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IN BRIEF



GENDER EQUALITY BRIEF FOR TUVALU

Women's Human Rights

Tuvalu's 1978 [Constitution](#) states that every person in Tuvalu is entitled to fundamental rights and freedoms regardless of race, place of origin, political opinions, colour, religious beliefs, or sex. The Constitution does not, however, mention sex or gender within the definition of discrimination. The Constitution is therefore not aligned with recommendations under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in regard to prohibition of direct and indirect discrimination. The CEDAW Committee [expressed concerns in 2015](#) that discriminatory provisions remain in a number of significant pieces of legislation, including: the Penal Code of 1978, the Native Lands Act of 1956, the Marriage Act (Cap. 29), the Tuvalu Lands Code of 1962, the Falekaupule Act of 1997 and the Employment Act of 1966. There has been [no legislative review](#) to amend the discriminatory provisions of the Constitution, the Land Act and Lands Code to comply with CEDAW. Consultations with the communities on those issues have been conducted by the Gender Affairs Department, but it had not led to amendments so far.

Land rights in Tuvalu are complex. [Women are not guaranteed equal rights to land ownership and inheritance](#) under existing legislation, customary laws and cultural systems. Land in Tuvalu is either [kaitasi land leased from the government](#), or individually-owned, although this is rare. Whilst some suggest that there is gender equality in acquiring *kaitasi* land, the titular owner of the land is typically a man – usually the father or eldest brother.

The [Tuvalu Lands Code](#) highlights that when the legal titleholder of a land dies without leaving a will, the largest share will be inherited by the eldest son. Daughters can inherit land, but their shares cannot exceed that of sons. In the case of no sons, the largest share goes to the eldest daughter. [Previous research](#) suggests that it is a commonly held view that women should not inherit land because they will get married and therefore shall acquire rights to her husband's land. Men are required to make provisions for their wife during their lifetime, and after their death, where she can acquire

land rights. However, following a woman's death, land rights do not pass onto her offspring or family, but to her husband's family.

Under the [Constitution](#), anyone born outside of Tuvalu is a citizen of Tuvalu by birth if either of their parents are citizens. Under the [Native Lands Act](#), custody of a child born outside of marriage is automatically granted to the father once the child turns 2 years old.

The [age of consent](#) in Tuvalu is 15 for girls, with no minimum age of consent for boys. Under the [Penal Code](#), the offence of rape can only be committed against a woman or girl, and marital rape is not specifically criminalised. A representative from Tuvalu [reported](#) to the CEDAW Committee in 2015 that the definition of rape was due to be revised.

Under the [Marriage Amendment Act 2015](#), the legal marriage age in Tuvalu is 18. Individuals under the age of 21 require the written consent of both parents in order to marry. If the required consent is denied, the Registrar-General may still allow the marriage if satisfied that it is in the best interests of those involved.

Legal marriage age in Tuvalu

Internationally accepted age:



Tuvalu with parental consent:



Tuvalu without parental consent:



Source: [Parliament of Tuvalu](#)

Tuvalu is a signatory of the UN Human Rights Council's 2011 [Joint Statement on Ending Acts of Violence and Related Human Rights Violations Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity](#). The [Penal Code](#) criminalises 'unnatural offences' and 'indecent practices between males', with consensual sexual relations between adult men therefore punishable by imprisonment of 5-14 years. This is [reportedly not enforced](#). Discrimination on the basis of sexual

orientation is prohibited in the workplace under the [Labour and Employment Relations Act](#) of 2017, however there are [no equivalent protections in the Constitution](#) or criminal law.

Governance and Participation in Public Life

The [Tuvalu Parliament](#) has 15 members who are elected from eight island constituencies every four years. In the most recent General Election in 2019, [two of the 37 candidates](#) (5.4%) were women. One woman, incumbent Member of Parliament Dr Puakena Boreham, was successfully elected in 2019, retaining her status as the only female MP in Tuvalu. As of April 2022, there have only been three women elected to parliament since the country's independence in 1978. There are no formal political parties in Tuvalu: candidates contest seats as independent individuals, and election campaigns largely based on family ties and reputation. The absence of political parties [may have a negative effect on women's political representation](#).

Female Representation in National Parliament in Tuvalu



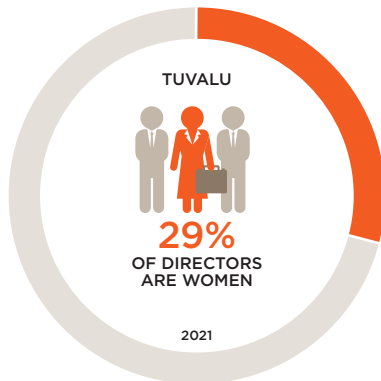
Source: [Pacific Women in Politics, Inter-Parliamentary Union](#) March 2022

There are no Temporary Special Measures (TSMs) in place to improve the representation of women in legislature in Tuvalu. The [2016-2020 National Strategy for Sustainable Development](#) reported that Department of Gender Affairs were attempting to improve the participation of women in national government with the introduction of two additional seats in Parliament reserved for women. As noted in the [Beijing +25 National Review Report](#), however, the topic of TSMs was not advanced during the 2018-2019 Constitution review.

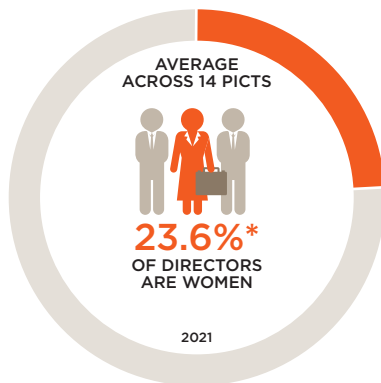
In the [local government system](#) in Tuvalu, decisions are made by a traditional assembly of elders called the *Falekaupule*. The *Kaupule* – the executive arm of the *Falekaupule* – act as primary advisors for each of the eight main inhabited islands. The ninth island, Niulakita, is under the administration of the *Kaupule* of Niutao. Each *Kaupule* consists of six members who are elected for a maximum of two four-year terms. Women are not expected to be involved in decision-making or be present during decision-making meetings. Women's presence in decision-making is considered unnecessary, with men representing women as the head of the household. Although the [Falekaupule Act 1997](#) paved the way for the inclusion of Women's Community Workers (*Ofisa o Fafine*) as officers and staff of *Kaupule* in traditional decision-making processes, it does not replace existing traditional norms and practices for decision-making on each island, which still largely exclude women. In 2018, the Gender Affairs Department [reported](#) that at local government level, the number of women elected to the *Falekaupule* has increased from 6% of membership in 2016 to 10% in 2018. Following the [2015 Kaupule elections](#), 10% of elected councillors were women, including 25% of council presidents.

There are 41 senior positions within the public service of Tuvalu, including permanent secretaries, senior assistant secretaries, assistant secretaries, and directors, and men dominate the senior positions within the government. Between 2009 and 2013, [women held 22% of senior public service positions](#). In a [2021 analysis](#) of 11 Tuvalu organisations, women held 29% of Board Chair positions and 29% of Director positions. Women were most highly represented as Directors on the boards of organisations in the agriculture and fisheries sector (40%) and the finance sector (38%). Women held 32% of Director positions on the boards of state-owned enterprises.

Women on Boards in Tuvalu



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



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

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

Cultural norms within Tuvaluan society [have been identified](#) as barriers to women’s political representation. The [belief that women belong to the domestic sphere](#) hinders them from acquiring leadership-related experience and skills such as public speaking.

Within the government, the Department of Women’s Affairs [was initially set up in 1999](#) to represent women’s interests and address issues involving women. It was renamed to the Gender Affairs Department under the 2014 [National Gender Policy](#), with the intention to take a more inclusive and wider approach towards gender equality. The Tuvalu National Council of Women (TNCW) [comprises 17 women](#) who represent women in the eight main island communities in Tuvalu. It is a non-governmental organisation established by Tuvaluan women in the 1970s to direct and manage women’s affairs in Tuvalu. The TNCW management committee acts a link between the Government and women in rural communities.

At the [local and island level](#), there are chapters and committees for women’s representation. On each island, there is at least one women’s group, which are organised around the dominant denominational church, the Ekalesia Kelisiano of Tuvalu. These women’s committees are influential in terms of presiding over resources and managing island affairs.

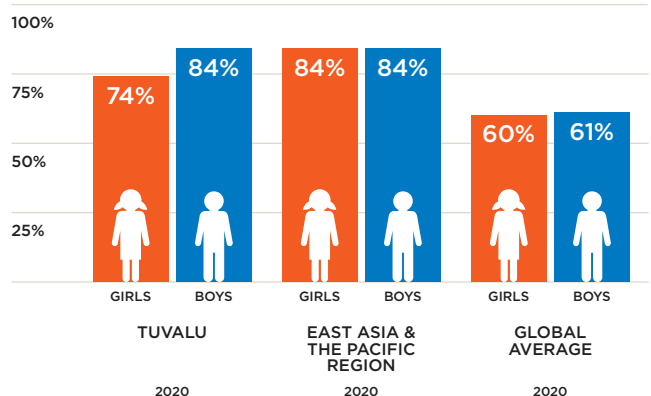
In 2015, [two of the 24 judges](#) working in Tuvalu were women, and approximately 10% of Tuvalu’s police officers were women.

Education

Education in Tuvalu is [compulsory from the ages of 6 to 15](#). Education is free in Tuvalu, although some primary schools may reportedly request a ‘school contribution’ of between AU\$2 and AU\$5 per term. In the [2019-2020 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey \(MICS\)](#), the literacy rate was 98.0% among women and 96.2% among men aged 15-49.

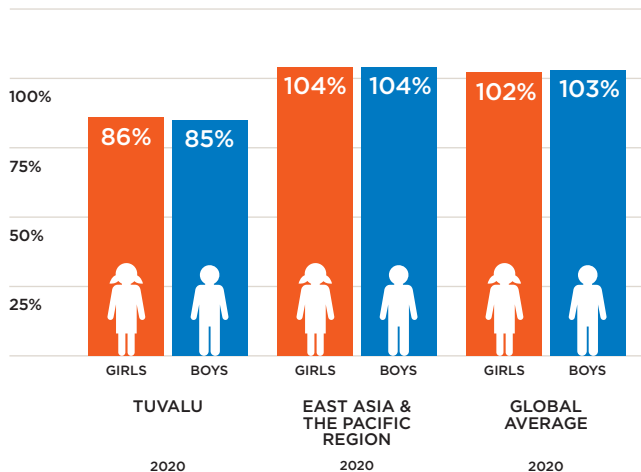
Early childhood education is not free in Tuvalu, and UNICEF [reported](#) in 2017 that fees are a significant barrier for children from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds. According to data published by the [UNESCO Institute for Statistics \(UIS\)](#), the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) for early childhood education was 73.7% for girls and 83.8% for boys in 2020. The most recent data on Net Enrolment Rates (NER), from 2019, shows a rate of 71.9% for girls and 80.4% for boys.

Early Childhood Education Gross Enrolment Rates in Tuvalu



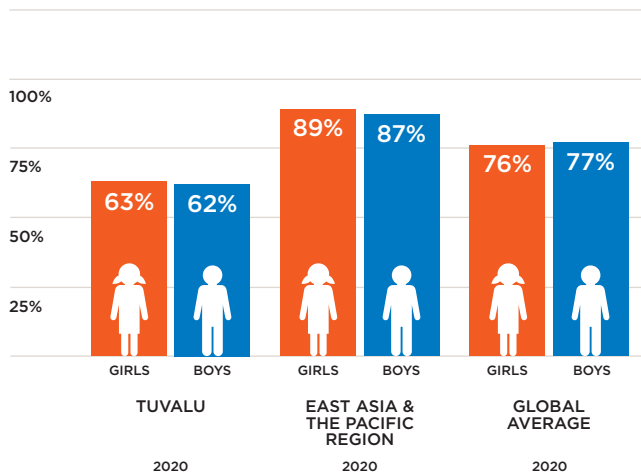
Source: [UNESCO Institute for Statistics](#)

Primary Gross Enrolment Rates in Tuvalu



Source: [UNESCO Institute for Statistics](#)

Secondary Gross Enrolment Rates in Tuvalu



Source: [UNESCO Institute for Statistics](#)

According to UIS data, in 2020 the GER for primary education was 86.0% for girls and 85.1% for boys. The NER was 74.2% for girls and 73.7% for boys in 2020. In data collected by the [2019-2020 MICS](#), the primary school completion rate was 100.0% for girls and 98.5% for boys in 2019-2020, and the effective transition rate to lower secondary school was estimated to be 84.5% for girls and 92.1% for boys. For children aged 7-14, 54.2% of girls and 55.2% of boys could demonstrate foundational reading skills, while 45.6% of girls and 33.4% of boys could demonstrate foundational numeracy skills.

Entry into secondary school is dependent on a satisfactory exam performance. Data published by the [UIS](#) gives a GER for secondary education of 63.0% for girls and 62.2% for

boys in 2020. The NER was 53.5% for girls and 53.9% for boys in 2020. In the [2019-2020 MICS](#), the lower secondary school completion rate was 92.6% for girls and 85.1% for boys. The upper secondary school completion rate was 60.5% for girls and 45.4% for boys.

[Tertiary education](#) in Tuvalu is provided by the University of the South Pacific campus on Funafuti. Technical and Vocational Education and Training courses are offered at schools in Tuvalu, as well as through the Tuvalu Maritime Training Institute. The majority of Maritime Training Institute recruits are male. [Previous reports](#) suggest that tertiary education is paid for through governmental scholarship awards. Data on tertiary education (including sex-disaggregated data) was not available in the 2019-2020 MICS. No data was available on the rate of employability for men and women following tertiary education.

In the [2019-2020 MICS](#), 81.2% of boys and 77.9% of girls had experienced a violent form of discipline in the 12 months prior to the survey. Corporal punishment in educational institutions has been common across Pacific Island countries. The [Education \(Amendment\) Act of 2017](#) provides greater protection for children in schools as the Amendment repealed previous allowances under which headteachers could administer corporal punishment to students. This brings Tuvalu [in-line with stipulations made by the Convention of the Rights of the Child](#).

Adolescent girls who become pregnant while attending secondary school face discrimination: as of 2017, Tuvalu's only public secondary school [maintained a policy stipulating that they are to be expelled](#). The number of girls whose education is directly impacted by this policy is not known, although the 2019-2020 MICS reported that 4.7% of women aged 15-19 have had a live birth.

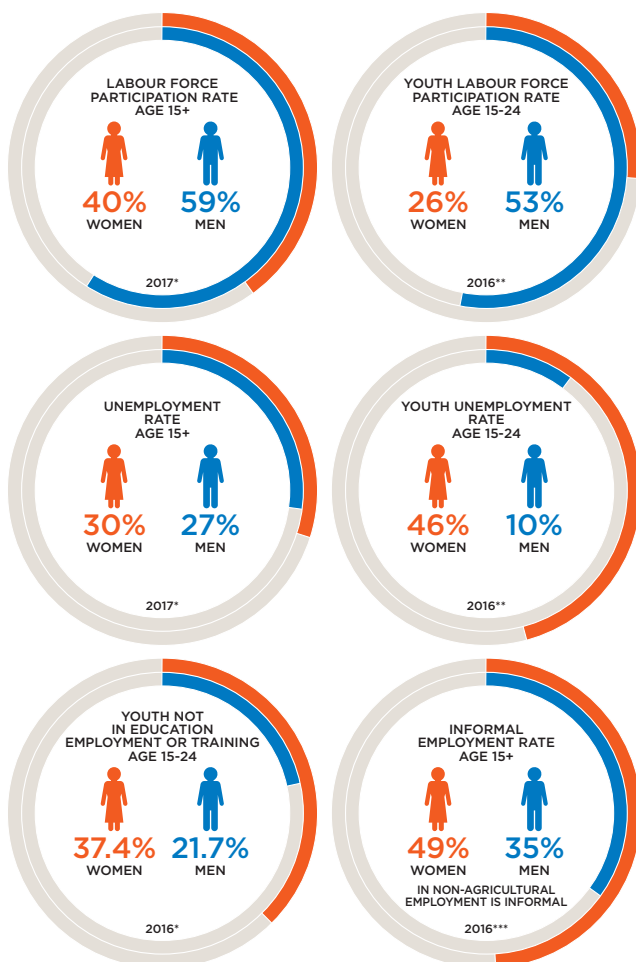
[Children with disabilities](#) encounter challenges due to a lack of specially trained teachers. Although there is no sex-disaggregated data available in relation to this, lack of trained teachers for children with special needs; poor infrastructure of school facilities; and the inaccessibility of schools in Tuvalu have all been identified as presenting challenges for disabled children.

Globally, [girls' access to education and learning outcomes](#)

are predicted to be disproportionately affected by the [COVID-19 pandemic](#). Global data shows that increased domestic and care work burdens during the pandemic affect girls significantly more than boys. More country-specific data is required in order to assess the long-term impacts that the pandemic will have on girls' education in Tuvalu.

Women's Economic Empowerment

Economic Empowerment Indicators in Tuvalu



* Source: [Central Statistics Division](#)

** Source: [World Bank](#)

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

The economy of Tuvalu predominantly consists of subsistence economic activities. [Agriculture and fishing account for roughly 80% of the Tuvalu's income](#). The per capita income in Tuvalu is significantly higher compared to other Pacific Island Countries, mostly due to offshore income (especially maritime employment), as well as

remittances from overseas workers and international aid.

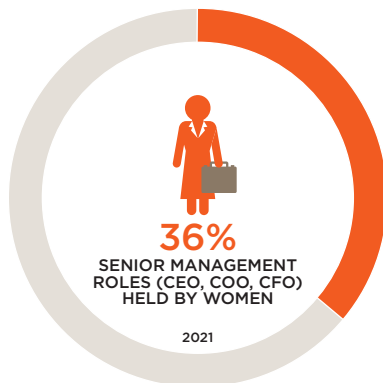
In the [2017 Mini-Census](#), the labour force participation rate was 39.7% for women and 58.5% for men. The unemployment rate was 30.4% for women and 27.2% for men in 2017, resulting in an employment population ratio of 25.2% for women and 40.0% for men. Over half (50.7%) of the working age population were economically inactive in 2017, the majority of whom were inactive due to full-time home duties. Sex-disaggregated data on the economically inactive population from 2017 is not available. An estimated [49.2% of female and 34.8% of male non-agricultural employment was informal](#) in 2016.

Labour force participation is lower among youth: according to [data from the World Bank](#), the labour force participation rate was 26.3% for young women and 52.7% for young men aged 15-24 in the most recent data from 2016. The unemployment rate among youth aged 15-24 was 45.8% for women and 9.8% for men in 2016. 37.4% of female youth and 21.7% of male youth were not in education, employment, or training in 2016.

According to the [2007 Demographic and Health Survey](#), which is the most recent source of sex-disaggregated data for occupations in Tuvalu, 30.4% of women aged 15-49 who were employed in the formal sector worked in professional, technical, and managerial occupations. The next most common occupation for employed women was clerical work, accounting for 21.3% of female employment in the formal sector. This is followed by sales and services occupations (15.5%), domestic services occupations (14.2%), unskilled manual labour occupations (12.2%), and agriculture occupations (4.0%). In comparison, for employed men, the most common occupation was in the agriculture sector (37%), followed by professional, technical, and managerial (18%). More recent data is necessary to assess the current sectoral and occupational characteristics of women's labour in Tuvalu.

In 2016, [women held an estimated 35.9% of managerial positions and 36.7% of Managing Director and Chief Executive positions in Tuvalu](#). In a [2021 analysis](#) of 11 Tuvalu businesses, women held 36% of senior management positions, including Chief Executive Officers (CEOs), Chief Financial Officers (CFOs), and Chief Operating Officers (COOs). Women held 29% of CEO positions across the analysed organisations, including 33% of CEO positions in state-owned enterprises.

Women in Senior Management in Tuvalu



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

Tuvalu has been a member of the [International Labour Organisation \(ILO\)](#) since 2008 and has signed one of the ILO's eight Fundamental Conventions, namely the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention in 2019. Tuvalu is not a signatory to the ILO Equal Remuneration Convention, Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, or the Maternity Protection Convention. The [Labour and Employment Relations Act of 2017](#) prohibits direct and indirect discrimination on the basis of gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, sexual orientation, or family responsibilities. Under the Act, women are entitled to 12 weeks maternity leave at 100% pay. The Act allows two paid hourly nursing breaks each day to employed women who are breastfeeding children under 12 months of age. Men are entitled to 10 days of paternity leave at 100% pay.

There is a lack of data on the amount of time that men and women spend on unpaid domestic and care work in Tuvalu. In addition to potential time-constraints due to unpaid work, women's economic empowerment is further impacted by their inability to access credit and appropriate financial services. As noted previously, discriminatory land rights practices may impact women's ability to access credit. The Gender Affairs Department has [undertaken activities to improve women's access to credit](#), such as lobbying banks to make loan forms more accessible and user-friendly.

Women in Tuvalu have been disproportionately impacted by the socioeconomic consequences of the COVID-19

pandemic. The Ministry of Health, Social Welfare and Gender Affairs [conducted a rapid assessment](#) in May 2020 and found that 63% of female business owners and 37% of male business owners interviewed in the survey were impacted by border closures and flight cancellations. Income-generating activities relating to tourism and handcraft – areas in which women are concentrated – were the most effected by the pandemic. A third of the business owners surveyed for the assessment had no other income to support their family's needs.

Health/Sexual and Reproductive Health

The [life expectancy](#) in Tuvalu was 66.5 years for women and 63.9 years for men in 2014. Tuvalu has a public sector healthcare system which is free of charge to all citizens. The [healthcare system](#) consists of clinics staffed by nurses in the outer islands which offer primary care and preventative services, and a hospital on Funafuti which provides primary and secondary care. Patients who require clinical care services not offered by the hospital are referred overseas. Overseas treatment is free under the Tuvalu Medical Treatment Scheme, funded by the Ministry of Health. Individuals who seek treatment abroad without a referral from the Ministry of Health, however, must self-fund their treatment.

In Tuvalu, non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, and cancer, [are among the leading causes for death and illnesses](#). There is a lack of recent data on the prevalence of NCDs. In 2014, 24% of women and 22% of men over age 18 [had raised blood glucose indicative of diabetes](#). In 2018, [amputation was the most common surgical procedure in Tuvalu](#), mainly due to complications related to diabetes and hypertension. In 2016, there were 23 amputations. Sex-disaggregated data on amputation rates is not publicly available. Strokes are common, which is also correlated with the prevalence of NCDs.

Risk factors for NCDs include physical inactivity, poor nutrition, alcohol-related harm, and tobacco use. In 2016, 41% of women and 20% of men over age 18 were [classified as physically in active by the World Health Organization](#). Among adults over age 18, the obesity rate was higher among women (56%) than men (46%) in 2016.

Among adolescents aged 10-19, 27% of females and 24% of males were classified as obese. Tobacco use and alcohol consumption are both higher among men than women; in the [2019-2020 MICS](#), 48.0% of men and 16.9% of women reported using tobacco products in the month prior to the survey, while 43.2% of men and 12.9% of women reported consuming at least one alcoholic drink in the month prior to the survey.

In the [2019-2020 MICS](#), the total fertility rate was 3.3 births per woman. The adolescent fertility rate was 40 births per 1,000 women aged 15-19 in 2020. The adolescent birth rate is higher in rural areas: 55 births per 1,000 population in rural areas compared to 35 births per 1,000 population in urban areas. Among lower income groups, the adolescent birth rate was higher at 70 births per 1,000 women aged 15-19 in 2020. An estimated 8.3% of women aged 15-19 had already had a live birth or were currently pregnant at the time of the 2019-2020 MICS.

Adolescent Fertility Rate in Tuvalu

Sustainable Development Goal target: reduce adolescent fertility rate to	Tuvalu:
less than 13 live births per 1,000	40 live births per 1,000
women aged 15-19 by 2030	2020

Source: [2019-2020 MICS](#)

Maternal Mortality Ratio in Tuvalu

Sustainable Development Goal target: reduce maternal mortality ratio to	Tuvalu:
less than 70 per 100,000 live births	0 per 100,000 live births
by 2030	2010

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

Under-5 Mortality Rate in Tuvalu

Sustainable Development Goal target: reduce under-5 mortality rate to	Tuvalu:
less than 25 per 1,000 live births	30 per 1,000 live births
by 2030	2020

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

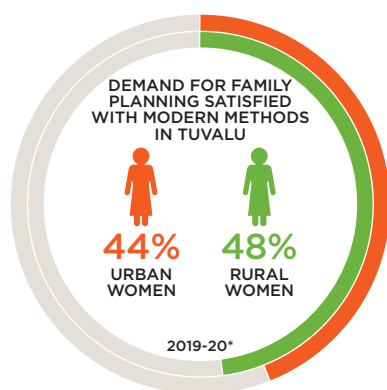
Data from the [2019-2020 MICS](#) indicates that 99.5% of births in the two years prior to the survey were assisted by skilled health personnel. In the most recent data from 2010, the [maternal mortality ratio](#) was 0. More recent data is required in order to accurately assess current maternal mortality trends. Mortality rate data in Tuvalu is [potentially subject to large fluctuations](#) due to the small population size.

The [infant mortality rate](#) was 20 per 1,000 live births in 2020. The under-5 mortality rate was 30 per 1,000 live births in 2020. Tuvalu has achieved the Sustainable Development Goal target for childhood mortality under 70 per 1,000 births, but disparities still exist. According to the [2019-2020 MICS](#) data, the estimated average under-5 mortality rate over the 10 years prior to the survey was 37 per 1,000 births in urban areas and 17 per 1,000 births in rural areas. The data further indicates that a mother's education level may be a significant predictor, with an estimated under-5 mortality rate of 38 per 1,000 births for mothers with a secondary education and 19 per 1,000 births for mothers with higher levels of education.

For married and in-union women aged 15-49 in the [2019-2020 MICS](#), 22.4% were using a modern method of contraception and a total of 23.7% were using any method of contraception. Modern methods of contraception were most common in the 25-34 age group, with 24.4% of this age group utilizing modern methods of contraception compared to 18.9% of the 20-24 age group and 22.3% of the 35-49 age group. Injectables were the most common method of contraception across all age ranges in the 2019-2020 MICS, utilized by 12.6% of women. Female sterilization was used by 5.8% of 20-24 year-olds, 0.8% of 25-34 year-olds, and 1.2% of 35-49 year-olds. Implants were used by 2.6% of 20-24 year-olds, 8.7% of 25-34 year-olds, and 5.7% of

35-49 year-olds. In the 2019-2020 MICS, 26.2% of currently married or in-union women aged 15-49 reported unmet needs for family planning. Unmet need for family planning was higher in urban areas (26.4%) than rural areas (25.7%). Overall, 43.5% of urban women and 47.7% of rural women who were married or in a union reported that their demand for family planning satisfied with modern methods.

Demand for Family Planning Satisfied with Modern Methods in Tuvalu



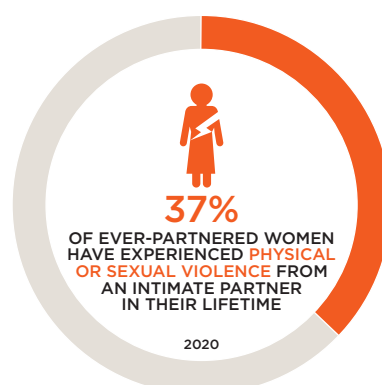
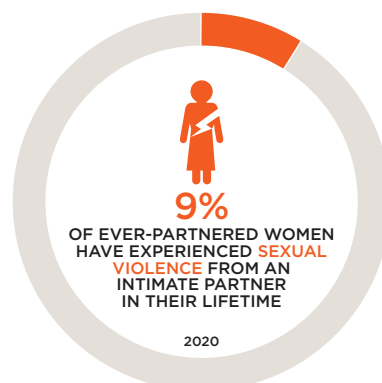
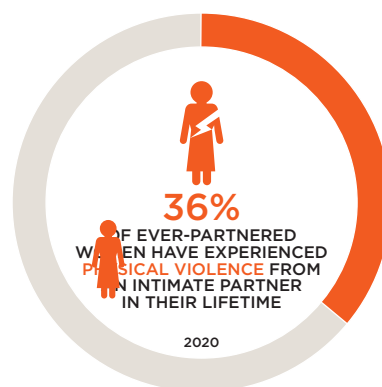
Source: [2019-2020 MICS](#)

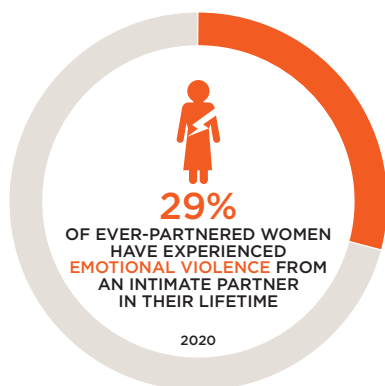
According to the [2017 Global Aids Monitoring Report for Tuvalu](#), there were a cumulative total of 15 identified cases of HIV as of 2017, 11 of whom were still alive. Given the small overall population size, Tuvalu therefore has one of the highest per capita infection rates in the Pacific. None of the 11 HIV patients were receiving antiretroviral therapy at the time of the report. In the [2019-2020 MICS](#), 7.5% of young women and 5.1% of young men aged 15-24 had been tested for HIV in the 12 months prior to the survey. 23.8% of women and 28.5% of men in the MICS could demonstrate a comprehensive knowledge of HIV. Among young adults aged 15-24, approximately 14.8% of women and 24.4% of men could demonstrate a comprehensive knowledge of HIV. UNICEF [reported](#) in 2017 that Tuvalu had a chlamydia infection rate of 21% among youth aged 15-24, which was the highest in the Pacific region. The Tuvalu Family Health Association, a non-government organisation, [focuses on promoting sexual and reproductive health rights](#). The organisation has a clinic in Funafuti as well as outreach clinics.

Ending Violence against Women and Girls

Nationally representative data on violence against women and girls in Tuvalu is found in the 2007 Demographic and Health Survey, as well as the [2019-2020 MICS](#).

Lifetime Prevalence of Intimate Partner Violence in Tuvalu





Source: [2019-2020 MICS](#)

According to the 2019-2020 MICS, among ever-married women aged 15-49, 35.6% reported that they had experienced physical violence from a partner in their lifetime. 24.3% of ever-married women reported that they had experienced this violence in the 12 months prior to the survey. Among ever-married women, 9.2% reported that they had experienced sexual violence from a partner in their lifetime, while 7.3% reported that they had experienced this violence in the 12 months prior to the survey. Overall, 37.0% of ever-married women reported experiencing physical or sexual violence from a partner.

Emotional violence was also found to be common, with 28.6% of ever-married women in the 2019-2020 MICS reporting that they had experienced emotional violence from a partner in their lifetime. The most common form of emotional violence was insults (23.0% of ever-married women), followed by humiliation (14.1%) and threats (12.7%). In total, 44.2% of ever-married women reported that they had experienced emotional, physical, or sexual violence from a partner in their lifetime, while 33.9% had experienced this violence in the 12 months prior to the survey.

According to the 2019-2020 MICS, 63.2% of ever-married women reported experiencing controlling behaviours from a partner, including *insisting on knowing where she is at all times* (54.5%), *is jealous or angry if she talks to other men* (34.3%), and *frequently accuses her of being unfaithful* (25.6%).

Among women aged 15-49 in the 2019-2020 MICS, 17.1% reported that they had experienced physical violence by a non-partner since age 15. The most common perpetrators of this violence were relatives. 11.4% of women aged 15-49 reported that they had experienced sexual violence from a non-partner in their lifetime. The most common

perpetrators of sexual violence were former partners and relatives.

The [2007 Tuvalu Demographic and Health Survey](#) indicates a possible link between intimate-partner violence and excessive alcohol intake by violent partners. Women whose husbands drink alcohol excessively are far more likely to experience physical, emotional, or sexual violence (72%), compared to women whose partners do not drink (27%). According to the [2019-2020 MICS](#), the rate of physical, sexual, or emotional violence was 54.9% among women whose husband sometimes drinks, compared to 25.4% among women whose husband does not drink alcohol.

Among women who reported in the 2019-2020 MICS that they had experienced physical or sexual violence from an intimate partner, only 33.7% had sought help to stop the violence, while 33.0% had never told anyone about the violence that they experienced. Among those who did seek help, 73.2% sought help from their own family, while just 13.6% sought help from the police.

Attitudes to domestic violence can contribute to a culture of acceptance and impunity. In the 2019-2020 MICS, 43.1% of women aged 15-49 stated that they believe a husband is justified in beating his wife in at least one situation, most commonly *if she neglects the children* (36.3%) and *if she goes out without telling him* (14.9%). Attitudes that justify physical violence in domestic relationships are less common among men: in the 2019-2020 MICS, 39.4% of men aged 15-49 stated that they believe a husband is justified in beating his wife in at least one situation, most commonly *if she neglects the children* (30.0%) and *if she argues with him* (26.7%).

The government has passed legislation aiming to address gender-based violence in Tuvalu. The [Family Protection and Domestic Violence Act 2014](#) aims to provide enhanced protection for survivors of domestic violence. Under the Act, domestic violence is defined as physical, sexual, verbal, psychological or economic abuse against an intimate partner or another person in the same family or household. The Act outlines the processes involved in protection orders and police complaints of domestic

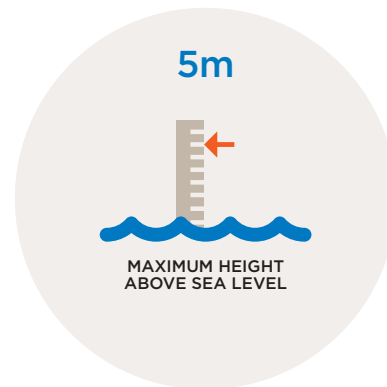
violence. Legislation in Tuvalu [does not explicitly prohibit sexual harassment](#). The police have a no-drop prosecution policy in cases of violence against women. Services available to survivors of domestic violence include a 24-hour emergency telephone line operated by the Domestic Violence Unit, as well as counselling services provided through the social welfare department of the government. As of 2020, there were no shelters in Tuvalu for women who had experienced abuse. A government-run 'Safe House' is not operational as of 2022 since it is being occupied by members of the general public.

To address heightened risks of domestic and family violence during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Gender Affairs Division and Social Welfare Department of Tuvalu, with the support from Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade in partnership with the Pacific Community (SPC), [developed a country specific-video animation: "Staying Safe at Home"](#). The animated video offers information on COVID-19 and domestic and family violence, offering advice for women survivors of violence regarding how and where to seek help. In May 2020, the Ministry of Health, Social Welfare & Gender Affairs [reported](#) that the number of domestic violence reports made to the police in Funafuti decreased in the period January-May 2020, compared to the same five-month period a year earlier. The police intervened in 16 cases of domestic violence (13 female victims, 3 male victims) between January and May 2020, compared to 38 cases (28 female victims, 10 male victims) during the same period in 2019. As noted in the report, this is not necessarily indicative of a reduced rate of violence, since a lack of further data prevents in-depth analysis. The figures are likely influenced by the reduced capacity that victims have in seeking help during the pandemic due to the disruption of services.

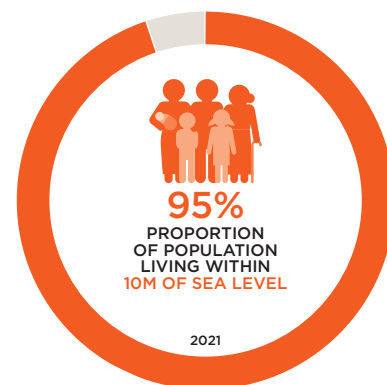
Gender and Protection in Humanitarian Action

The [maximum height above sea level](#) in Tuvalu is 5m, and 100% of the population live within 1km of the coast. There is a 'high' likelihood of coastal flooding in Tuvalu, and a 'medium' likelihood of tsunamis. Tuvalu is not included in the 2021 Global Risk Index on disaster risk due to a lack of data on key indicators.

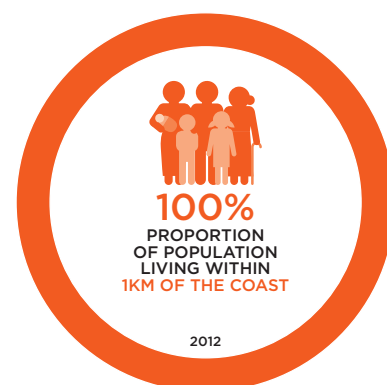
Climate and Disaster Profile of Tuvalu



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



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



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

Main Climate-Related Hazards



Source: [Australian Aid](#)

Climate change poses a significant threat to Tuvalu. The impact of climate change [affects rural women disproportionately](#) due to their reliance on natural resources for their income and food source. The [2015 CEDAW review](#) stated that there was little evidence that those affected by climate change had been informed, or had opportunities to participate in decision-making processes concerning climate change and how policy could protect them. In particular, women are often blocked from accessing information and often rely on male household members to collect and relay information regarding humanitarian action.

Between 2000 and 2019, [Tuvalu was the 125th most impacted country by climate-related extreme weather events](#) in terms of direct losses and fatalities. Tuvalu experienced two major cyclones between 2011 and 2020, and the [average annual losses due to disasters](#) was calculated to be equivalent to 4.0% of GDP in 2020. Future climate projections predict that Tuvalu will experience less frequent but more intense cyclones, and more frequent and more intense extreme rainfall events. Temperatures and sea levels are expected to continue to rise, ocean acidification trends will continue, and the risk of coral bleaching is expected to increase.

There is [little gender-specific data](#) regarding the impact of natural hazards, humanitarian disasters and climate change in Tuvalu. During disaster response and recovery, women generally face higher rates of sexual and gender-based violence, have limited participation in decision-making, and lack of employment opportunities. The unpaid domestic and care workloads of women increase, while they suffer from a limited access to resources and opportunities.

Extreme weather change and increases in natural hazards have also been associated with the emigration of Tuvaluan citizens to neighbouring countries. According to [reports in 2015](#), emigration has increased, and there have been increased risks of internal as well as international displacement, potentially leading to issues with statelessness and insecurity in living circumstances. It has been highlighted that there is a [slightly higher proportion of male Tuvaluans who decide to migrate](#), compared to women. The common destinations for women's migration were Fiji (64%), New Zealand (17%), Other (16%) and Australia (3%), whereas men migrated to Fiji (57%), Other (22%), New Zealand (16%) and Australia (5%).

The National Disaster Committee was established in the 2007 [National Disaster Management Act](#). The [Tuvalu National Gender Policy](#) includes two key actions on environment and disasters. Firstly, the Policy commits to monitoring the progress on gender equality commitments made in the National Strategic Action Plan for Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management. Secondly, the Policy supports the participation of women in decision-making for disaster risk management, climate change adaptation, and natural resource management at local and national levels. The current representation of women in disaster preparedness and response in Tuvalu is not known.

The [Tuvalu National Strategic Plan for Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management 2012-2016](#) provides a prioritised programme to improve Tuvalu's adaptation, mitigation, and disaster risk management processes. The Plan calls for the collection of sex-disaggregated data for development planning to strengthen adaptation capacity and aims to diversify gender-specific climate resilient livelihoods. The [Tuvalu National Climate Change Policy 2012-2021](#), *Te Kaniva*, upholds respect and sensitivity for human rights and gender equality as one of its guiding principles. Under its desired Policy outcomes, *Te Kaniva* also includes the availability of sex-disaggregated data for development planning and the diversification of gender-specific climate resilient livelihoods.

When assessed in combination with other pre-existing crisis risks, [Tuvalu is considered to be at high risk from the](#)

[potential humanitarian impacts of COVID-19](#). According to the Ministry of Health, Social Welfare and Gender Affairs' [2020 Rapid Assessment of the Socioeconomic Impacts of the Global COVID-19 Pandemic](#), women were more likely than men to express concerns regarding food security and natural resource depletion during the pandemic. With many people relocating to rural areas as a precautionary measure against the spread of COVID-19, 80% of surveyed women stated that extra expenses associated with relocation left them with little money for food supplies.

Appendix 1: Country Background

Capital	Funafuti
Population	10,679 (2021 estimate)
GDP per capita (USD)	\$4,143.11 (2020)
Human Development Index	Not available
Type of Government	Tuvalu is a constitutional monarchy with a parliamentary democracy , mandated by the 1978 Constitution of Tuvalu. There are three branches of national government: Executive, Legislative, and Judicial. The head of state is the British monarch , who is represented in Tuvalu by the Governor-General. The Governor-General is appointed by the monarch on the recommendation of the incumbent Prime Minister of Tuvalu and the Tuvalu Parliament. The role of the Governor-General is largely ceremonial.
Women in Legislature	One out of 15 MPs (6.7%) are woman as of March 2022.
Legal System	The legal system is a combination of legislation passed by the Tuvalu Parliament, Westminster Parliament legislation, common law, and customary law.
Ratified Human Rights Conventions	<p>Ratified:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (Accession 1995) • Tuvalu has not signed the Optional Protocol to the CRC on the involvement of children in armed conflict or on the sale of children, child prostitution, and child pornography. • Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) (Accession 1999) • Tuvalu has not accepted the Optional Protocol to CEDAW, CEDAW-OP, or the inquiry procedure under CEDAW-OP. • Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) (Accession 2013) • Tuvalu has not accepted the Optional Protocol to the CRPD. <p>Not Ratified:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convention Against Torture (CAT) • International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (CCPR) • International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD) • International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) • International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (CMW) • Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (CED) (2007)
Urban vs. Rural Women (%)	59.0% of the female population and 61.2% of the male population resided in Funafuti – the country's only urban area – in the 2017 Mini-Census .
Female-Headed Households (%)	18% of households were headed by women in the 2019-2020 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey .
Women in the Workforce	An estimated 49.2% of female and 34.8% of male non-agricultural employment was informal in 2016.
Women CEOs	An analysis of 11 Tuvalu organisations in 2021 found that women held 29% of CEO positions.
Women on Boards	In 2021, women held an estimated 29% of Director positions on boards in Tuvalu, as well as 29% of Board Chair positions. Women were most highly represented as Directors on the boards of state-owned enterprises (32% female representation).

Appendix 1: Country Background (continued)

Tuvalu is a Polynesian country comprised of nine islands: five coral atolls and another four low-lying islands. The [total land area](#) across the nine islands is 30km², and the country has an exclusive economic zone of 749,790km². The capital Funafuti is the only urban area and was home to 59.0% of the female population and 61.2% of the male population in the [2017 Mini-Census](#). Tuvalu gained independence from the United Kingdom in 1978 and is a member of the Commonwealth. Tuvalu is a [constitutional monarchy with a parliamentary democracy](#) and British monarch as Sovereign.

The population of Tuvalu was [estimated to be 10,679](#) in 2021, with a national population density of 356 people per km². In the [2017 Mini-Census](#), 97.0% of the population were ethnically of Tuvaluan descent, while a further 1.6% were of mixed Tuvaluan/I-Kiribati descent. Tuvalu's [official languages](#) are Tuvaluan and English.

Appendix 2: Country Commitments on Gender

International Commitments

Gender Commitments	Status	Actions
Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)	Accession 1999. The most recent reporting cycle took place between 2012 and 2017.	The Concluding observations on the combined third and fourth periodic reports of Tuvalu noted a number of areas of progress in legislation and policy since accession to CEDAW: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counterterrorism and Transnational Organized Crime Act (2009), which defines and prohibits all forms of exploitation, including of prostitution, as well as trafficking of persons. • National Strategic Plan for HIV and Sexually Transmitted Infections 2009-2013, aimed at reducing the transmission of HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases. • Police Powers and Duties Act (2009), which includes a definition of domestic violence and specifies the responsibilities of the police in relevant cases. • Family Protection and Domestic Violence Act (2014), which prohibits domestic violence and provides enhanced protection for women and girls. • Falekaupule (Authorization of Budget) Amendment Act (2014), which allows women aged 18 and above residing within the territorial jurisdiction of the local government council to participate and vote in the approval stages of the council's budget. • National Gender Policy (2014) and its Strategic Plan of Action 2014-2016, which aim to realise women's human rights in all aspects of life.
The Beijing Platform for Action	1995 Tuvalu conducted a Beijing +25 review in 2019.	Tuvalu's Beijing+25 Review concluded as below: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Government of Tuvalu and civil society and private sector organisations have recognised the importance of gender equality as demonstrated through a wide range of significant achievements that contribute toward the realisation of the Beijing Platform for Action. • The National Gender Policy 2016-2019 and the National Strategy for Sustainable Development 2016-2020 were both scheduled to be reviewed. • The review report also recognised the importance of continued gender mainstreaming in policies, plans, and their implementation in Tuvalu. • There is a need to continue to strengthen partnerships, implement relevant policy and legal reforms, and address family health and violence against women as significant social challenges.
Pacific Leaders' Gender Equality Declaration	Signed 2012. A regional review was conducted in 2016.	According to the Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration Trend Assessment Report 2012-2016 : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Gender Affairs Department in Tuvalu needs to work closely with key partners to deliver trainings at the community level and also at the policy level. • The National Gender Policy and the National Strategic Plan (TKIII) consider improvement in gender equality including getting women into key decision-making bodies such as the parliament. Gender sensitisation at the community and across government should continue as to increase support for Temporary Special Measures (TSM) and other measures to increase women's presence in the positions of decision-making and influence. • To support women's economic empowerment, Tuvalu's fair trade bazaars targeted women entrepreneurs, and the development bank was engaged in negotiations to streamline financial services to women.

Appendix 2: Country Commitments on Gender (continued)

National Commitments

Gender Commitments	Status	Actions
Tuvalu National Gender Policy	2014	The National Gender Policy provides a guiding framework to realise the Tuvalu Government's commitments on gender equality and women's empowerment. The Policy outlines the Government's policy focus between 2014 and 2019, with the goal of achieving gender equality and women's empowerment.