 2016-2035	<p>Strategy adopted in 2016.</p> <p>Performance report published 2017.</p>	<p>The 2016-2035 National Development Strategy aims to improve the social and economic lives of all Solomon Islanders.</p> <p>The Strategy notes the additional challenges faced by women in areas such as poverty alleviation and access to health and family planning services, particularly in rural areas.</p> <p>The Strategy aims to improve gender equality through actions such as community engagement programmes and establishing targets for the representation of women in parliament, ministries, state-owned enterprises and in local government.</p> <p>A 2017 performance report noted that the production and submission of implementation reports from government ministries and donors was lacking. The collection and distribution of data was found to be insufficient.</p>
National Policy on Eliminating Violence Against Women 2016-2020	Published 2016.	<p>The National Policy on Eliminating Violence Against Women was introduced in 2016. An updated version of the Policy is due as of 2021.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Policy has seven key strategic areas: • Developing national commitments to eliminate violence against women • Strengthening legal frameworks, law enforcement and justice systems • Eliminating and preventing violence against women through public awareness and advocacy • Improving protective, social and support services • Treating perpetrators • Working with men to end violence against women • Coordinating with related policies and services
Women, Peace and Security National Action Plan (WPS NAP) 2017-2021	Published 2017.	<p>The Women, Peace and Security National Action Plan recognises the high vulnerability and disproportionate consequences for women during previous conflict in Solomon Islands. The Plan further recognises the important peacekeeping roles that women played in the end to ethnic tensions, as well as the exclusion of women from formal peace processes and official agreements.</p> <p>The Plan combines recommendations from the CEDAW Committee and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission to produce four high-level outcomes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Women’s participation, representation and decision-making in peace and security are expanded at all levels 2. Women’s human rights are protected and women are secure from sexual and gender-based violence 3. Solomon Islands actively prevents conflict and violence against women and girls 4. Women and girls priorities and rights are reflected in development and peace building.

Gender Commitments	Status	Actions
National Gender Equality and Women's Development Policy (GEWD) 2016-2020	Published 2016.	<p>The GEWD 2016-2020 has guided the development of the following key national policies that seek to address different thematic gender equality and women's issues: the National Policy on the Elimination of Violence against Women and Girls (EVAWG) 2016 – 2020; the National Strategy on Economic Empowerment of Women and Girls (NSEEWG) launched in 2017; and the Women, Peace and Security National Action Plan (WPS NAP) 2017-2021.</p> <p>The GEWD is the current overarching framework for achieving gender equality in Solomon Islands. It recognizes the importance of gender equality as an important part of improving the well-being of all Solomon Islanders – women, men, girls and boys.</p> <p>The policy has seven priority outcomes: (1) to have gender responsive government programmes and services; (2) to improve the economic status of women; (3) to promote equal participation of women and men at all levels of decision-making, governance, and leadership; (4) to prevent and respond to violence against women and girls; (5) to increase awareness and acknowledgement of the role of women in peace and security; (6) to increase access to education and provide a supportive school environment; and (7) improve women's access to sexual and reproductive health.</p>
National Strategy for the Economic Empowerment of Women and Girls 2020-2023	Published 2020.	<p>The National Strategy for the Economic Empowerment of Women and Girls aims to enhance gender equality and improve the economic status of Solomon Islands women.</p> <p>The key strategic areas of the Strategy are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender mainstreaming with a particular focus on the resource sector activities, especially for rural women; • Financial inclusion through financial literacy, savings clubs and access to affordable financial services, particularly targeting the informal sector; • Enterprise development and support, and improved employment opportunities • Creating an enabling environment through legislation and policy changes; • Institutional strengthening of MWYCFAs including monitoring, research and knowledge sharing. • The monitoring of progress under the Strategy is due to be carried out annually by the Women's Development Divisions and the Research, Policy, Planning and Information Division of the Ministry of Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs.