Women and the World of Work in Afghanistan

GENDERED DISCRIMINATION IN THE LABOUR MARKET IS WORSENING:

In 2023, less women than men were in labour force

Women **5%**

Men **69%**

Source: World Bank Gender Data Portal.

In 2022, more women than men were in **vulnerable employment**

91% Women **79%** Men

Source: World Bank Gender Data Portal.

In 2021, more women than men were in **informal employment**

97% Women **83%** Men

Source: ILOSTAT.

With a **global gender gap index** of **41%** Afghanistan ranked **146th** out of 146 countries.

Source: World Economic Forum, Global Gender Gap Index 2023 edition.

Women are banned or restricted from working in: **public sectors, NGOs, INGOs, UN entities, media, beauty parlors, secondary and higher education.**

GDP loss due to restricting women at work:

Bans on women's employment and education led to a **GDP contraction** of approximately **2.5%** ($500 million).

Source: UNICEF, 2022.

Now, even though **GDP has experienced mild growth**, it has only recovered about **10%** of the past economic losses.

Source: World Bank. Afghanistan Overview.

If these restrictions persist, **Afghanistan's economy is projected to shrink by $9.6 billion** by 2066.

Source: UNESCO, 2024.

TO SUPPORT WOMEN TO THRIVE AND SAFEGUARD THEIR ECONOMIC RIGHTS, GENDER-TRANSFORMATIVE ACTIONS NEED TO ADDRESS:

Women's decision-making power

In 2024, women had **0%** **seats** in national or local governance bodies.

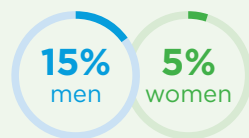Source: UN Women. Afghanistan Gender Index. Forthcoming.

Ownership of productive resources

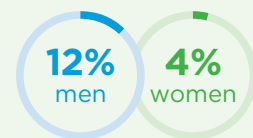**0%** Women **5%** Men

owned a **debit card** in 2021

Source: World Bank Gender Data Portal.

15% men **5%** women owned an **account** at a financial institution or with a mobile money service provider in 2021

Source: World Bank Gender Data Portal.

12% men **4%** women made or received a **digital payment** in 2021

Source: World Bank Gender Data Portal.

Since August 2021, **women and girl's fundamental rights and freedoms have been systematically curtailed** by policies and practices that set back their economic and social development, and disempower them in all spheres of decision-making.

Gender-blind systems

Women, Business and the Law Index scores, in 2023

Category	Afghanistan
Assets	40
Entrepreneurship	75
Mobility	25
Pay	0
Workplace	50

Afghanistan ■ South Asia ■
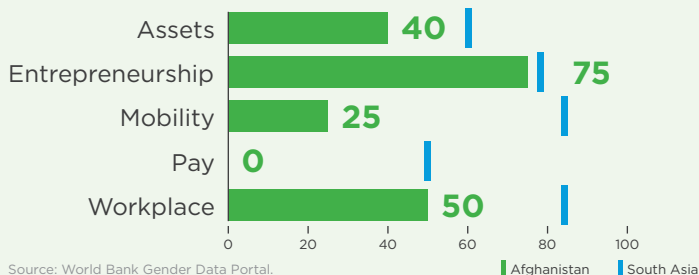
Source: World Bank Gender Data Portal.

As of 2023, **NO** law prohibited **discrimination in access to credit** based on gender

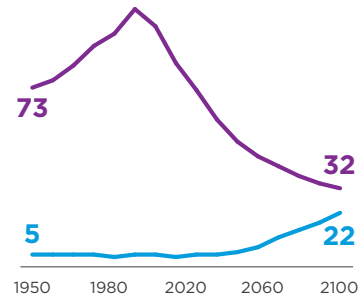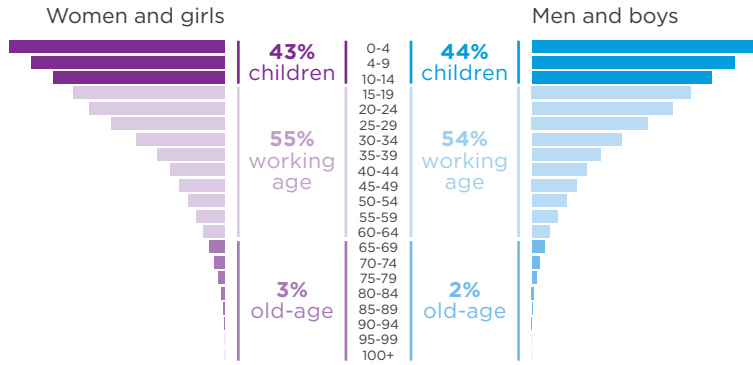Source: World Bank Gender Data Portal.

As of 2023, **NO** law prohibited **discrimination in employment** based on gender

Source: World Bank Gender Data Portal.

GENDER ACTION LAB

WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT FACTSHEET

Australian Aid

UN WOMEN

Transforming Care Systems in Afghanistan

POPULATION STRUCTURE SHAPES THE DEMAND FOR CARE SERVICES

Women and girls

- 43% children
- 55% working age
- 3% old-age

Men and boys

- 44% children
- 54% working age
- 2% old-age

Age groups: 0-4, 4-9, 10-14, 15-19, 20-24, 25-29, 30-34, 35-39, 40-44, 45-49, 50-54, 55-59, 60-64, 65-69, 70-74, 75-79, 80-84, 85-89, 90-94, 95-99, 100+

Source: UN DESA, Population Division, World Population Prospects 2024.

Chart values: Child dependency ratio 73 → 32; Old-age dependency ratio 5 → 22 (years 1950, 1980, 2020, 2060, 2100)

- Child dependency ratio
- Old-age dependency ratio

Source: UN DESA, Population Division, World Population Prospects 2024.

Demographic shifts present challenges and opportunities. While rising demands for unpaid care may hinder women's economic empowerment, they create potential for job creation.
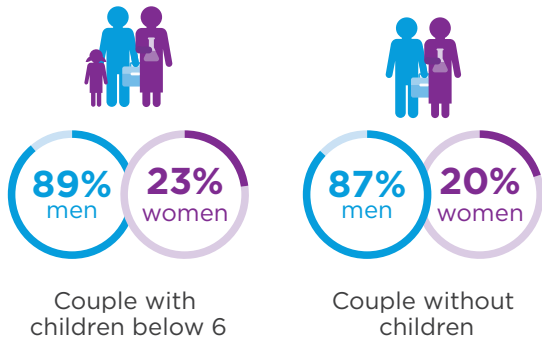

TO UNLEASH THE POWER OF GENDER-RESPONSIVE ECONOMIES, INVESTMENTS NEED TO:

Tackle inequality of opportunities in the labour market

In 2021, prime-age (25-54 years) employment-to-population ratio was

Couple with children below 6
- 89% men
- 23% women

Couple without children
- 87% men
- 20% women

Source: UN DESA Gender Data Hub.

27% Women / **23%** Men worked **part-time** in 2021

Source: UN DESA Gender Data Hub.

65% Women / **20%** Men aged 15 to 24 were **not in education, employment or training** in 2021

Source: SDG Global Database.

Expand care services and create decent care jobs

- 5% men / 4% women — workers were in **care employment** in 2021

Source: Authors' elaboration based on ILOSTAT data.

- 35% men / 49% women — care workers were in **informal employment** in 2021

Source: ILOSTAT.

CARE-ENABLING AND GENDER-EQUALIZING ACTIONS NEED TO ADDRESS:

Discriminatory social norms

In 2023, among women aged 20-24 years

29% were married or in a union **before age 18**

10% **before age 15**

Source: SDG Global Database.

Disproportionate unpaid care gaps

In 2023, among children aged 5-17 years

- 16% boys / 11% girls — were engaged in economic activities
- 20% boys / 19% girls — were engaged in economic activites and household chores

Source: SDG Global Database.

Gender-blind systems

Women, Business and the Law Index scores, in 2023

	Afghanistan	South Asia
Marriage	20	
Parenthood	20	
Pension	25	

(Scale: 0, 20, 40, 60, 80, 100)
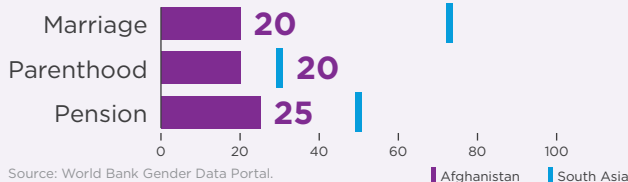
Source: World Bank Gender Data Portal.

In 2023, workers were entitled to

90 days of **maternity** leave

14 days of **paternity** leave

Source: World Bank Gender Data Portal.

As of 2023, there were **NO periods of absence due to childcare** accounted for in pension benefits

Source: World Bank Gender Data Portal.