



IN BRIEF



# GENDER EQUALITY BRIEF FOR VANUATU

## Women's Human Rights

Vanuatu's [1980 Constitution](#) guarantees the fundamental rights and freedoms of individuals regardless of race, place of origin, religious or traditional beliefs, political opinions, language, or sex. The Constitution guarantees equal treatment and specifies that laws enacted for the provision of special benefit, welfare, protection, or advancement of under-privileged groups – including women and children – are not considered contrary to equal treatment laws. The Constitution also contains commitments to the preservation of customary law practices, which may be a potential barrier to equal treatment, for example, through the impact of women's ability to exercise rights over customary land. The [Custom Land Management Act of 2013](#) does, however, allow for the participation of women in customary institutions which are involved in decision-making regarding land matters. The [Citizenship \(Amendment\) Act 2013](#) guarantees gender equality in citizenship eligibility.

Several critical factors [impact gender relations in Vanuatu](#), including patriarchal values introduced through religion and colonial power structures and *Kastom*. *Kastom* is broadly defined as indigenous knowledge, beliefs, values, and practices and how these are expressed and manifested. *Kastom* practices embody concepts of community and tradition and are not uniform throughout Vanuatu but vary depending on the location and culture of specific Ni-Vanuatu groups. Within Vanuatu, there are a variety of matrilineal and patrilineal systems, but patrilineal systems are predominant.

Within Ni-Vanuatu ethnic groups, *Kastomary* laws form the basis of the relationship between people and land. There are no discriminatory laws regarding land ownership or access within Vanuatu's Constitution or subsequent national legislation. *Kastom* law, however, may in some instances [prevent or discourage the participation of women in decision-making processes](#) pertaining to land management and tenure. According to the [2020 Census](#), 73% of private households reported having customary land tenure agreements. The [National Sustainable Development Plan Baseline Survey](#) found that male-headed households had greater access to customary land than female-headed households. The

Vanuatu Land Registry does not collect sex-disaggregated data on land leases, and so the proportion of land leased by Ni-Vanuatu women is not known. In 2015, the Land Management and Planning Committee Chair [stated that 30% of Ni-Vanuatu lease applicants were women](#). Data collected in the 2020 Census on the proportion of houses that are headed by women has not yet been released; previous data from the [2016 Mini Census](#) found that women headed 17.5% of households in Vanuatu.

The [legal age of marriage](#) without third-party consent is 21 for women and men. With parental consent, it is legal for girls to marry at age 16 and for men to marry at age 18. The practice of early marriage is [believed to be common in Vanuatu](#), particularly on isolated atolls where girls are reportedly married at younger ages. In some areas of Vanuatu, *Kastom* may advise that a [girl is available for marriage and sex once they begin to menstruate](#). Between 2012 and 2018, it is estimated that [3% of women aged between 20 and 24 were first married by age 15](#), while 21% of women and 5% of men were first married by age 18.

### Legal Marriage Age in Vanuatu

Internationally accepted age:



Vanuatu with parental consent:



Vanuatu without parental consent:



Source: [World Health Organization and Inter-Parliamentary Union](#)

Within some Ni-Vanuatu groups, *Kastom* [may require a bride price](#) to be paid upon marriage whereby a groom and/or the groom's family pays the bride's family in exchange for her hand in marriage; this may be viewed to impede gender equality and contribute to a culture in which women are viewed as property. In [Women's Lives and Family Relationships study](#), conducted in 2011, 53% of women in Vanuatu stated that they believe a woman becomes a man's property if a bride price is paid. More up-to-date data is required to understand the current prevalence of such attitudes. In the 2011 survey, 81% of married women stated that their marriage involved a

bride price, with 84% of these respondents stating that they believed the bride price had a positive impact on how they were treated by her husband's family. Overall, 32% of survey respondents believed that a bride price was justification for physical violence in a marriage. In addition to providing perceived justification for physical violence, bride prices may cause women to be hesitant to leave their husbands, even if they are abusive, as they [may not be able to reimburse the bride price](#) that has been paid.

Under Vanuatu's [Penal Code](#), the age of consent to sexual activity is 15 for both men and women. In 2009, 72% of women who stated that they were below the age of 15 at their first sexual experience [stated that they had been forced or coerced to have sex](#). More up-to-date research is required to determine current trends in this area. Sexual offences legislation in Vanuatu is outlined in the Penal Code of 1981 and subsequent amendments in 2003 and 2006. Sexual assault crimes are expressed in gender-neutral terms. However, [some language used within the legislation is moralistic](#) (for example, 'indecent act', 'indecent assault') and would require revision to align with current international standards.

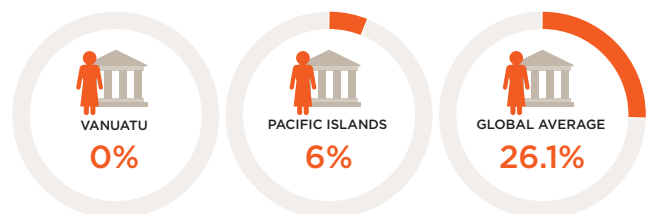
The [age of consent is higher for homosexual than heterosexual acts](#), at 18. Vanuatu supported the UN's 2011 Joint Statement on Ending Acts of Violence and Related Human Rights Violations Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity. There are, however, [limited protections in Vanuatu's legislation](#) against discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and no protections against discrimination on the basis of gender identity. Same-sex marriage is not legal.

## Governance and Participation in Public Life

Vanuatu has a [unicameral Parliament](#) with 52 members. Members are elected by popular vote in elections held every four years. The voting age is 18 with universal suffrage. In the [2020 Census](#), 88.3% of women and 88.5% of men living in private households had a valid electoral card. The rate was lowest among urban women, at 82.7%.

As of March 2022, there are [no female members of Parliament](#). There have only been five women in Parliament in the country's history, and there have been no women in Parliament since 2012. In the 2020 elections, there were [18 female candidates](#), an increase from eight in 2016. [According to senior female political actors](#), reasons for this gender gap include women's lack of money and necessary resources to contest incumbent seats. Vanuatu's women's rights groups have called for 'affirmative action measures' to help boost representation for women in Parliament. There are currently no Temporary Special Measures in place to improve women's representation in national governance.

### Female representation in national parliament in Vanuatu



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

The [Vanuatu Department of Women's Affairs](#) in 2011 proposed an amendment to the Municipalities Act to ensure that some seats should be reserved for women on the Municipal Councils. The Municipalities Amendment Act No.11 of 2013 established a quota system for women to contest local government elections. The provincial and municipal level elections for the 2018-2021 term resulted in the election of 11 municipal female councillors (accounting for 25.6% of all municipal councillors) and seven provincial female councillors (7.1% of all provincial councillors). No female mayors were elected, but there were some female deputy mayors elected. At the September 2019 municipal election, six female councillors were voted into Luganville Municipal Council. There were more than 15 female candidates at the 2020 general elections, but none won their seats.<sup>1</sup>

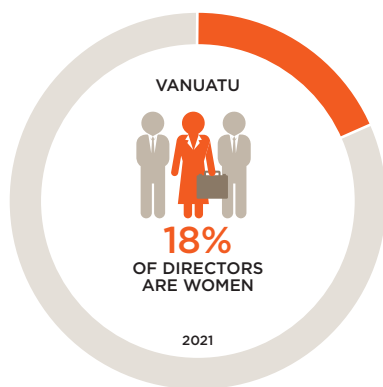
## Women in Local Governance in Vanuatu

Women were	Women were
<b>26%</b>	<b>7%</b>
of <b>municipal councillors</b> elected for the 2018-2021 term	of <b>provincial councillors</b> elected for the 2018-2021 term

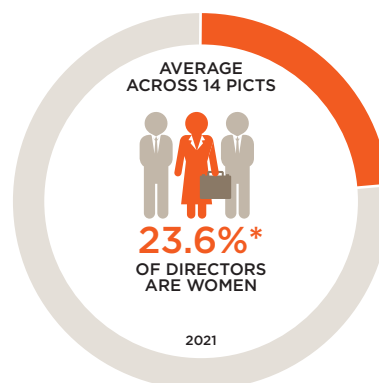
Source: National Gender Policy 2020-2030 [Unpublished]

Women are underrepresented as board members of organisations in Vanuatu; an [analysis](#) conducted by the Pacific Private Sector Development Initiative (PSDI) estimated that 18% of Directors were women in 2021. Female representation was highest on the board of industry associations, at 38%, followed by other private sector organisations, at 14%, and state-owned enterprises, at 9%. Within specific sectors, women were most highly represented on the boards of organisations in the tourism sector (women accounted for 33% of Directors in this sector) and the finance sector (19% of Directors). There were [340 cooperatives in Vanuatu in 2017](#) involved in various areas, including savings and loans, housing, handicrafts, fisheries, and agriculture. Of these, 44.7% were managed by women.

## Women on Boards in Vanuatu



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



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

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

The number of women who hold senior positions in the public sector is gradually increasing but remains low. The Vanuatu Public Service Commission appointed three women as Director Generals in 2018. In 2019, two of the seven Director Generals and eight out of 43 Directors of government departments were women.<sup>2</sup>

The representation of women within the high levels of policing, justice, and governance is improving. In 2016, the [first woman was promoted to Police Inspector](#) in the Vanuatu police force, and the first female Ni-Vanuatu Supreme Court Judge was appointed in 2019. Of those listing their occupation in the category of *Armed forces occupations* in the [2020 Census](#), 30.2% were women.

Women have held political advisory roles within the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Ministry of Justice and Community Services, and Ministry of Internal Affairs. Within the [Ministry of Education](#), there is only one incumbent female educational director out of five directorships as of January 2022. In the media sector, it was estimated in 2015 that women [occupy less than 10% of the senior editorial level positions](#), such as senior editors and foreign editors.

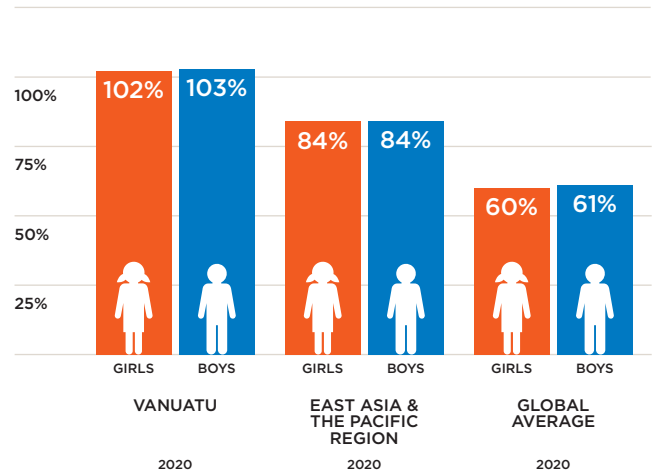
There is a lack of national data on the proportion of traditional leadership roles held by women. As [reported to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in 2005](#), in the matriarchal and graded societies of central Vanuatu, women can hold chiefly titles; however, they may not necessarily take on the same role as male chiefs. For female chiefs, the role of administrator or talking chief is often delegated to her brother.

## Education

Whilst Vanuatu's National Sector Development Plan mandates that all children must be able to access the education system, [primary and secondary education is neither compulsory nor free](#) in Vanuatu, and the onus is placed on parents to send their children to school. There are also several indirect costs of primary and secondary schooling, such as transport. [Priority for schooling is often given to boys](#). The Government of Vanuatu has been working towards universalising access to education for all children. In 2018, the Government [reportedly provided school grants](#) for early childhood education, as well as for primary school students in Years 6 and 7. In December 2018, the Parliament passed a budget to allocate school grants that ensured free access to education for secondary school students from Years 8 to 10. In 2019 the Government [announced a plan to extend its 'free tuition' policy](#) till Year 13.

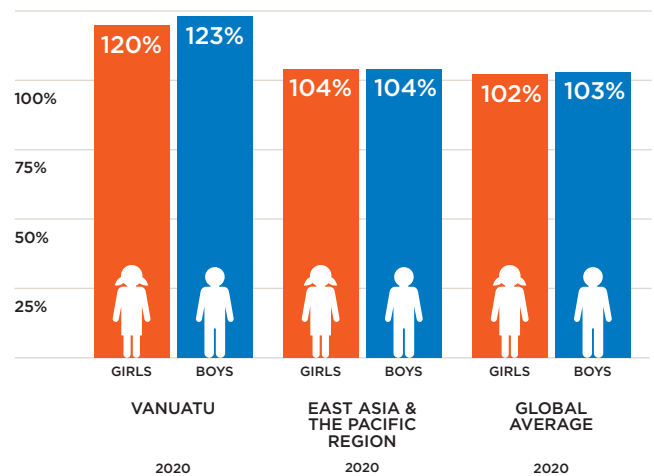
Of the total population over the age of 3 who are currently attending school, 48.7% were female in the [2020 Census](#). According to [data from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics](#) (UIS), the net enrolment rate in primary school was 94.9% for girls and 95.8% for boys in 2020. Girls surpass boys in secondary school; girls' net enrolment rate in secondary school was 49.9% compared to boys' 42.8%. In [data](#) published by the Pacific Community (SPC), 14.3% of girls and 36.5% of boys enrolled in primary education were at least two years overage for their current grade in 2020. Overall, 64.8% of students across early childhood, primary, and secondary education were [over-age for their current enrolment level](#) in 2020.

### Early Childhood Education Gross Enrolment Rates in Vanuatu



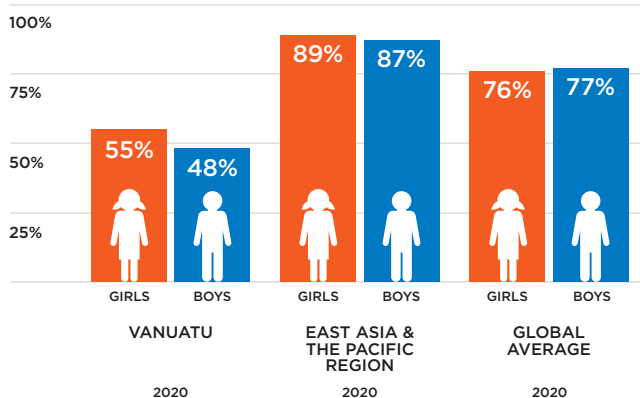
Source: [UNESCO Institute for Statistics](#)

### Primary Gross Enrolment Rates in Vanuatu



Source: [UNESCO Institute for Statistics](#)

## Secondary Gross Enrolment Rates in Vanuatu



Source: [UNESCO Institute for Statistics](#)

There is a [high dropout rate](#) amongst girls at the secondary level of education. Around 50% of girls enrolled drop out between Grades 7 and 11. A comparable dropout rate for boys was not available. No law protects the right of pregnant women and girls to re-enrol in school following birth. In the [2016 Global School-based Student Health Survey](#), 50.0% of girls and 60.8% of boys aged between 13 and 17 stated that they had missed classes or school without permission in the 30 days prior to the survey.

[Data from the Ministry of Education and Training](#) show that 62% of Ni-Vanuatu students enrolled at tertiary education institutes in 2020 were female. As indicated by the [2020 Census](#), men in Vanuatu are more likely than women to hold Bachelor's, Master's, and Doctorate degrees, as well as post-graduate certificates and diplomas. Higher rates of female attendance in tertiary education, however, indicate that trends in tertiary education are changing. For young people below the age of 25, more women than men hold tertiary degrees and qualifications; in the 2020 Census, 56.0% of those with tertiary qualifications in this age range were female.

The Vanuatu National Statistics Office [reported in 2011](#) that women with disabilities experience educational disadvantages. In the Ministry of Education [2015 Annual Statistics Digest](#), approximately 2.9% of students in primary schools identified as having a disability. The

report noted that some students with disabilities were “not able to adapt themselves with the ‘normal’ teaching and learning development in the classrooms”, leading to them dropping out.

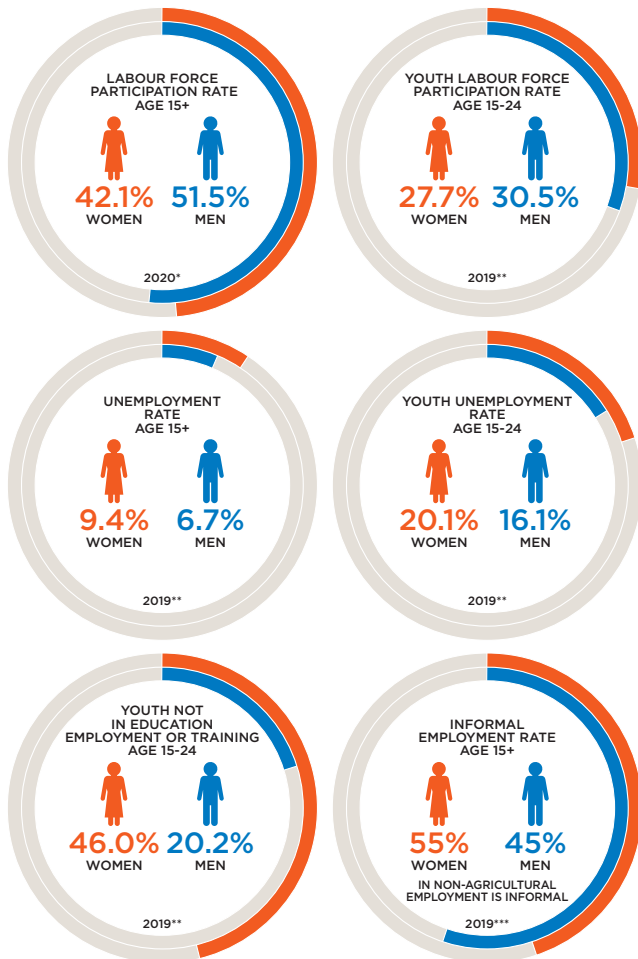
There are incidents of violence within schools, and corporal punishment by teachers is [reported to be relatively common](#) in Vanuatu. Incidents of school sexual violence involving both male teachers and pupils have also been reported. Previous research has [suggested](#) a notable absence of protocols for school authorities to handle sexual violence cases. Vanuatu has a [National Child Protection Policy \(2016-2026\)](#), and the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) introduced a [Child Safeguarding Policy](#) in 2017. As per the National Gender Equality Policy 2020-2024, the MoET is due to implement new child protection and safeguarding policies and procedures in schools by 2023.

In a 2018 [survey](#) conducted by the MoET, 43% of respondents stated that it was either ‘hard’ or ‘very hard’ to pay school fees for secondary school, with 8% of respondents reporting that they are not always able to afford it. The payment of school fees was found to be the most significant barrier to education, followed by a lack of parental support or value on education, access to school, disability, and disasters. Following Tropical Cyclone Pam in 2016, the enrolment rate of girls in primary education reduced significantly, suggesting that families prioritise the education of boys during periods of economic stress and uncertainty.

A 2020 [survey](#) on home-schooling during the COVID-19 pandemic found that there were several barriers impacting children's learning during periods of home-schooling – for example, lack of internet and internet-connected devices, lack of study space at home, and lack of teacher mentoring.

## Women's Economic Empowerment

### Economic Empowerment Indicators in Vanuatu



\* Source: [2020 Census](#)

\*\* Source: [NSDP Baseline Survey](#)

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

In the [2020 Census](#), the national labour force participation rate was 42.1% for women and 51.5% for men age 15 and over. For women, the labour force participation rate was 47.2% in urban areas and 40.4% in rural areas. Among the regions of Vanuatu, the female labour force participation rate is lowest in the southerly province of Tafea and the northerly province of Torba, at 27.0% and 36.4%, respectively. Male labour force participation rates are similarly lowest in these regions at 27.0% and 44.1%, respectively. For those who did not work and were not looking for work in the week prior to the Census, 69.9% of women and 66.0% of men stated that their reason was *doing domestic work only for self and others*.

According to the [2019-2020 National Sustainable Development Plan \(NSDP\) Baseline Survey](#), the unemployment rate was 9.4% for women and 6.7% for men aged 15 and over, resulting in a total unemployment rate of 7.9%. Youth unemployment was 20.1% for women and 16.1% for men aged 15-24, resulting in an overall youth unemployment rate of 18%. For those aged 15-24, 46.0% of women and 40.2% of men were not in education, employment or training.

In 2019, an estimated 55.3% of female non-agricultural employment and 45.3% of male non-agricultural employment was [classified as informal](#). In the [2019-2020 NSDP Baseline Survey](#), the informal employment rate was 68.7% for women and 65.5% for men. Within the labour force, 13.4% of women were government employees in the November [2020 Census](#), while 21.0% were employees in the private sector. For men, 12.9% of the labour force were government employees, and 28.3% were employees in the private sector. Men were more likely to be employers, with 4.6% of the male labour force and 3.5% of the female labour force reported to be employers in 2020. There was a higher number of self-employed men than women, although self-employment accounted for a slightly larger proportion of female than male economic activity; 24.9% of the male labour force and 25.8% of female labour force reported that they were self-employed in the 2020 Census. While men accounted for 54.4% of unpaid family workers, women accounted for 67.9% of unpaid household workers. Men were marginally more likely to report that they produced goods for their own consumption; 51.0% of individuals in this category were male in the 2020 Census. Further, in the [2019-2020 NSDP Baseline Survey](#) 45.5% of women reported their main activity was caring for the household and family, while 50.2% of men reported their main activity was paid or volunteer work.

For both men and women, the predominant industry of economic participation in the 2020 Census was *Agriculture, Forestry, and Fishing*; 33.3% of women and 41.2% of men. The most common occupations listed by women in the 2020 Census were *Skilled agricultural, forestry, and fishery workers* (38.7% of women's occupations), *Service and sale workers* (18.0%), *Elementary occupations* (15.4%), and *Professionals* (11.1%). Women outnumber men in *Clerical support workers*, *Professionals*, and *Service and sales workers* occupations. In 2020, 36.5% of managers were women, with the occupation *manager* accounting for 2.1% of female occupations and 3.0% of male occupations.

According to a 2021 [analysis](#) of 22 state-owned enterprises, industry associations, and private sector organisations, women occupied 15% of Chief Executive Officer roles and 14% of Chief Financial Officer/ Chief Operating Officer roles in Vanuatu.

The economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic [has been considerable](#) in Vanuatu due to the impact that global travel restrictions and lockdowns have had on Vanuatu's tourism sector. Women tend to be more engaged in sectors such as tourism and hospitality that have been significantly impacted by the pandemic and associated restrictions. Further research is required to fully comprehend the impact of the pandemic on the economic participation and empowerment of women in Vanuatu.

Vanuatu has been a member of the [International Labour Organization](#) since 2003 and has signed all eight of the Fundamental Conventions under the ILO, including the *Equal Remuneration Convention* and the *Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention*, both of which were ratified in 2006. Vanuatu has not signed the ILO *Maternity Protection Convention* or the *Violence and Harassment Convention*, and there is [no specific legislation against sexual harassment](#) in Vanuatu.

In the [2016 Mini-Census](#), 25.1% of women and 37.4% of men had an account at a commercial bank; the rate was higher among urban populations (46.6% female, 59.8% male) than rural (18.0% female, 29.3% male). The typical requirement at financial institutions for land or vehicles as collateral or a 100% cash deposit [restricts women's access to capital](#) in Vanuatu. In 2020, [80% of the members of savings and loans cooperatives in Vanuatu were women](#). Savings and loans cooperatives disbursed approximately US\$475,000 of loans to members in 2020.

## Health/Sexual and Reproductive Health

The [life expectancy](#) in Vanuatu in 2021 was 72 for women and 69 for men. Vanuatu is faced with a double burden of both communicable diseases, such as malaria and tuberculosis and noncommunicable diseases. The [mortality rate attributed to the noncommunicable diseases](#) cancer, cardiovascular disease, chronic respiratory disease, and diabetes was 33.5% for women and 45.1% for men in 2019.

A [global analysis of cervical cancer incidence](#) in 2018 found that Vanuatu had the lowest global average age at diagnosis of cervical cancer at age 44 and the lowest average age at death from cervical cancer at 45. Cervical cancer is the leading cause of cancer deaths among 15-44-year-olds, with an age-standardised mortality rate of 10.6%, accounting for 19.7% of all cancer deaths. The Ministry of Health noted in 2021 that the high mortality and morbidity rates of cancers of the reproductive system in Vanuatu are often associated with delayed care-seeking behaviours.<sup>3</sup> [Cervical cancer screening programmes](#) to improve community detection screened 19.9% of eligible women between 2015 and 2019. Rates of breast cancer are also believed to be increasing in Vanuatu, although the lack of appropriate screening programmes means that the current rates and trends are not well understood.<sup>4</sup>

Risk factors for noncommunicable diseases include tobacco use, physical inactivity, the harmful use of alcohol, and unhealthy diets. According to the [2020 Census](#), 5% of women and 49% of men over the age of 15 reported smoking tobacco within the previous seven days. Rates of tobacco use are higher among teenagers than adult women; in 2016, 19.5% of girls and 31.6% of boys aged between 13 and 17 [reported](#) that they currently used tobacco products. Among adults in the 2020 Census, 5.1% of women and 25.5% of men reported drinking alcohol in the previous seven days.

The [national adult obesity rate](#) in 2015 was 28% for women and 19% for men. For adolescents aged between 10 and 19, 7% of both boys and girls were classified as obese in 2016. The [2016 Global School Health Survey](#) found that 16.5% of girls and 12.1% of boys aged between 13 and 17 were overweight, while 1.7% of girls and 2.8% of boys were obese. The diabetes prevalence rate was 9.3% in 2015.

The rate of suicidal feelings and intentions was found to be higher among teenage boys than girls in the [2016 Global School Health Survey](#); 11.5% of girls age 13-17 and 18.0% of boys age 13-17 stated that they had seriously considered attempting suicide during the 12 months prior to the survey, while a further 17.8% of girls age 13-17 and 27.0% of boys age 13-17 stated that they had attempted

3 Ministry of Health, 2021. Vanuatu Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health Policy, Strategy & Implementation Plan. [Unpublished]

4 ibid



suicide one or more times during the same period.

Vanuatu has made progress in recent years in the prevention of communicable diseases. The [incidence of malaria](#) has fallen significantly over the past decade, from 66.3 per 1,000 population in 2010 to 3.5 per 1,000 in 2019. Activities under the [Vanuatu Malaria Programme](#), such as net distribution and indoor residual spraying, have helped reduce malaria incidence in Vanuatu. In the [2020 Census](#), 58.7% of women and 58.4% of men reported having access to a treated bed net. 81.7% of women and 81.1% of men with access reported sleeping under nets. [Tuberculosis incidence](#) has also declined in recent years, from 69 per 100,000 population in 2010 to 38 per 100,000 in 2020.

#### Malaria Incidence Rate in Vanuatu

2010	2019
<b>66.3</b>	<b>3.5</b>
per 1,000 population	per 1,000 population

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

#### Tuberculosis Incidence Rate in Vanuatu

2010	2020
<b>69</b>	<b>38</b>
per 1,000 population	per 1,000 population

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

The adolescent birth rate in Vanuatu was 70 births per 1,000 women aged 15-19 in 2020, down from 81 in 2013.<sup>5</sup> The total fertility rate in Vanuatu has been continually decreasing over the past decades; according to [World Bank data](#), the total fertility rate in 2020 was 3.7 births per woman, down from 4.1 in 2009 and 4.5 in 1999. As noted in the Ministry of Health's 2021-2025 Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health (RMNCAH) Policy, the number of maternal deaths during childbirth and child deaths under the age of 5 in Vanuatu remains high; the infant mortality rate was 22 infant deaths per 1,000 live births in 2018, while the under-5 mortality rate was 25.9 in 2019. The maternal mortality ratio was estimated to be 72 in 2017. Indicators such as maternal and infant mortality rates are susceptible to large fluctuations in small populations. Therefore, trends in maternal mortality are difficult to measure accurately. The rate of 72 in 2017, for example, was calculated based on six maternal deaths, while eight maternal deaths in 2014 resulted in a significantly higher maternal mortality ratio of 110 deaths per 100,000 live births.

#### Adolescent Fertility Rate in Vanuatu

Sustainable Development Goal target: reduce adolescent fertility rate to	Vanuatu:
<b>less than 13 live births per 1,000</b>	<b>70 live births per 1,000</b>
women aged 15-19 by 2030	2020

Source: [RMNCAH Policy \[Unpublished\]](#)

#### Maternal Mortality Ratio in Vanuatu

Sustainable Development Goal target: reduce maternal mortality ratio to	Vanuatu:
<b>less than 70 per 100,000 live births</b>	<b>72 per 100,000 live births</b>
by 2030	2017

Source: [RMNCAH Policy \[Unpublished\]](#)

#### Under-5 Mortality Rate in Vanuatu

Sustainable Development Goal target: reduce under-5 mortality rate to	Vanuatu:
<b>less than 25 per 1,000 live births</b>	<b>25.9 per 1,000 live births</b>
by 2030	2019

Source: [RMNCAH Policy \[Unpublished\]](#)

In 2022, 36% of all women aged 15-49 and 48% of married or in-union women aged 15-49 were [using a contraceptive method](#). 31% of all women and 41% of married or in-union women in the same age group were using a modern method of contraceptive. Among married or in-union women aged 15-49, 20% of women had unmet needs for family planning, while 15% of the total female population in this age range had unmet family planning needs. The 2021-2025 RMNCAH Policy recognises that cost may be a barrier to contraceptive access, particularly for young people, and identifies the provision of accessible and affordable contraception as a priority.

The 2021-2025 RMNCAH Policy states that the prevalence

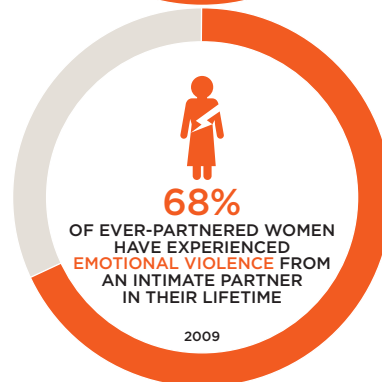
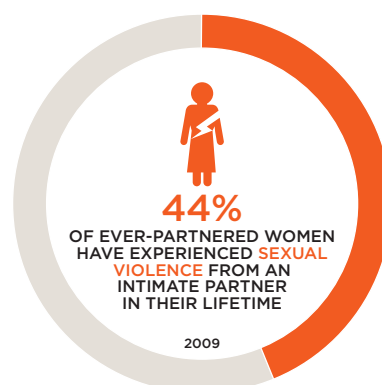
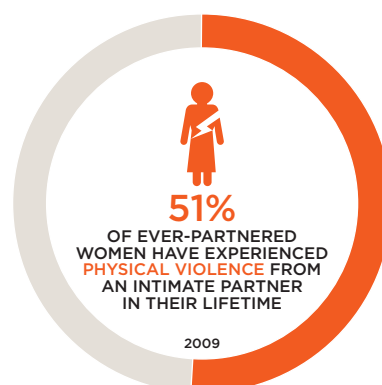
of sexually transmitted infections is increasing in Vanuatu, particularly among young, urban women. Among 8,593 women tested for HPV as part of a [cervical cancer prevention programme](#) between 2015 and 2019, 10% tested positive. HIV prevalence in Vanuatu remains low; as of 2020, seven people were living with HIV in Vanuatu, with a total of only ten cases recorded since 2003.<sup>6</sup> [Previous research](#) suggests that only a quarter of adolescents had ‘comprehensive’ knowledge about HIV. A third of young people living in urban areas lacked knowledge about family planning and sexually transmitted infections, while comparable data for young people in rural areas is missing. More up-to-date data is required to understand current knowledge and attitudes to HIV in Vanuatu. In baseline data from the 2021-2025 RMNCAH Policy, the prevalence rate of chlamydia was recorded as 25.1%, and the prevalence rate of syphilis was 4.5%.

The Government of Vanuatu [implemented the Family Life Education programme](#) in 2013 as a long-term intervention strategy to deliver information and education on sexual and reproductive health in schools and [is working to improve access to quality family planning information and services](#) for women and adolescents by 2022.

## Ending Violence against Women and Girls

Vanuatu has high and severe rates of violence against women and girls. According to the [Vanuatu National Survey on Women’s Lives and Family Relationships](#) (VNS), conducted by the Vanuatu Women’s Centre (VWC) and the Vanuatu National Statistics Office in 2009 and published in 2011, 60% of women aged between 15-49 who have ever been in a relationship have experienced either physical or sexual violence (or both) by a husband or intimate partner, and more than two in three (68%) experienced emotional violence. Women living with physical and/or sexual violence are more likely to have had restrictions placed on their mobility, participation in organisations, and access to education.

### Lifetime prevalence of intimate partner violence in Vanuatu



Source: [Vanuatu National Survey on Women’s Lives and Family Relationships](#)

In [comparison with other national studies conducted within the region](#), Vanuatu has the highest lifetime and current prevalence of emotional violence from intimate partners; in the 2011 national survey, 68% of ever-partnered women reported that they had experienced emotional violence from a partner in their lifetime, with 54% reporting that they had experienced this violence in the 12 months prior to the survey.

In line with global data, women and girls in Vanuatu are more likely to have experienced violence at the hands of someone known to them, than they are from a stranger, reinforcing the need for programming that focuses on gender equality, including challenging gender norms/ stereotypes and attitudes and structures that condone or support violence, whilst enabling healthy relationships and ensuring access to quality services.

The VNS, along with other qualitative research, link violence against women and girls in the context of marriage and family to deeply engrained beliefs and attitudes that there are 'justifiable reasons' for husbands to use physical violence to 'discipline and control' their wives, highlighting a high social acceptance of violence and associated barriers to leaving violent relationships.

The VNS found that 69% of ever-partnered women reported that they had experienced controlling behaviours from a partner in their lifetime, with 28% reporting having experienced at least four types of controlling behaviour. The most common types of controlling behaviour were insisting on knowing where she is at all times (experienced by 52% of ever-partnered women), expecting his permission before she does anything (48%), and expecting his permission before she accesses health care (41%). Controlling behaviours were more commonly experienced by urban than by rural women.

The survey also found that 60% of survey respondents agreed with at least one situation in which a man was justified in hitting his wife. The most common justifications were if a husband finds out his wife has been unfaithful (38% of women considered it as a justification of physical violence), if she disobeys him (34%), and if a bride price has been paid (32%).

Gender-based violence has long-term damaging effects on survivors. The VNS found that more than 21% of women in Vanuatu who had been injured due to intimate partner violence had sustained a permanent disability.

A [2020 survey](#) of 192 women attending ante-natal clinics at Northern Provincial Hospital in Sanma Province found that 64% of women had experienced physical, sexual, or psychological intimate partner violence during their lifetime, while 42% reported experiencing intimate partner violence during their current pregnancy. Among the survey respondents, 40% had experienced physical partner violence in their lifetime, 19% had experienced sexual violence, and 58% had experienced psychological violence.

According to the 2011 VNS, 30% of women reported that they were sexually abused under the age of 15. Most perpetrators were either male family members (55%) or boyfriends (33%). A third (33%) of women reported that they had been sexually abused since the age of 15 by someone other than an intimate partner, while 28% of women stated that their first sexual experience was forced. Experiences of physical and/or sexual abuse by someone other than an intimate partner were more common among rural women (50%) than urban women (39%).

There were [94 sexual offences reported to police](#) in Port Vila in 2016. The most common offences were *indecent assault*, *indecent matter*, and *indecent act in a public place* (accounting for 32% of reports), and *sexual intercourse without consent* (24%). There were 14 offences of unlawful sexual intercourse with a child under the age of 15, accounting for 15% of reports. As [reported by local media](#), the Department of Correctional Services annual survey found in 2021 that 49% of offenders were charged with sexual offences. Sexual crimes have been the top offences in Vanuatu for the past decade.

The [Family Protection Act](#) of 2008 was passed to help tackle the high level of violence against women and children by criminalising domestic violence in recognition that many perpetrators were family members. However, the legal framework fails to protect unmarried women or domestic workers. In a [study](#) examining access to justice in rural Vanuatu published in 2016, 74% of the interviewed women stated that they had not heard of Family Protection Orders.

There are also barriers to accessing formal justice institutional services. According to an [access to justice study](#) conducted by UN Women in 2016, 98% of women and children who experience violence do not access the formal justice system. Many women and children rely on support from Vanuatu Women's Centre to access

the formal justice system as court fees, transport, and medical costs can be a barrier to accessing justice due to high levels of poverty and other vulnerabilities. Women in rural areas have less access to formal justice systems and may face considerable delays.

UN Women's 2016 [access to justice study](#) found the Family Protection Act to be a 'largely urban service'. The Family Protection Act contains mechanisms to improve rural women's access to formal justice systems by allowing applications for protection orders to be made by telephone and allowing appointed *Authorised Persons* to authorise temporary protection orders when the applicant is not able to apply directly to the court. In reality, however, these mechanisms are rarely utilised, and access to the formal justice system for victims of family violence remains low for those who cannot easily travel to a Magistrates Court.

A lack of access to formal institutions results in incidents of rape and sexual assault being dealt with outside of the formal justice system. A 2016 [study](#) found several incidents in which conflicts relating to rape and sexual assault were managed by chiefs instead of the police. Concerning attitudes relating to sexual violence were expressed by a few chiefs within the study – including a claim that rape cases involving adult women are often fake because the woman has led the man on – highlights the dangers of relying on informal mechanisms for resolving cases of sexual violence. Respondents reported that they were more likely to seek help from Village and Family Chiefs than police in cases of sexual violence; when asked whom they would seek help from if cost and distance were not an issue, respondents were more likely to seek help from the police than from Chiefs. As [noted by UNICEF](#) in 2017, sexual offences against children are often resolved through informal justice mechanisms or according to *kastom* practices involving the intervention of family, religious leaders, and village chiefs.

As of 2016, the Vanuatu Women's Centre was the [only organisation providing counselling support](#) to women and children who had experienced violence from an intimate partner, family and non-family members. The Vanuatu Women's Centre has headquarters in Port Vila,

five provincial branches in Torba, Sanma, Malampa, Tafea, and Penama, and Committees Against Violence Against Women (CAVAWs) providing awareness raising, basic counselling, and referral services in more remote areas.

Only 54% of health facilities provide sexual and gender-based violence services, and there are limited facilities providing emergency contraceptives, vaccines, post-exposure HIV medication, or forensic medical services.<sup>7</sup> Previous [research](#) found that few support programmes have trained counselling and therapy professionals. Staff often resort to 'common sense' methods when supporting vulnerable women, but there are concerns that this approach is influenced by traditional views of women's roles within society. Support centres run by non-governmental organisations have previously been described as often under-funded, making it challenging to provide consistent service and expand service beyond urban areas.

## Gender and Protection in Humanitarian Action

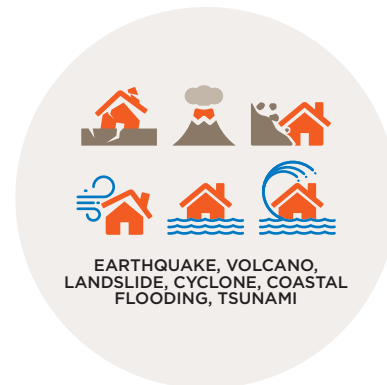
Vanuatu has the highest disaster risk rating of any country in the world, ranking number one in the [World Risk Index](#) in 2021. Vanuatu's [high disaster risk rating](#) is driven by a very high rate of exposure to extreme natural events such as cyclones, earthquakes, tsunamis, landslides, and coastal flooding. The majority of the population of Vanuatu live in coastal zones, [with 64% of the population living within 1km of the coastline](#) in 2009. In addition to a very high risk of exposure, the World Risk Index classifies Vanuatu as having a high level of vulnerability and susceptibility to disasters and a lack of coping and adaptive capacities. Despite that, the Government of Vanuatu [does recognise the importance of applying traditional knowledge](#) such as particular agricultural practices as a means of coping with high levels of disaster risk. Further to the hazards considered within the World Risk Index framework, Vanuatu is [vulnerable to volcanic activity](#); Vanuatu has 14 volcanoes, and 53% of the population live within 30km of a volcano.

## Climate and Disaster Profile of Vanuatu

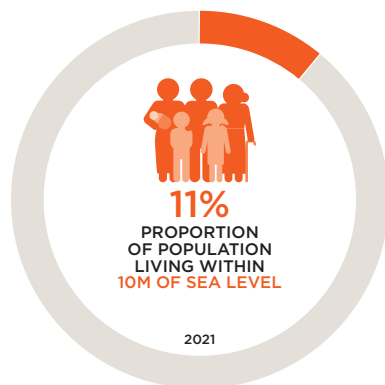


Source: [Pacific Community \(SPC\)](#)

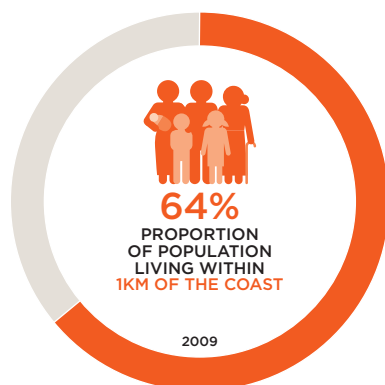
## Main Climate-Related Hazards



Source: [Australian Aid](#)



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



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

A [Rapid Gender Analysis](#) conducted by CARE following Tropical Cyclone Harold in 2020 found that women were likely to be disproportionately affected by TC Harold through its impact on shelter, food security, nutrition, health, and protection. In Vanuatu, women are the primary caregivers for children, the elderly, and persons with disabilities. Additionally, women typically hold the primary responsibility to ensure the household's food security. Women's workload in both areas is likely to increase during disasters. Furthermore, while health services are under pressure during disasters, maternal, sexual, and reproductive health services are often overlooked and deprioritised.

Following the impact of Tropical Cyclone Pam in March 2015, communities that had benefited from CARE's gender-responsive disaster risk reduction programming [reportedly showed improved preparation, response and recovery](#), with men and women working together to coordinate a community-level approach. Other actors, such as the Australian Humanitarian Partnership (AHP) consortium in Vanuatu are supporting local communities, partners, and government authorities to lead localised and community-based actions to increase community resilience, protection, understanding, and preparedness against the direct and indirect impacts of COVID-19 and other disasters.<sup>8</sup>

In addition to high vulnerability to disasters, Vanuatu is vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, most notably to sea-level rise. In 2020, Vanuatu was ranked 31<sup>st</sup>

8 Australian Humanitarian Partnership, 2022. Final Report: AHP COVID-19 Phase 2 End of Program Evaluation. [Unpublished]. The Australian Humanitarian Partnership includes CARE, World Vision, Oxfam, Plan International (implementing through Action Aid), Caritas/ CAN DO (implementing through Vanuatu Christian Council) and Save the Children.

in the [Global Climate Risk Index](#). In addition to sea-level rise, [climate change has significant implications for Vanuatu's natural resources](#). Some examples include: changes to freshwater supplies due to an increase in extreme wet and dry periods; changes to agricultural seasons and produce due to increasing atmospheric temperatures; saltwater intrusion from storm surges and sea-level rise; CO<sub>2</sub> fertilisation effect on plant growth; degradation of natural barriers (such as rainforests) due to sea-level rise and storms; and breached coastal infrastructure.

The [Vanuatu Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction Policy 2016-2030](#) recognises the varying perspectives, needs, and capacities of under-represented groups such as women and persons with disabilities. The Policy advocates for the meaningful involvement of under-represented groups in planning and implementing climate and disaster programmes.

The [Gender and Protection Cluster](#), led by the Department of Women's Affairs, was established in 2014 to contribute to Vanuatu's disaster preparedness and response activities in a gender- and disability-sensitive and socially inclusive manner. It aims to protect the safety and dignity of women, men, girls and boys, persons with disabilities, and other marginalized groups affected by disasters. Through the Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies Sub Cluster, Child Protection in Emergencies Sub Cluster, and Disability Inclusion in Emergencies Sub Cluster, the Department of Women's Affairs and Ministry of Justice and Community Services coordinate with partners on accessibility of humanitarian response, community-based prevention approaches and to ensure continuity of services during natural disasters and pandemics. It also provides necessary materials for humanitarian workers on issues such as preventing sexual exploitation and abuse following disasters and referral pathways for survivors of gender-based violence. For example, in 2018, the Gender and Protection Cluster Deployment Packs for Emergency Responders were developed by the Department of Women's Affairs, Ministry of Justice and Community Services, CARE, Save the Children, and UN Women, including a Code of Conduct for humanitarian workers, referral

cards and IEC materials. A second version was available in 2022. Furthermore, the Gender and Protection Cluster recognises the importance of representation of women in humanitarian action. For example, the [response to Cyclone Donna](#) required that a minimum of two female assessors were part of every assessment team and stated that women's leadership and agency should be made a priority throughout the disaster response efforts.

Community Disaster and Climate Change Committees (CDCCCs), formed by the Vanuatu Meteorology and Geo-Hazards Department and the National Disaster Management Office, are responsible for coordinating local responses to natural hazards and climate change impacts. At least a third of CDCCC leaders [are required to be women](#). While this requirement has yet to be achieved, there is confidence that in years to come, women will increasingly take leadership roles.<sup>9</sup>

In rural areas of Vanuatu, piped water supply services are managed mainly by community-based management systems. As noted in the [Vanuatu National Water Policy](#), greater representation of women in rural water committees and management of water schemes is associated with higher levels of functionality. Under the Water Resources Management Act, water schemes may only be transferred to Rural Water Committees if they have at least 40% female representation. [An analysis of water use committees between 2014 and 2016](#) found that 16% of the members on water committees were women, with 51% of committees reporting that a woman held at least one key post.<sup>10</sup> Women, however, were the Chair of only 7% of these committees. Committees with women in at least one key post met more regularly than committees with men in all the key posts, particularly when the Committee's Chair was a woman. Committees with women in key posts also collected significantly more regular revenue than committees with only men in key posts. The systems were more likely to be in good or fair condition.

A [Rapid Gender Analysis of the impacts of COVID-19 in Vanuatu](#) conducted in April 2020 found that women were predicted to have increased workloads as primary caregivers with high levels of domestic responsibility, which is further compounded by the increased childcare responsibilities associated with school closures. The

9 Australian Humanitarian Partnership, 2022. Final Report: AHP COVID-19 Phase 2 End of Program Evaluation. [Unpublished].

10 Key posts include secretary, treasurer, and chair.

analysis further noted that although good hygiene practices such as hand-washing are repeatedly emphasised in public health messaging regarding COVID-19, access to Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) facilities is significantly lower in rural than in urban areas, and women in Vanuatu have [previously expressed concerns](#) regarding safe access to WASH facilities.

## Appendix 1: Country Background

<b>Capital</b>	Port Vila (Vila)
<b>Population</b>	<a href="#">300,019</a> (2020) [49.5% female, 50.5% male]
<b>GDP per capita (USD)</b>	<a href="#">\$2,870</a> (2020)
<b>Human Development Index</b>	Ranked <a href="#">140th</a> of 189 countries and territories (2020)
<b>Type of Government</b>	Vanuatu is a <a href="#">constitutional democratic republic</a> with three branches of national government: Executive, Legislative, and Judicial. There is also a sub-national government system comprised of six provinces.
<b>Women in Legislature</b>	<a href="#">0 out of 52</a> (0%) of MPs are women as of March 2022.
<b>Legal System</b>	Vanuatu is a constitutional democratic republic mandated by the 1980 Constitution of the Independent Republic of Vanuatu. The <a href="#">legal system</a> is a combination of common law, British and French law, as well as customary law, but, ultimately, the Constitution remains supreme.
<b><a href="#">Ratified Human Rights Conventions</a></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (signed 1990, ratified 1993)</li> <li>• Vanuatu has ratified both of the Optional Protocols to the CRC – on the involvement of children in armed conflict (CRC-OP-AC) and the sale of children, child prostitution, and child pornography (CRC-OP-SC) (signed 2005, ratified 2007)</li> <li>• Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) (accession 1995) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vanuatu accepted the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW-OP) in 2007.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (CED) (signed 2007)</li> <li>• International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (CCPR) (signed 2007, ratified 2008) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vanuatu has not signed the Second Optional Protocol to the CCPR (CCPR-OP2-DP)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) (signed 2008, ratified 2008)</li> <li>• Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT) (accession 2011) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vanuatu has not signed the Optional Protocol of the Convention Against Torture (CAT-OP)</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>Vanuatu has not signed the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD), the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (CMW), or the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR).</p>
<b>Urban vs. Rural Women (%)</b>	In the <a href="#">2020 Census</a> , 22.3% of the female population of Vanuatu lived in urban areas, while 77.7% lived in rural areas. Women comprised 49.7% of the urban population and 49.4% of the rural population.
<b>Female-Headed Households (%)</b>	In the <a href="#">2016 Mini Census</a> , 17.5% of households were headed by women. <sup>11</sup>
<b>Women in the Workforce</b>	The national labour force participation rate was 42.1% for women and 51.5% for men in the <a href="#">2020 Census</a> . The <a href="#">unemployment rate</a> was 9.4% for women and 6.7% for men over the age of 15 in 2019-2020. In 2019, 55.3% of female and 45.3% of male non-agricultural employment was <a href="#">classified as informal</a> .
<b>Women CEOs</b>	Women occupied 15% of Chief Executive Officer roles and 38% of senior management positions including Chief Executive Officer, Chief Financial Officer, and Chief Operating Officer roles in Vanuatu in a <a href="#">2021 analysis</a> of 22 state-owned enterprises, industry associations, and private sector organisations.
<b>Women on Boards</b>	A <a href="#">2021 analysis</a> by the Pacific Private Sector Development Initiative found that 18% of Directors on the boards of organisations in Vanuatu were women in 2021. Female representation was highest on the board of industry associations, at 38%, followed by other private sector organisations, at 14%, and state-owned enterprises, at 9%.

11 The 2020 Census information is not disaggregated by sex for female-headed households.



## Appendix 1: Country Background (continued)

The Republic of Vanuatu is a Melanesian country in the Pacific [consisting of 83 islands](#) with a total land area of approximately 12,199km<sup>2</sup>. Vanuatu is comprised of six provinces: Torba, Sanma, Penama, Malampa, Shefa, and Tafea. The capital Port Vila is located on Efate island in Shefa province. The [Exclusive Economic Zone](#) of Vanuatu is 663,251km<sup>2</sup>. The [climate of Vanuatu](#) varies between tropical and sub-tropical, and many islands are mountainous and volcanic.

According to the [2020 Census](#), Vanuatu's total population is 300,019, of which 49.5% are women. Overall, 22.2% of the population live in the urban areas of Port Vila and Luganville. The country's [official languages](#) are Bislama, English, and French. In the 2020 Census, an estimated 99% of the population were ethnically Ni-Vanuatu, and 99% had Vanuatu citizenship.

## Appendix 2: Country Commitments on Gender

### International Commitments

Gender Commitments	Status	Actions
<a href="#">Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women</a>	Acceded 1995  The most recent reporting cycle took place between 2014 and 2018.	As noted in the concluding observations of the fourth and fifth periodic reporting cycle, progress has been made in the following areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enactment of legislation including the Family Protection Act, Customary Land Management Act, and Amendment to the Municipalities Act.</li> <li>• Improvements to Vanuatu's institutional and policy framework include developing National Gender Equality Policies, the Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health Policy, and the Gender Equity in Education Policy.</li> </ul> <p>Key areas of concern were identified as: participation in political and public life, a lack of constitutional and legislative protections against discrimination, access to justice, stereotypes and harmful practices, and violence against women.</p>
<a href="#">The Beijing Platform for Action</a>	Signed 1995  The <a href="#">+25 national review</a> was published in 2019	Key achievements identified in the most recent Beijing Platform for Action review in 2019 include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advancements in gender policies and mainstreaming gender, including through the introduction of the National Gender Equality Policy and the establishment of the Human Rights Committee;</li> <li>• Legislative reforms, including the Family Protection Act and the Department of Women's Affairs' efforts to increase the participation of women in the legislature through the Municipalities Act and providing support to women to contest provisional elections;</li> <li>• Improved economic empowerment and protections for women through the UN Women Markets for Change Project;</li> <li>• Increased representation of women in humanitarian responses by establishing the Gender and Protection Cluster (including the Gender Based Violence in Emergencies Sub Cluster, Child Protection in Emergencies Sub Cluster and Disability Inclusion in Emergencies Sub Cluster) led by the Department of Women's Affairs and Ministry of Justice and Community Services under the National Disaster Management Office Cluster system.</li> </ul> <p>The 2019 review identified the top five priority areas over the next five years to be: quality education, training and life-long learning for women and girls; eliminating violence against women and girls; political participation and representation; gender-responsive budgeting; and gender-responsive disaster risk prevention, reduction and resilience building.</p>
<a href="#">Pacific Leaders' Gender Equality Declaration</a>	2012  A <a href="#">regional review</a> was published 2016.	In a <a href="#">regional review</a> conducted in 2016, Vanuatu was found to have made progress under the Declaration through several actions undertaken in the previous four years, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The collection of sex-disaggregated data and statistics on gender equality and disabilities included in the census;</li> <li>• More women contesting elections at local and national levels;</li> <li>• Free cervical cancer screening and check-p services.</li> </ul>
<a href="#">The Revised Pacific Platform for Action on the Advancement of Women and Gender Equality</a>	2018	The 2018 revision of the Regional Pacific Platform for Action (RPPA) recognises the progress that Vanuatu has made towards its commitments under the RPPA in three specific areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Efforts to revise customary laws and practices</li> <li>• Introduction of female representation quotas in the Municipalities Act</li> <li>• Support for female market vendors through UN Women's Markets for Change project.</li> </ul>

## Appendix 2: Country Commitments on Gender (continued)

### National Commitments

Gender Commitments	Status	Actions
<a href="#">Family Protection Act</a>	2008	The Family Protection Act criminalises domestic violence and provides mechanisms such as protection orders to protect victims of violence within families. The Act obligates police and law enforcement to formally act on complaints within 48 hours.
<a href="#">Child Protection Policy 2016-2026</a>	Published 2016. Reviewed 2021.	The Child Protection Policy has been developed as part of the Government's commitment to protect children from all forms of abuse, exploitation, neglect, and violence, whilst strengthening Vanuatu's child protection system and ensuring commitments are upheld under the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
<a href="#">National Sustainable Development Plan 2016 to 2030</a>	2016	The National Sustainable Development Plan recognises the need to prevent and eliminate violence and discrimination against women, children, and vulnerable groups in order to achieve an inclusive society that upholds human dignity and supports, protects, and promotes the rights of all people in Vanuatu, including women, youth, the elderly and vulnerable groups.
<a href="#">Reviewed Gender Equity in Education Policy</a>	2018	<p>The Reviewed Gender Equity in Education Policy aims to foster 'a safe, secure, and effective education system where girls and boys, women and men of all ages and abilities live and work together in harmony.</p> <p>The Implementation Strategy of the Policy is constructed around four key areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build a gender, evidence-based understanding of education in Vanuatu;</li> <li>• Ensure that schools and materials promote equitable learning and performance and address issues of security, particularly of girls and women;</li> <li>• Foster girls' and women's participation in higher education, Science Technology Engineering and Maths, Vanuatu Skills Partnership and links to post-education employment;</li> <li>• Ensure the full participation of girls and women across all levels of a balanced and gender-equitable education system in Vanuatu.</li> </ul>
<a href="#">National Disability Inclusive Development Policy 2018-2025</a>	2018	The Vanuatu National Disability Inclusive Development Policy identifies women and girls living with disabilities as one of its strategic priorities and includes programs that address violence against women and girls living with disabilities within its indicators. The policy is led by the Disability Desk, under the Ministry of Justice and Community Services.
<a href="#">National Gender Equality Policy 2020-2030 and Implementation Plan and Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy 2020-2025.</a> <sup>12</sup>	2021	<p>The Policy aims to promote respect and equal rights, opportunities and responsibilities among men and women of all ages and abilities in Vanuatu.</p> <p>The Policy contains five strategic areas:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Eliminating discrimination and violence against women and girls;</li> <li>2. Enhancing women's economic empowerment and skills development;</li> <li>3. Advancing women's leadership and political participation;</li> <li>4. Strengthening the foundation for gender mainstreaming;</li> <li>5. Fostering gender-responsive and community-driven solutions to climate and disaster resilience.</li> </ol> <p>Each strategic area is supported by a theory of action and its own objectives, outcomes – as measured by key indicators – and priority actions.</p>

Gender Commitments	Status	Actions
<b>Vanuatu Reproductive, Maternal, New-born, Child &amp; Adolescent Health Policy, Strategy &amp; Implementation Plan 2021-2025</b> <sup>13</sup>	2021	<p>The Policy aims for all people, especially women, children, young people, and people with disabilities enjoy a high quality of physical, mental, spiritual and social well-being through equitable access to affordable, quality health care and autonomy to make informed decisions about sexual and reproductive health, birth-spacing and health-protecting behaviours.</p> <p>The Policy commits to achieving:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Zero preventable maternal deaths;</li> <li>• Zero unmet need for family planning;</li> <li>• Zero gender-based violence and harmful practices against women and girls.</li> </ul> <p>The Policy has eight key policy areas, progress against which is monitored through key indicators.</p>

<sup>12</sup> Department of Women's Affairs, 2020. National Gender Equality Policy 2020-2030. [Unpublished]

<sup>13</sup> Ministry of Health, 2021. Vanuatu Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health Policy, Strategy & Implementation Plan. [Unpublished]