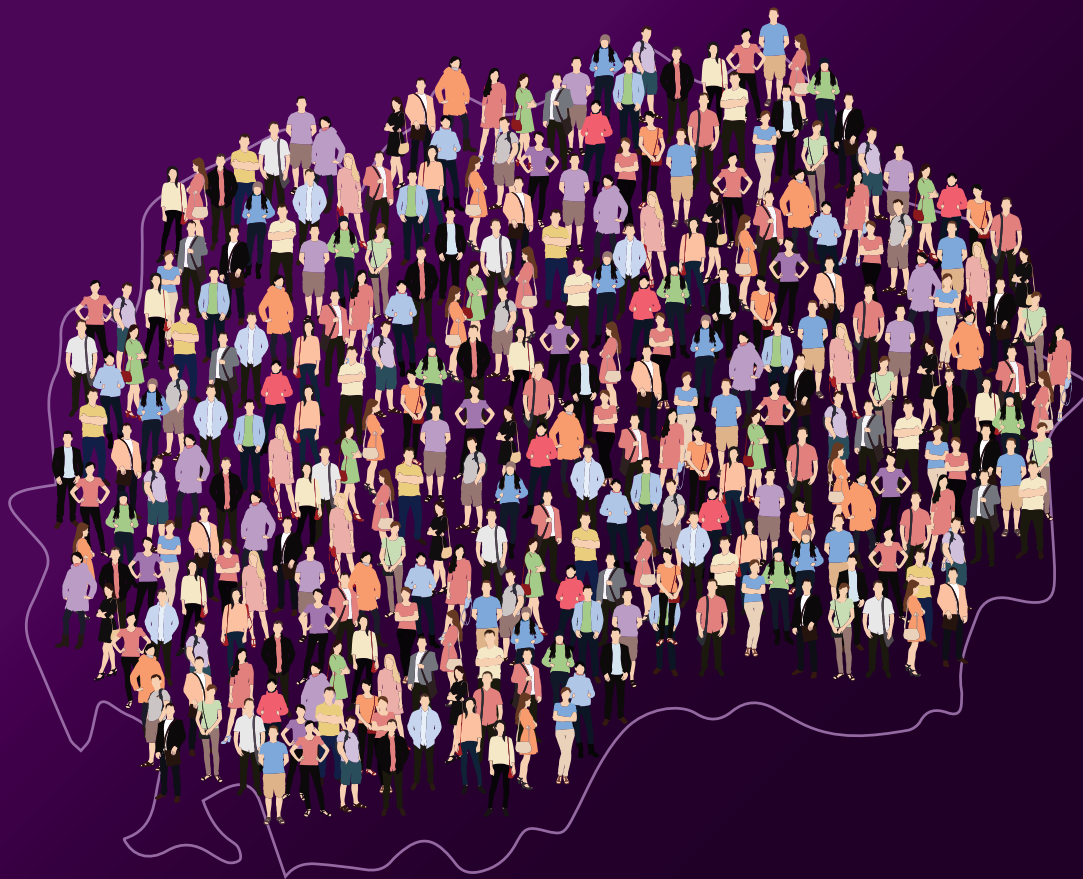
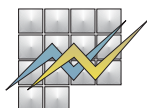


WOMEN AND MEN

IN NORTH MACEDONIA



A statistical portrait of
trends in gender equality



Republic of North Macedonia
State Statistical Office



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A C K N O W L E D G E M E N T S

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ABBREVIATIONS

BPfA	Beijing Platform for Action
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CSO(s)	Civil Society Organization(s)
CSW(s)	Centre(s) for Social Work
DHS	Demographic and Health Survey
DV	Domestic Violence
EIGE	European Institute for Gender Equality
ESS	European Statistical System
EU	European Union
GE	Gender Equality
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GRB	Gender Responsive Budgeting
IAB	Institute for Employment Research
IAEG-SDGs	Inter-Agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators
ILO	International Labour Organization
IPA	Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance
Istanbul Convention	Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence
IUD	Intrauterine device
LFS	Labour Force Survey
MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey
MLSP	Ministry of Labour and Social Policy
NAP	National Action Plan
NEET	Not in Education, Employment or Training
NSSD	National Strategy for Sustainable Development 2009-2030
PSD	Partnership for Sustainable Development (2016-2020)
SDCF	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
SDG(s)	Sustainable Development Goal(s)
SSO	State Statistical Office
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
VNR	Voluntary National Review
WHO	World Health Organization

1. INTRODUCTION

Gender statistics are not simply data disaggregated by sex. They are a type of statistic that reflect differences and inequalities in the situation of women and men, or girls and boys, in all areas of life.¹ The Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA), adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995, recognizes that in many areas, the absence of sex-disaggregated statistical data obscures the nature and extent of gender inequalities. Therefore, the BPfA includes a specific commitment for national, regional, and international statistical services, and relevant governmental agencies, to ensure that statistics related to individuals are collected, analysed, and presented by sex and age and that they reflect problems, issues and questions related to women and men.²

The UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women has repeatedly described the essential role of gender statistics to illuminate hidden barriers and forms of discrimination, in such areas as gender-based violence, women's contributions to unpaid domestic and care work, the gendered impacts of climate change and the gender-specific consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic on women and men, for instance.³ Furthermore, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women recommends that disaggregation by sex is only a starting point, gender statistics should ideally also be disaggregated by age, disability, ethnicity, and geographical location (urban/rural), among other characteristics.

Gender statistics are, likewise, an essential tool for gender mainstreaming at the national level because they highlight critical gaps so that gender-responsive strategies, policies and programmes can be developed that will improve the lives of women and men, girls and boys. Gender statistics are the basis for gender analysis and research as they provide the quantitative evidence that is needed to assess gender gaps, “to understand the interlinkages between cultural, social, and economic factors that are at the basis of gender inequality and their dynamic over time and to evaluate the implications of unequal access of women and men to social and economic opportunities”.⁴

Gender statistics serve informational and awareness-raising purposes. By disseminating gender statistics, national statistical offices inform the public and the media about key issues, gaps, and areas for improvement related to gender equality. They encourage public debate and promote change in society. The analysis and dissemination of gender statistics to a large audience is crucial for identifying gender stereotypes about the roles of women and men and their contributions to society. Data provides evidence of how gender stereotypes can hold back women or men, and this is the first step in promoting gender balance in the distribution of roles within the family, at the workplace, and in decision-making.

¹ United Nations (2006) *The World's Women 2005: Progress in Statistics*, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Statistics Division, New York. Available at: https://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/products/indwm/ww2005_pub/English/WW2005_text_complete_BW.pdf

² Beijing Platform for Action (1995), Article 206.

³ <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/recommendations/recomm.htm>

⁴ United Nations (2016) *Integrating a Gender Perspective into Statistics*, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Statistics Division, New York. Available at: <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic-social/Standards-and-Methods/files/Handbooks/gender/Integrating-a-Gender-Perspective-into-Statistics-E.pdf>

1.1 GENDER STATISTICS IN SUPPORT OF THE 2030 AGENDA AND THE EU ACCESSION PROCESS

North Macedonia is fully committed to the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the European Union (EU) integration process. The country has set up a framework of sustainable development policies through measures, activities and guidelines defined in the National Strategy for Sustainable Development 2009-2030 (NSSD).⁵ The aim of the Strategy is to provide an effective framework through practical guidelines for the public and private sectors on how to plan and implement sustainable development and how to encourage the growth of domestic and foreign investment. After the adoption of the NSSD for 2009-2030, the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia established the National Council for Sustainable Development and the Technical Working Group of the Council for Sustainable Development.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were set up by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in the Post-2015 Development Agenda as the future global development framework to succeed the Millennium Development Goals. Goal 5 of the SDGs is “Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls” and refers specifically to achieving gender equality by introducing measures to achieve 9 specific goals to advance the position of women in the world.

The United Nations in North Macedonia assisted the country with the acceleration of activities towards reaching the SDGs defined in the 2030 Agenda through the identification of strategic priorities within its key document, the 2016-2020 Partnership for Sustainable Development (PSD).⁶ In 2018, the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia reaffirmed its commitment to implement the Agenda 2030 by identifying five prioritized SDGs (1, 4, 8, 13 and 16), based on the priorities defined in the Government Programme for 2017-2020. A Rapid Integrated Assessment⁷ conducted in 2020 concluded that 83% of the national strategic development planning is aligned with the SDGs. In 2020, the country submitted its Voluntary National Review (VNR).⁸ In 2020, the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework for 2021–2025 (SDCF)⁹ was adopted. SDCF succeeds the 2016-2020 PSD and is aligned with the country’s national development priorities, its international human rights and gender equality commitments and the Agenda 2030.

⁵ MPPE, Government of the Republic of Macedonia (2010) National Strategy for Sustainable Development 2009-2030. Available at: <https://vlada.mk/sites/default/files/dokumenti/strategii/MZHSP/nacionalna-strategija-za-odrzliv-razvoj-vo-rsm.pdf>

⁶ United Nations Country Team (2016) Partnership for Sustainable Development, UN Strategy 2016-2020. Available at: https://unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/operact/Technical_Cooperation/Delivering_as_One/UNDAF_country_files/UNDAF_files_2015-2020/Macedonia-UNDAF-2016-2020.pdf

⁷ UNDP (2020) North Macedonia Rapid Integrated Assessment. Available at: https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/1578Rapid_Integrated_Assesment_North_Macedonia.pdf

⁸ UN North Macedonia (2020) USDG Voluntary National Review. Available at: https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/26388VNR_2020_Macedonia_Report.pdf

⁹ United Nations (2021) Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework 2021–2025. Available at: https://northmacedonia.un.org/sites/default/files/2020-11/UN-SDCF-MK_english_signed.pdf

Monitoring is an essential component in accomplishing the 2030 Agenda's vision, both globally and in the EU, by assessing national progress made towards the SDG targets. The global indicator framework for SDGs, developed by the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators (IAEG-SDGs), includes 231 unique indicators.¹⁰ SDG indicators should be disaggregated by sex, as well as other characteristics, such as income, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability and geographic location.¹¹ SDG 5 specifically addresses gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, but gender considerations are considered a priority area, and they cut across much of the 2030 Agenda. Thus, at the national level, gender statistics are crucial to monitoring progress towards SDG targets and for achieving the goals themselves.

The EU recognizes equality between women and men as a fundamental right and a common European value. The EU official policy approach to gender equality requires gender mainstreaming, that is, the integration of a gender perspective into the preparation, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies, regulatory measures, and spending programmes, with a view to promoting equality between women and men and combating discrimination.¹² Gender-disaggregated statistics and gender indicators are an integral part of gender mainstreaming throughout the entire policy cycle. The EU Member States and European Free Trade Association countries regularly collect sex-disaggregated data and compile statistics for national and EU purposes.

The EU accession process rests on three pillars - democracy and institutions, rule of law, including fundamental rights and fight against corruption, and economic development and competitiveness. The EU *acquis*¹³ is the body of common rights and obligations that are binding on all EU members, while applicant countries are required to accept the *acquis* before they can join the EU. The EU requires that Member States produce good quality statistics in line with the principles of the European Statistics Code of Practice and based on professional independence, impartiality, reliability, transparency, and confidentiality.

Therefore, the Republic of North Macedonia, as a candidate country to the EU, is expected to improve the quality and availability of gender statistical data and enhance their use in the development and coordination of public policies in the pre-accession/accession period. The European Commission's 2021 Country Progress Report¹⁴ acknowledges that “[p]roper gathering and analysis of gender statistics requires the enhancement of the capacity of relevant institutions and improved coordination.”

¹⁰ United Nations Statistics Division, Global indicator framework for the Sustainable Development Goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Available at: https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/Global%20Indicator%20Framework%20after%202022%20refinement_Eng.pdf

¹¹ UN General Assembly (2014), Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 29 January 2014. Available at: <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N13/455/11/PDF/N1345511.pdf?OpenElement>

¹² European Institute for Gender Equality, What is Gender mainstreaming | EIGE. Available at: <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/what-is-gender-mainstreaming>

¹³ EUR-Lex. Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=LEGISSUM:acquis>

¹⁴ European Commission (2021) North Macedonia 2021 Report. Available at: https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/north-macedonia-report-2021_en

1.2 GENDER STATISTICS IN NORTH MACEDONIA

The State Statistical Office of the Republic of North Macedonia (SSO) is an independent institution within the state administration. The SSO is the coordinator of the country's statistical system. Moreover, it is the governmental institution responsible for international cooperation in the field of statistics, for defining statistical methodologies and standards, and for ensuring the protection of data collected from individuals and from legal entities. The main purpose of the SSO is the collection, processing, and dissemination of statistical data on demographic, social, and economic phenomena in the Macedonian society.

The SSO coordinates the production of gender statistics in accordance with the Law on State Statistics,¹⁵ the Law on Equal Opportunities of Women and Men,¹⁶ the Law on the Prevention and Protection from Violence against Women and Domestic Violence,¹⁷ and other relevant laws. The SSO's responsibility for the production of gender statistics is also regulated by international commitments undertaken by North Macedonia by ratifying the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), signing the UN Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA), and ratifying the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention), for example.

Although the Law on State Statistics makes no explicit mention of gender, the Law on Equal Opportunities (Art. 18) obliges all institutions, which by law are responsible for collecting, recording, and processing statistical data, to produce sex-disaggregated data and to submit the data to the SSO. The Law also prescribes a fine of 400-600 Euro in Denar countervalue for the entities mentioned in Art.18 that do not collect, record, and process sex-disaggregated statistical data and who do not submit it to the SSO (Art. 42).

The National Strategy on Gender Equality 2022-2027¹⁸ identifies the SSO as the main national institutional authority when it comes to gender statistics. Specific goal 1.3 of the Strategy prescribes "Establishment of effective system for monitoring of the situation with gender equality, in accordance with relevant international standards and recommendations" with the expected result 1.3.1 "Regular collection and updating of gender segregated data at all levels and by all relevant stakeholders".

According to the Law on the Prevention and Protection from Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, the SSO is responsible for conducting a national survey on gender-based violence and domestic violence. The aim of the survey is to provide comprehensive information on the prevalence of specific forms of gender-based violence and domestic violence by sex, gender, age, ethnicity, disability, geographic location of the victim and perpetrator, and other information relevant to monitoring the situation of violence against women.

¹⁵ Law on State Statistics (Official Gazette of RM no. 54/1997, 21/2007, 51/2011, 104/2013, 42/2014, 192/2015, 27/16, 83/18, 220/18, 31/20). Available at <https://www.stat.gov.mk/ZakonZaStatistika.aspx>

¹⁶ Law on Equal Opportunities of Women and Men (Official Gazette of RM no. 6/12). Available at: <http://www.mtsp.gov.mk/WBStorage/Files/ZEM%205%2009%202011%20L.pdf>

¹⁷ Law on prevention and protection from violence against women and domestic violence (Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia no. 24/2021). Available at: <https://www.mtsp.gov.mk/content/pdf/2021/1a28a922f364401e94935d4d694b9d75.pdf>

¹⁸ Strategy on Gender Equality 2022-2027. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3zuYhtd>

On the whole, the SSO has demonstrated advancement in producing and disseminating sex-disaggregated data, supporting the monitoring and reporting on the country's progress towards international and national commitments, such as the Agenda 2030 and the SDGs, and the EU *acquis* requirements. The Strategic Plan of the State Statistical Office for the period 2022-2024¹⁹ represents a framework in which SSO determines its basic priorities, goals and development programs aimed at integration into the European Statistical System (ESS), strengthening the institutional environment and statistical infrastructure, developing strategic partnerships and quality management.

Accurate and disaggregated data are essential for planning and monitoring the national progress towards the SDGs. The State Statistical Office (SSO) made efforts to produce and integrate a set of indicators that provide statistical support for monitoring the degree of implementation of the concept of sustainable development and in 2019 published *The Sustainable Development Goals*.²⁰

The signature publication of the SSO in the field of gender statistics is *Women and Men in North Macedonia*. The SSO prepared the first edition in 2000 and published the most recent version in 2021, with a total of 12 editions over the years. Although *Women and Men in North Macedonia* is not produced annually, the SSO includes data for several years in each compilation, and since the early 2000s has also regularly uploaded data for some indicators to the SSO database of gender statistics (MAKStat).²¹ Thus, almost twenty years' worth of data are available for review and analysis. It should be noted that while each of the *Women and Men in the Republic of Macedonia/North Macedonia* publications includes a core set of gender indicators, some indicators have been included in specific years but subsequently discontinued (one example of this concerns statistical data about election results).

The SSO also regularly conducts population-based surveys on a variety of themes. The data resulting from many of these surveys are disaggregated by sex, if not entirely at least for several key indicators. The survey data is available in separate publications, but it is not consistently replicated in the *Women and Men in North Macedonia* publication. Thus, the body of gender statistics produced by the SSO can be found in several publications, as well as through the online database, but the data are not consolidated.

¹⁹ Strategic Plan of the State Statistical Office 2022-2024.

Available at: https://www.stat.gov.mk/pdf/StrateskiPlan/StrategiskiPlan_2022-2024_mk.pdf

²⁰ State Statistical Office (2019) Sustainable Development Goals. Available at: https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/1576Publication_State_Statistical_Office_SDG_indicators.pdf

²¹ http://makstat.stat.gov.mk/PXWeb/pxweb/mk/MakStat/MakStat__PoloviStat/125_PoloviStatistiki_mk.px/?rxid=46eeof64-2992-4b45-a2d9-cb4e5f7ec5ef

1.3 MILESTONES IN GENDER EQUALITY LEGISLATION AND POLICY IN NORTH MACEDONIA

North Macedonia has made significant efforts to develop a policy framework for non-discrimination and the promotion of gender equality. The Constitution of the Republic of North Macedonia guarantees equal rights and freedoms, regardless of sex, race, skin colour, national or social origins, political or religious beliefs, of the citizens and of their material and societal position (Art. 9). As an accession country to the EU, North Macedonia has committed to accomplishing *de jure* and *de facto* gender equality and ensuring full development and advancement of women's rights.

In 1997, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MLSP) became the first governmental body to take responsibility for gender equality with the establishment of the Unit for the Promotion of Gender Equality. Subsequently, in 2007, the Department for Equal Opportunities was established within the MLSP. The Department for Equal Opportunities is responsible for the advancement of the status of women and men in all areas of social life, providing internal sectoral and cross-sectoral cooperation, among other tasks. The first Strategy on Gender Equality was adopted for the period 2013-2020. Between 1999 and 2020, the country adopted three National Action Plans on GE. The NAP is the instrument for the implementation of the goals defined in the Strategy. The first Strategy 2013-2020 lacked a clear strategic focus, goals, and indicators, as well as a framework for monitoring and evaluation. The new GE Strategy 2022-2027 was adopted in 2022, with three main principles - gender mainstreaming, gender responsive budgeting, and intersectionality. The new Strategy has clearly set general and specific goals, expected results, as well as indicators for monitoring.

Gender equality issues are regulated with the Law on Equal Opportunities of Women and Men, adopted in 2006 and amended in 2012. The Law includes, inter alia, special measures (Art. 7), to overcome the impacts of pre-existing systemic discrimination and structural gender inequality. To this end, the Law obliges public institutions to take specific measures (Art. 8) which, in practice, means giving priority to persons belonging to the less represented sex, until equal representation is reached in all state bodies and at all levels of legislative, executive and judiciary power, including in local government, as well as in all the other public institutions and services (Art. 7, p. 3). A new Law on Gender Equality is currently being prepared, which is expected to make significant changes to the responsibilities of national and local level institutions in the advancement of gender equality.

Women's participation in politics in North Macedonia has increased as a result of the continuous improvement of election regulations and the continuous efforts of women politicians and women activists. The Women Parliamentarians' Club was established within the Parliament in 2003. In 2006, the Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men was established in the Assembly, with the main purpose of initiating and discussing laws and amendments related to gender equality and integrating gender concepts into other legislation. The gender quota was introduced in 2001, requiring that 30% of candidates on electoral lists at the national and local level would be the under-represented sex. Amendments in 2006 stipulated that every third person on candidate lists must be of the under-represented sex, which significantly improved the participation of women in the Parliament of Republic of North Macedonia. In 2015, the Election Code was amended, and the gender quota was raised to 40%. However, access to decision-

making structures for some groups of women, such as Roma women, rural women, and women with disabilities, is still a concern.²²

In 2020, a new Law on Prevention and Protection against Discrimination²³ was adopted, adding gender identity and sexual orientation as grounds for discrimination and introducing the concept of intersectional discrimination into national legislation. All entities that are obliged to collect, record and process data, are required to present this data according to the discriminatory grounds, with the aim of promoting and advancing equality and preventing discrimination. The discriminatory grounds include, among others, race, nationality, ethnic origin, sex, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, belonging to a marginalized group, etc.

Eliminating violence against women and domestic violence is critical for achieving gender equality. North Macedonia signed the Istanbul Convention in 2011 and ratified it in 2017. The Istanbul Convention entered into force in July 2018 and is one of the country's most important international commitments in the area of prevention and protection from violence against women and domestic violence. National Action Plan for the implementation of the Istanbul Convention 2018 – 2023 was prepared by MLSP, while in 2021, a new Law on Prevention and Protection from Violence against Women and Domestic Violence²⁴ was adopted, aligned with the requirements of the Istanbul Convention.

The following list summarizes the key milestones in the gender equality legislation and policy in North Macedonia:

1991	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acceded to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and signed the Optional Protocol which entered into force in 2003
1995	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Signed the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing
1997	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adopted Decision on establishing a Unit for the Promotion of Gender Equality within the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy
1999	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adopted first National Action Plan for Gender Equality
2001	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gender quota is introduced, requiring that 30% of candidates on electoral lists at the national and local level are from the under-represented sex
2003	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Women Parliamentarians' Club established - an informal and cross-party group of Women Parliamentarians from the Parliament of the Republic of North Macedonia

²² Sixth periodic report on implementation of the Convention on Elimination of All Forms Of Discrimination Against Women, CEDAW Committee 2018.

Available at: http://mtsp.gov.mk/content/word/dokumenti/dokumenti%202017/CEDAW_2017en.doc

²³ Law on Prevention and Protection against Discrimination (Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia no. 258/2020). Available at: <https://bit.ly/3vBZUUW>

²⁴ Law on Prevention and Protection from Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia no. 24/2021). Available at: <https://www.mtsp.gov.mk/content/pdf/2021/1a28a922f364401e94935d4d694b9d75.pdf>

2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adopted Labour Code, with provisions for protection against discrimination and equal opportunities for women and men
2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adopted Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men The Commission for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men established within the Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia The gender quota for elections is expanded to require that every third person on candidate lists must be from the under-represented sex
2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Unit for Promotion of Gender Equality within the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (1997) is reorganised as Department for Equal Opportunities, increasing its status and giving it overall responsibility for the advancement of the status of women and men in all areas of social life Appointed Coordinators for Equal Opportunities of Women and Men in all institutions at central and local level Adopted second National Action Plan for Gender Equality for 2007-2012
2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adopted Law on Prevention and Protection against Discrimination Adopted Strategy for Safe Motherhood for 2010-2015, with NAP for its implementation
2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adopted Strategy for Sexual and Reproductive Health for 2011-2020, with NAP for its implementation
2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adopted Strategy on Gender Responsive Budgeting (2012-2017) Adopted the first NAP for the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (2013-2015) Law on Minimum Wage introduced for the first time in North Macedonia – it does not explicitly address women but covers low-paid jobs in which women predominate
2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adopted first Strategy on Gender Equality for 2013-2020 Adopted Law on Termination of Pregnancy (Law on Abortion) – restricting women’s access to abortion
2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adopted Law on Prevention of and Protection from Domestic Violence The concept of gender responsive budgeting (GRB) introduced and applied for the first time in state institutions and local self-government units
2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Election Code amended to increase the gender quota from 30% to 40% of the under-represented sex for candidates on electoral lists Amended the Labour Code – requiring equal pay for women and men and equal treatment in relation to employment, working hours, working conditions, occupational social security schemes and absence from work

2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Adopted Law on Ratification of the Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention) (signed in 2011 and entered into force in 2018) ▪ Amended Law on Minimum Wage - by equalizing the minimum wage with the national average for workers in the textile, leather, and apparel industries, where a majority of employees are women
2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Adopted third National Action Plan for Gender Equality for 2018-2020 ▪ Adopted NAP 2018-2023 for the implementation of the Istanbul Convention - covering harmonization of national legislation with the provisions of the Convention, as well as fulfilment of obligations on the prevention of GBV, ensuring effective protection of victims, and prosecution and punishment of perpetrators ▪ Amended Methodology for strategic planning and preparation of the Annual Work Program of the Government - changes contributed to establishment of mechanism for inclusion of gender perspective in the strategic plans and annual programs and monitoring of their implementation ▪ Adopted Strategy for the Development of Women's Entrepreneurship 2019-2023 – aimed at developing an entrepreneurial eco-system for the continuous advancement of women's entrepreneurship, through inclusion of all relevant stakeholders, increasing the number of women-owned start-ups, increasing the number of employees in companies established by women, and increasing the number of women employed in enterprises ▪ Adopted amendments to the Law on Textbooks for Primary and Secondary Education – aimed at limiting discriminatory and stereotypical content of textbooks and ensuring their quality ▪ Adopted amendments to the Law on Primary Education - introduced an anti-discrimination clause
2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Adopted new Law on Termination of Pregnancy (Law on Abortion) - abolishing provisions on the mandatory period for counselling and other administrative barriers to exercising the right to abortion ▪ Adopted new Law on Social Protection – reform of the entire social protection system for a more effective fulfilment of the needs of the citizens, with women and girls from vulnerable categories occupying a particularly important place
2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Adopted Law on Prevention and Protection against Discrimination – recognising gender identity and sexual orientation as grounds for discrimination and introducing the concept of intersectional discrimination ▪ Adopted second National Action Plan for the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2020 – 2025)
2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Adopted Law on the Prevention and Protection from Violence against Women and Domestic Violence – aligned with the requirements of the Istanbul Convention
2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Adopted new Strategy on Gender Equality 2022-2027 – including clearly stated general and specific goals, expected results, and indicators for monitoring and evaluation

1.4 PURPOSE OF THE ANALYSIS

The main purpose of this analysis is to provide an overview of the situation concerning gender equality in North Macedonia and to identify any clear trends or changes regarding the status of women. The primary source for the analysis is the *Women and Men in North Macedonia* publication, and this analysis reviews data that has been produced over the last decades covering a variety of topics. In a few cases, other sources were consulted when data contained in *Women and Men in North Macedonia* publication was insufficient in order to provide a more comprehensive overview of the situation in the country. These sources are noted in the text.

It is not possible to provide causal explanations for changes relevant to the improvements in gender equality, or in some cases a worsening of the situation, because change depends on many factors. Nevertheless, the authors attempt to relate trends to the impacts of implementing various measures and policies for the advancement of gender equality, wherever possible. To effectively assess the specific consequences of gender-focused and gender-neutral policies, a more thorough analysis is needed with a wider pool of indicators than those encompassed here. The lack of data for a number of indicators complicates the process of more deeply analysing the situation of gender equality in the country.

Note that, as described above, data for a consistent set of indicators has not been published continuously in *Women and Men in North Macedonia*, and for this reason the analysis in this publication does not cover a consistent time span. The indicators, and dates, that are included here are those that are representative of the main trends related to gender equality and women's status over time.

NOTE

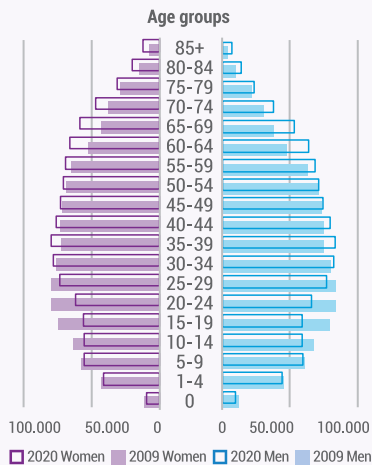
The graphs throughout the analysis are created with data from the “Women and Men in the Republic of Macedonia/ North Macedonia” statistical publication and MAKStat database. Where additional sources have been used, the source is indicated below the graph.



2. OVERVIEW OF TRENDS IN GENDER EQUALITY

2.1 POPULATION AND FAMILIES

Figure 1.
Population by five-year age groups



Sex ratio for 2020

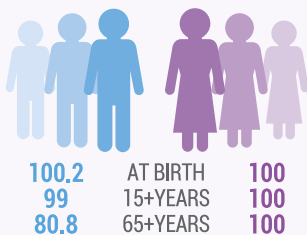
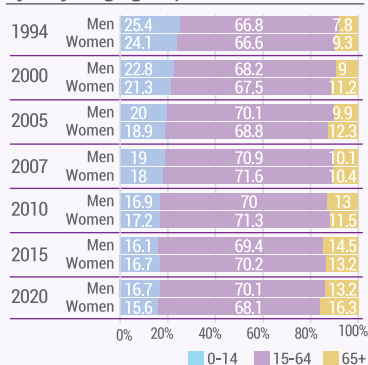


Figure 2.
Share of the population
by major age groups



AN AGING POPULATION

The population of North Macedonia is gender-balanced on the whole. More boys are born each year than girls, but women live longer than men on average. This means that when looking at the population as whole, there are more boys and men among the younger age groups, but more women as the population gets older. By the time that people reach the age of 85, women outnumber men by almost two to one.

There have been a number of changes over time that explain why the population of North Macedonia has been getting older. Life expectancies have increased on average, and women are having fewer children. The proportions of both elderly and working age (aged 15 to 64) people in the population have increased, but strong labour migration trends have also reduced the proportion of working age youth, as discussed below.

FEWER CHILDREN AND OLDER MOTHERS

Women are deciding to have children later in life, and this has led to a decline in the total number of births and an overall reduction in the fertility rate in the country since the 1990s. The total fertility rate is a measure of the number of live births a woman would have if she were subject to the current age-specific fertility rates throughout her reproductive years (15-49 years). Whereas a woman had an average of 2.1 children in 1994, the rate declined to 1.6 children by 2000 and further to 1.3 children per woman by 2020. The decrease observed between 2019 and 2020, the lowest fertility rate since the country's independence, could be interpreted as a first sign of the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on North Macedonia's population. To compare, the fertility rate in the EU in 2020 is 1.5 births per woman.

In North Macedonia, the fertility rate differs also depending on a woman's location (the fertility rate is 1.9 in urban areas, but 2.0 in rural areas) and ethnicity. Roma women's fertility rate is considerably higher than the national average, estimated at 2.9 children.²⁵

²⁵ MICS 2018-2019.

The declining fertility rate may be the result of several factors, or a combination of the same. The delay in having children is related to lifestyle changes, such as women’s greater participation in the labour market and becoming more career oriented. Intense rural to urban migration, as well as migration abroad, in the 1990s and 2000s could also have contributed to a decrease in the fertility rate. While the population of North Macedonia was estimated at 2,073,702 in 2016, the 2021 census indicated a total population of 1,836,713, approximately a 10% decrease.²⁶ With this change of the population numbers, the age-sex structure of the population has also changed, which may have indirectly affected the fertility rate. North Macedonia is also following a trend seen throughout Europe in recent decades, in which women are generally having fewer children.

The average first-time mother in North Macedonia is just over 27.5 years, having become around one year older in the last decade. This is younger than the average for women in the EU (29.5 years when their first child is born).²⁷ The average mothers’ age in North Macedonia when all births are considered is almost 29 years old. Roma women have children at younger ages, around five years younger than the average per country.

The greatest declines in the birth rate have been among married women in the 20-24 age group (a decrease of 45% in the number of births from 2010 to 2020), followed by women aged 25-29 (a 28% decline). This trend suggests that married women are delaying having children, perhaps because they are focusing on building careers or, alternatively, because workplace conditions are incompatible with starting a family.

The patterns are quite similar for unmarried women, with one specific and emerging trend. Although they still account for a small number of the total births, single women aged 40-44 are increasingly having children compared to two decades ago (the number of live births for this age group increased by 85% for unmarried women and by 43% for married women). One explanation is that at this age, women are more likely to be economically independent and probably feel prepared to raise a child on their own. To compare, in 2018, the greatest proportion of employed women (42.3%) were in the 35-44 age group.

Fertility rate

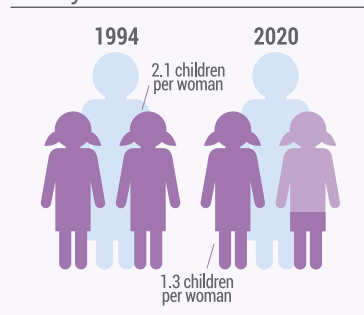


Figure 3. Change in the fertility rate

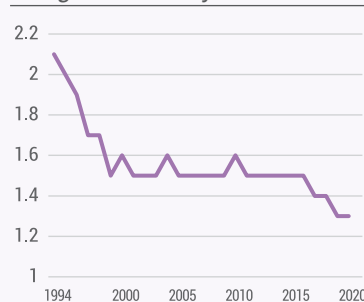
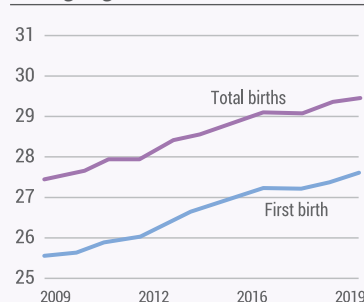


Figure 4. Average age of mother at birth



²⁶ State Statistical Office (2022) North Macedonia in figures 2022, p.9. Available at: https://www.stat.gov.mk/PrikaziPublikacija_1_en.aspx?rbr=854

²⁷ Ibid.

SDG indicator 3.7.2
 Adolescent birth rate
 (aged 10–14 years;
 aged 15–19 years) per 1,000
 women in that age group




Figure 5.
 Share of live births by age of mother,
 within marriage

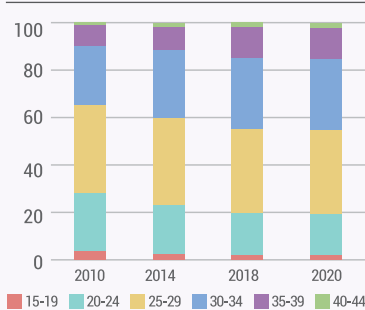
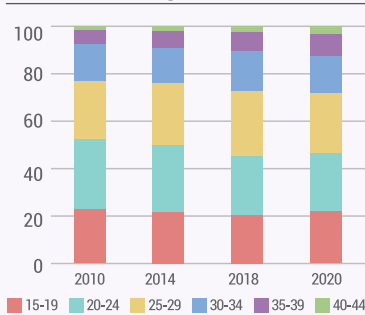


Figure 6.
 Share of live births by age of mother,
 outside of marriage



General population
 21 births per 1000 women
Roma population
 114 births per 1000 women

Almost 1/3 of Roma girls
 Have had a live birth
 Before the age of 18.



The adolescent birth rate, among women aged 15-19, halved since 2010. However, there are very significant differences depending on several factors. The adolescent birth rate is significantly higher in urban areas, 31 births per 1,000 women, as compared to rural areas, 8 births per 1,000 women. This phenomenon could be explained by high levels of rural to urban migration, especially migration to the capital²⁸ (migration is discussed in more detail in the section below).

While the adolescent birth rate for the female population as a whole is 21 births per 1,000 women, for the Roma population in North Macedonia the rate is 114 births per 1,000 women.²⁹ Almost a third (29.2%) of Roma girls have had a live birth before the age of 18.

INCREASING MARITAL AGE

The age at which women and men in North Macedonia marry has slightly increased. Compared to a decade ago, Macedonian women and men are both entering marriages later. The average age at first marriage for women increased from 24.5 years in 2005 to 26.9 years in 2019, while for men it increased from 27.6 to 29.7 years over the same time span. Consequently, the gender gap in marital ages has narrowed, but only slightly - from 3.1 years in 2005 to 2.8 in 2019.

Most women and men in North Macedonia who marry, do so between the ages of 20-34. In 2010, most of women who entered marriage were between the ages of 20-24 (37.5%), followed by those between 25-29 (29.6%). In the same year, most men (37.4%) entered marriage between the ages of 25-29. By 2020, the pattern had changed for both sexes, with a trend toward marrying later.

CHILD MARRIAGE

Child marriage for girls aged 15-19 has declined for the general female population (to a rate of 8.3%), but this is not the case for girls from the Roma community. Child marriage in the Roma communities is based on harmful traditions and practices, as well as poverty. Due to lack of institutional protection, child marriage is still a common phenomenon. Because child marriage in the Roma population is also closely linked to early childbearing, it has harmful effects on Roma

²⁸ MICS 2018-2019.

²⁹ Ibid.

girls, their development, access to education and overall quality of life. Currently, 15.5% of Roma women aged 20-24 have been first married or in a union before the age of 15, and for 45.1% of them, it was before the age of 18.³⁰ In North Macedonia, 5.6% of female adolescents aged 15-19 years are married or in a union, while for the Roma girls aged 15-19 the figure is 22.6%. Moreover, 8% of Roma girls in this age group are married or in a union with a spouse who is ten or more years older than they are.³¹

One third of girls who enter marriage below the age of 18 are not in education or have only completed elementary education and they are predominantly from the poorest quintile of the population.³² Hence, even though the trend of child marriage is declining, girls from marginalized communities are still at a greater risk to be married before the age of 18.

DIVORCE

Both the marriage and divorce rates in North Macedonia have remained quite steady over the last twenty years, although there has been a slight uptick in divorces. While in 2001, of every 100 marriages, almost 11 ended in divorce, today that number is over 14. Still, the divorce rate is lower than that of the EU average.

The divorce rate in North Macedonia declined in the early 2000s but then steadily increased to a peak in 2014 when the political situation in the country was especially unstable. The lowest divorce rate occurred in 2008 (82.3 divorces per 1,000 marriages). In 2009, after the EU visa liberalization that facilitated travel for citizens from North Macedonia, a new wave of migration to the countries of Western Europe began. This is a potential explanation for the rapid increase in the divorce rate seen in the country after 2010, as migration was easier for single people.

There has also been an upward trend in the ages at which women and men divorce. Most spouses divorce in their 40s, accounting for 30.6% of men and 26.7% of women. The share of divorces involving children has been on a steady increase since the last decade. Most often, the mother is granted custody of the children after a divorce.

³⁰ MICS 2018-2019.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

SDG indicator 5.3.1



Proportion of women aged 20–24 years who were married or in a union before age 15 and before age 18

Figure 7.
Average age at first marriage

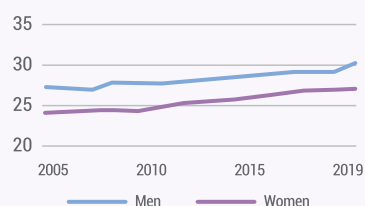
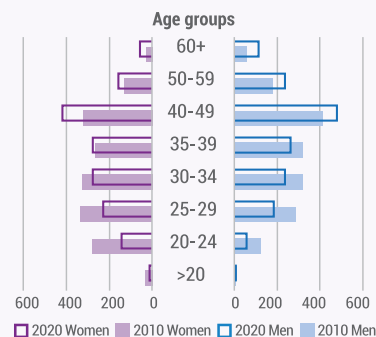


Figure 8.
Marriages by age of women and men



5.6%
female adolescents
15-19 are married
or in a union

VS

22.6%
of Roma girls



Figure 9.
Divorces rate (cases per 1.000 marriages)

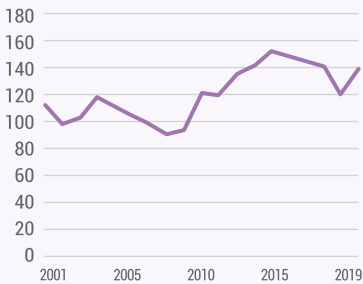


Figure 10.
Divorces with and without children

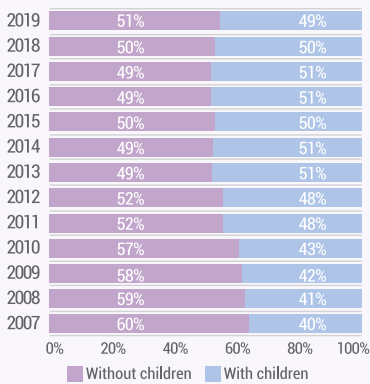
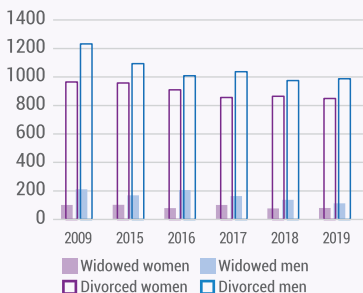


Figure 11.
Number of widowed/divorced people that remarry



The age at the time of divorce most likely reflects women’s role in childcare. The age corresponds to a time when children are becoming more independent, and societal pressure on women to remain in dysfunctional marriages for the sake of the children lessens. Furthermore, there is no effective mechanism in practice to manage child support payments in cases of divorce. Despite legal responsibility for non-payment of alimony, which can even result in a prison sentence for the non-paying parent (which is most often the father), most often proceedings result in a suspended sentence. Consequently, the burden of financially supporting and caring for the children falls entirely to the parent with custody (usually the mother). Because women on average have their first child around age 27, by the time they reach their mid-40s, their children are nearing adulthood and are in less need of support.

Women are less likely to remarry after divorce, and the same is true for women who are widowed. Considering that women also live longer than men on average, there are statistically more single women living into older age in North Macedonia. One reason that women do not remarry may be related to traditional gender roles; older women are less dependent than men for their daily needs, such as cooking, cleaning, maintaining hygiene, and taking care of the household. Double standards and negative stereotypes about divorced women persist in society. Divorced woman with children from a previous marriage most often have custody, prejudices and societal pressures prevent them from fulfilling their emotional, sexual, or partnered life, at least until the children are independent.

WOMEN MIGRATE MORE BOTH INTERNALLY AND EXTERNALLY

Demographic changes in the population of North Macedonia can also be explained by intensive migratory outflows following visa liberalization in the EU in 2009 and the more favourable migratory regimes in specific European countries, such as Germany, that encouraged entire families to move abroad.³³ At the same time, student exchange and work and travel programs have become very popular. Such opportunities have likely contributed to the particular decrease in the population of two age groups - 15-19 years and 20-24 years.

³³ ETF (2021) How migration, human capital and the labour market interact in North Macedonia. Torino: European Training Foundation. Available at: <https://www.etf.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/how-migration-human-capital-and-labour-market-interact-o?fbclid=IwAR28Aoul9w7ctv4hbezy3jUlmnP8isEoXjdKWbURqZhiDxEcIX7bzZvof4Q>

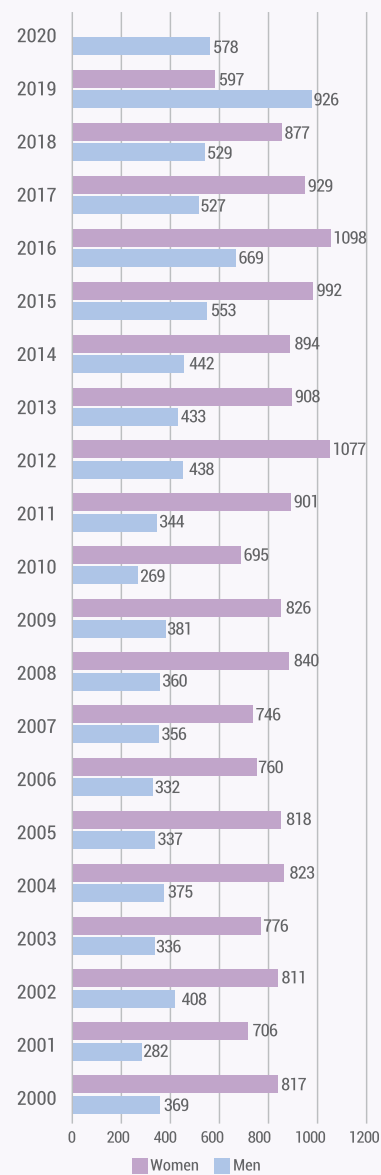
There is no robust analysis of the gender characteristics of migration, in part because the data is varied and there are no official statistics on the issue. Some have suggested that earlier waves of migration (in the 1990s, for example) were dominated by men, but this likely changed over the 2000s and particularly during the 2010s. For example, the Institute for Employment Research (IAB) database³⁴ has sex-disaggregated data about Macedonian emigration to advanced economies (where most of the Macedonian diaspora lives) that indicates a proportion of 52.4% men and 47.6% women.

North Macedonia experiences both external and internal migration. **External migration** occurs when people cross state borders and remain in the host state with intention of settling permanently, or temporarily, at a new location. Push factors for external migration are usually economic, political, religious, family and household related, or environmental, among others. North Macedonia recorded a population decrease in every year from 2010 to 2020, except in 2017 and 2018.

Records from the EU³⁵ confirm the migration flows from North Macedonia to EU Member States has been increasing. Citizens of North Macedonia represented 7% of the citizens of candidate countries and potential candidates issued with first residence permits by EU Member States in 2020. Citizens of North Macedonia received 29% more first residence permits in 2020 than in 2010. As of the end of 2020, there were 3.8 million citizens of the candidate countries and potential candidates with valid permits to reside in the EU Member States. 5% or approximately 190,000 valid permits to reside were held by citizens of North Macedonia. In the same year, 93,000 citizens of candidate countries and potential candidates acquired the citizenship of an EU Member State. 5% or approximately 4,650 of those who acquired the citizenship of an EU Member State were from North Macedonia. From 2010 to 2020 the number of citizens from North Macedonia acquiring EU citizenship increased by 52%.

Internal migration occurs when people move from rural areas to urban areas. In North Macedonia, the largest migrant flows are to Skopje, the capital. From 2000 to 2015, the annual number of women that migrated to the capital has been consistently double that of the number of men. In the last five years, the migration trend for women has remained high while male migration of men has increased.³⁶

Figure 12.
Number of citizens that migrated to Skopje region

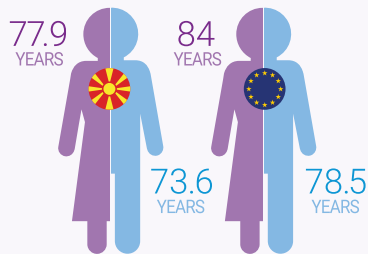


³⁴ <https://www.iab.de/en/daten/iab-brain-drain-data.aspx>

³⁵ Eurostat (2022), https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Enlargement_countries_-_statistics_on_migration,_residence_permits,_citizenship_and_asylum

³⁶ MakStat data base.

Life Expectancy (2019)



SDG indicator 5.6.1

Proportion of women aged 15–49 years who make their own informed decisions regarding sexual relations, contraceptive use and reproductive health care



In 2019, **40.1%** of women aged 15–49, married or in a union, did not use any contraceptive method.

32.7% of Roma women, married or in a union, did not use contraception.



In 2005, **86.5%** of women aged 15–49, married or in a union, did not use any contraceptive method.

2.2 HEALTH

INCREASING LIFE EXPECTANCY

Since 1994, the average age of the population of North Macedonia has increased from 33.1 and 31.8 years for women and men, respectively, to 40.3 and 38.5 years, respectively, in 2020. The increase in the average age is due to the life expectancy at birth increasing.

Today, a girl born in North Macedonia can expect to live 77.9 years, and a boy - 73.6 years (2019). Even though both men and women are living almost three years longer than they were several decades ago, women consistently are expected to live longer than men by about four years.

The gender gap in average life expectancy in North Macedonia has changed very little, and it is smaller than the average gap in EU Member States of 5.5 years. Still, women and men in the EU are living longer on average - women to age 84.0 and men to age 78.5. The difference between the life expectancies of women and men ranges from almost 10 years in Lithuania and Latvia to below 4 years in the Netherlands, Sweden, and Malta.³⁷

WOMEN'S SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

Appropriate contraceptive use is essential for the health of women and children because it prevents pregnancies that are either too early or too late, it extends the period between births and limits the total number of children that a woman will have.

Women in North Macedonia have a high level of knowledge about **contraception methods**. In 2019,³⁸ 99% of the female population aged 15–49 has heard of some contraceptive method, either modern or traditional. Knowledge is also very high for Roma women of the same age group (96.4%). The most well-known modern contraceptive method among all women aged 15–49 is the male condom - familiar to 96.5% of women in the general population and 90.6% of Roma women. The second most well-known modern contraceptive method is the pill (oral hormonal contraception) – for 92.4% of the total women population. For Roma women, the second most familiar form of contraception is the intrauterine device (IUD) - known by 81.1%. Familiarity with emergency contraception (the “morning-after” pill) is significantly lower for women aged 15–49 in general (67.7%) and in particular for Roma women of this age group (26.7%).³⁹

³⁷ Eurostat (2021) The life of Women and Men in Europe. Available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-interactive-publications/-/ks-08-21-315>

³⁸ MICS 2018–2019.

³⁹ Ibid.

In contrast to knowledge, however, the overall use of the contraceptive methods is low, especially when it comes to forms of modern contraception. This is a reflection of the lack of accessibility of specific forms of contraception. 40.1% of women aged 15-49, married or in a union, did not use any contraceptive method.⁴⁰ The share of Roma women not using contraception was 32.7%.⁴¹ However, this is a significant improvement from 15 years ago, when 86.5% of women aged 15-49 who were married or in a union did not use any contraception.⁴² For this group of women, traditional methods of contraception are preferred over modern methods.⁴³

Unmarried women, or those not in a union, aged 15-49, more often use modern forms of contraception - 21.1% of this group uses the pill, male condom, IUD, or other forms of modern contraception, compared to 3.4% relying on traditional methods. In contrast, Roma women in this category are less likely to use contraception overall - 6.6% use a traditional method, and only 3.7% use a modern form of contraception. 6.6% of Roma unmarried nor in union women use a traditional contraception method whilst only 3.7% use modern contraception method.⁴⁴

The most commonly used traditional method of contraception is withdrawal (used by 43.9% of women, generally, and 58.2% of Roma women specifically). The male condom is the most frequently used modern contraceptive method by 10% of all women and 3.6% of Roma women, specifically.⁴⁵ In North Macedonia, there are no forms of oral contraception (hormonal pill) or emergency contraception covered by public health insurance. Therefore, women and girls must pay the market price if they want to prevent unwanted pregnancies with this method.

Male condoms (the only contraceptive method that prevents unwanted pregnancies and transmission of sexually transmitted infections) are the most commonly available modern form of contraception in the country. Since women and girls, especially Roma and rural women, are more likely to be unemployed or economically inactive, they are more often financially dependent. This, in turn, means that they are less likely to purchase and use modern contraceptive methods.

Access to contraception is key component of **family planning**, as it assists women and girls to make choices about and control their reproductive lives. Family planning makes critical contributions to girls' and women's abilities to receive quality education, find decent

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²MICS 2005-2006.

⁴³MICS 2018-2019.

⁴⁴Ibid.

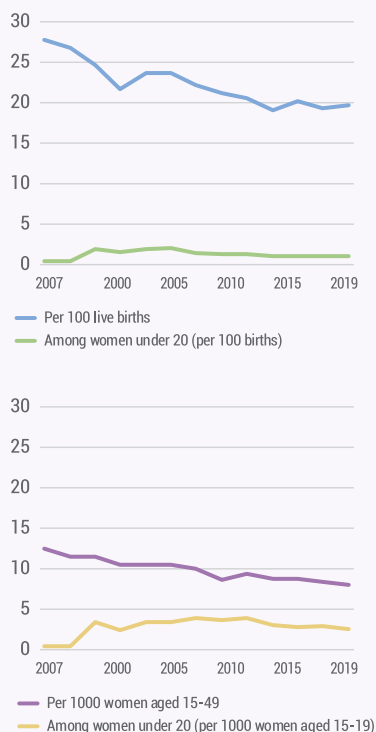
⁴⁵Ibid.

99% of the female population aged 15-49 has heard of some contraceptive method

96.4% of Roma women has heard of some contraceptive method



Figure 13. Trends in abortion rates

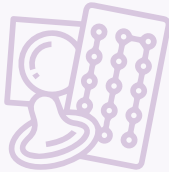


SDG indicator 3.7.1



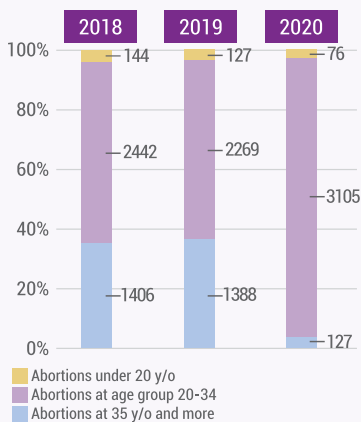
Proportion of women of reproductive age (aged 15–49 years) who have their need for family planning satisfied with modern methods

Reported satisfied demand for family planning with contraception methods in women aged 15-49 years



TOTAL 19.9%
ROMA WOMEN 11.4%

Figure 14. Number of registered abortions by age group and year



Source: Institute for Public Health database (2022).

work and make free and informed decisions in all spheres of life.⁴⁶

In North Macedonia, the total demand for family planning among women who are married or in a union, between the ages of 15-49, is 70%. For only 19.9% is the demand for family planning satisfied with modern contraception methods. For Roma women of this group, the picture differs - the total demand for family planning is higher at 75.6%, but the demand is satisfied for only 11.4% of Roma women).⁴⁷ As a comparison, in 2005, 33.6% of women aged 15-49, married or in a union, had unmet need for contraception.⁴⁸ The need for family planning is significantly lower for women who are neither married nor in a union, aged 15-49, and who use contraception - for women in general (24.6%) and for Roma women, specifically (10.3%). The total demand for family planning among unmarried Roma women is 11.6% while for all the women 24.6%.⁴⁹

The number of **abortions** has been declining. The abortion rate decreased from 27 abortions per 100 live births in 2007 to 19 abortions in 2019. This means that if in 2007, 12 out of every 1,000 women aged 15-49 had an abortion, by 2019 that figure was only 7.5 per 1,000 women. Access to abortion has been impacted by significant legal and policy changes. In 2013, the Law on Termination of Pregnancy (Law on Abortion) entered into force, restricting women’s access to abortion. The passage of the Law was accompanied by a public campaign that stigmatized abortion. The Law was in force until 2019 when a new Law on Termination of Pregnancy was adopted that abolished the provisions that limited women’s access to safe abortion, such as a mandatory period for counselling and other administrative barriers.

Looking specifically at 2018-2020, the number of abortions declined dramatically in 2020, a reflection of the more limited accessibility of this medical procedure during the COVID-19 pandemic. Overall, the number of abortions had been on the decline for women under the age of 20 even before the health crisis. From 2021, medical abortions, meaning abortion without surgery, became available at the Gynaecology and Obstetrics Clinic in Skopje. However, this procedure is not yet available to women in other regions of the country, especially rural women, unless they can travel to the capital.

⁴⁶ Starbird, E. et al. (2016) Investing in Family Planning: Key to Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, *Global Health: Science and Practice*, 4(2):191-210. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.9745/GHSP-D-15-00374>

⁴⁷ MICS 2018-2019.

⁴⁸ MICS 2005-2006.

⁴⁹ MICS 2018-2019.

MATERNAL AND NEW-BORN HEALTH

The adoption of the national Strategy for Safe Motherhood for 2010-2015 and the Strategy for Sexual and Reproductive Health for 2011-2020, along with national action plans for their implementation, contributed to significant improvements in the health of both women and infants.

The majority of pregnant women in North Macedonia receives **antenatal care**. The antenatal period is an important time to reach pregnant women with a number of interventions that may be vital to their health and well-being and that of their infants (for example, to inform women and families about any risks during pregnancy, labour, and delivery, and to ensure that pregnant women, in practice, have access to a skilled health care provider when they deliver). WHO recommends a minimum of eight antenatal visits based on a review of the effectiveness of different models of antenatal care. In North Macedonia, in both urban and rural areas, 95.7% of the women aged 15-49 years with a live birth in the last two years had at least four antenatal care visits, while 81.1% had eight or more visits. Among Roma women, 93.4% had four or more visits, but only 61.6% have had eight or more visits.⁵⁰ Roma women have consistently had less visits throughout the years – in 2005, 94.7% of Roma women had at least one visit vs. 98.7% of Macedonian and 99.1% Albanian women.⁵¹

Almost all women deliver in a public health facility (95.8%). Safe motherhood programmes recommend that all women and new-borns receive **post-natal care**, through a health check within two days of delivery. In North Macedonia, the Post-Natal Health Checks module includes information on new-borns' and mothers' contact with a nurse and specific questions on the type of care.

Post-natal care visits for new-borns are significantly higher than those for mothers. More than half (59%) of Roma mothers and 47.4% of all mothers aged 15-49 that gave birth in the last two years received no post-natal care visits while in a facility or at home following the birth.⁵² Most of new-borns receive post-natal care after the first week following discharge. A quarter (23.6%) of new-borns living in urban areas receive post-natal care in the first or second day following discharge, but this figure is considerably lower for new-borns in rural areas or Roma settlements. 20% of all Roma new-borns do not receive post-natal care visit following discharge from health facility.⁵³

⁵⁰ MICS 2018-2019.

⁵¹ MICS 2005-2006.

⁵² MICS 2018-2019.

⁵³ Ibid.

Percentage of women age 15-49 years with a live birth in the last two years

AT LEAST 4 CARE VISITS:

TOTAL 95.7%
ROMA WOMEN 93.4%

AT LEAST 8 CARE VISITS:

TOTAL 81.1%
ROMA WOMEN 61.6%




SDG indicator 3.1.2

Proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel



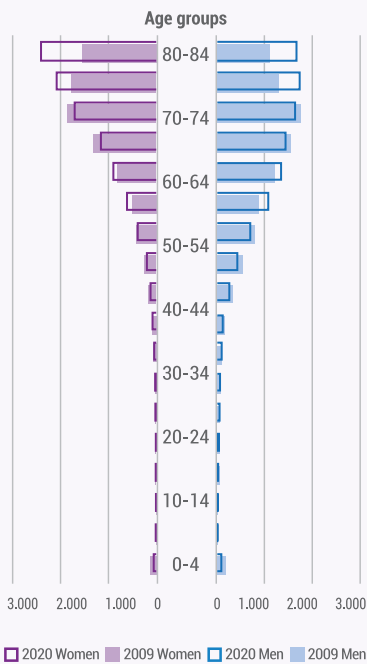
SDG indicator 3.2.1
Under-five mortality rate



SDG indicator 3.2.2
Neonatal mortality rate

UNDER FIVE MORTALITY RATE		NEONATAL MORTALITY RATE	
8.7	2010	5.5	
9.6	2015	6.8	
6	2020	4.2	

Figure 15.
Age at time of death, by age group



The infant mortality rate has been in decline, partially a reflection of women having better access to reproductive health and pre-natal care. When progress in reducing infant mortality stalled in the late 2010s, the Ministry of Health established the national Safe Motherhood Committee and the Perinatal Mortality Audit Working Group in 2015 to ensure better quality of services for mothers and babies. This was intended to secure fast-track improvements in maternal and newborn health outcomes.⁵⁴ From 2000 to 2020, the infant mortality rate declined from 13.2 deaths per 1,000 infants to 5.7 deaths.

CAUSES OF DEATH

As described, above, women live longer than men by four to five years, and there has been no clear change to this gender gap over time. Presently, women on average die at 76 years of age, while men at 71.6 years of age. The gender disparities in life expectancy have both biological and social dimensions.

Maternal mortality⁵⁵ is a cause of death relevant only to women. In North Macedonia, maternal mortality is rare (0-2 cases per year over the last decade), and therefore only the Service for Health Care of Mothers and Children (Centre for Health Skopje) publishes relevant data. There were no maternal deaths registered in any year from 2015-2019, but this data suggests a high probability of under-registration, mostly due to misclassification of the cause of death. In 2021, two cases of maternal mortality were registered, which expressed through the maternal mortality ratio is the equivalent of 10.7 per 100,000 live births.⁵⁶ For comparison, the maternal mortality rate in the EU is below 10 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births.⁵⁷

The main causes of death for both men and women are diseases of the circulatory system, even though there has been an overall decline in mortality from these causes. Deaths due to neoplasms (including cancer) have been increasing for women and men, and are the second leading cause of death.

⁵⁴ World Health Organization, Regional Office for Europe (2021) Perinatal mortality audit: North Macedonia 2019.

⁵⁵ Maternal mortality refers to the death of a women during pregnancy, childbirth or within 42 days after the termination of pregnancy, regardless of the duration or location of the pregnancy, from any cause related to or aggravated by pregnancy, or from its conduct, but not as a consequence of accidental or incidental causes.

⁵⁶ The health of mothers and children in the Republic of North Macedonia in 2021, Service for Health Care of Mothers and Children (Not published yet)

⁵⁷ Eurostat (2017), https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=The_EU_in_the_world_-_health#Mortality

Mortality due to injuries and violence has decreased since 2011, with the exception of homicides. In general, men die more frequently from violent causes than women. Here, we can see that for women, their overall higher life expectancy is also linked to gender norms and gender-based behavioural differences. For instance, men are statistically more likely to abuse alcohol and other substances than women, and men are also over-represented in dangerous professions (such as mining and quarrying and construction) that put them at risk of injury. In terms of road accidents, women use public transportation more frequently than men. The number of women who own a motor vehicle is significantly lower than that of men (15% in the country as a whole and around 21% in the Skopje region)⁵⁸ - suggesting that they do not drive as often. Accidental deaths due to injury and poisonings and are generally considered preventable by addressing risk factors.

Figure 16.
Disease-related deaths by cause

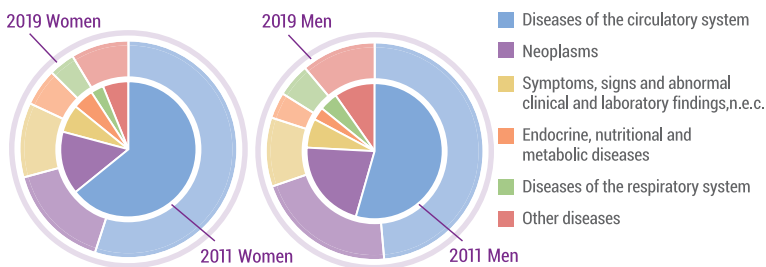
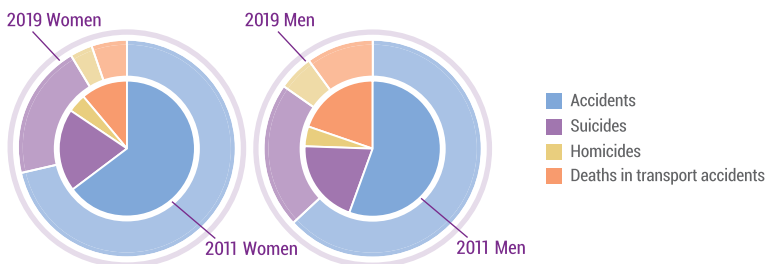


Figure 17.
Deaths due to injury



⁵⁸ Apostolova, O. (2019) Support to the implementation of the Draft Action Plan on Gender Equality and Climate Change, Version 0.2, UNDP. Available at: <https://api.klimatskipromeni.mk/data/rest/file/download/7b705f174c1ba220ebd359638ea9deb84e80b37965ed78f7cf3a783b70363269.pdf>

SDG indicator 3.1.1

Maternal mortality ratio



SDG indicator 3.4.1

Mortality rate attributed to cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes or chronic respiratory disease



SDG indicator 3.4.2

Suicide mortality rate

Transition from primary to secondary education

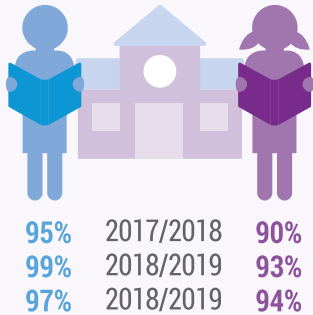
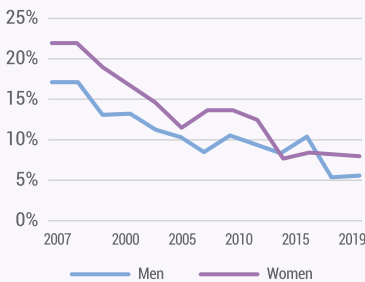
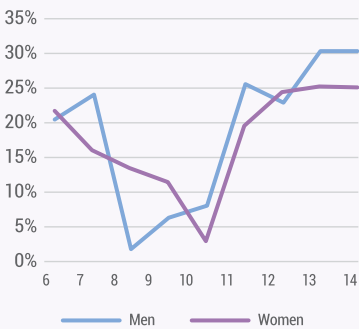


Figure 18. Early school-leavers



Source: Labour Force Survey

Figure 19. Percentage of Roma children of primary school age out of school (2018/2019)



Source: MICS 2018-2019

2.3 EDUCATION

PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOL ENROLMENT AND ATTENDANCE

The number of pupils enrolled in primary and secondary schools has been declining over the past two decades, from around 250,000 (primary pupils) and 93,000 (secondary pupils) in the 2000/2001 academic year to around 190,000 (primary) and 70,000 (secondary) in the 2020/2021 academic year. This trend is a direct consequence of the situation with migration, as discussed above, the declining birth rate, and other societal developments in North Macedonia. At the same time, the ratio of girls to boys has remained consistent over time, with virtual gender parity in enrolment at the compulsory level. Boys represent 52% of both primary and secondary pupils, and 48% of pupils are girls, with almost no variation.

Net enrolment rates in primary education are high in North Macedonia - with over 90% of children enrolled in compulsory education. In the 2018/2019 academic year, for instance, 98.4% of primary school aged children were enrolled. Primary school age children living in urban areas are more likely to be out of school (the net attendance ratio for children in urban area is 97.4%, for rural 99.2%).⁵⁹ There are very slight gender differences here; girls in urban areas are slightly more likely to be out of school, whereas boys in rural areas are out of school a bit more often.

In the 2018/2019 academic year, 90.6% of secondary school aged children were attending secondary school. The situation of out-of-school children is similar to that for primary school aged children - non-attendance in urban areas is slightly higher than in rural (9.4% and 6.9%, respectively). The gender patterns also mirror those for primary schools: girls are more likely to not attend urban secondary schools, and boys to not attend rural schools (9.7% of urban girls vs. 7.7% of rural boys). Children in rural areas often help their parents on family farms and this might be a key reason that they are out of school. A total of 21.8% of children aged 15-17 living in rural areas are involved in economic activities for up to 43 hours per week, as opposed to 9.8% of children living in urban areas.⁶⁰

Transition from primary to secondary education is consistently higher for boys, while transition from secondary to tertiary education is higher for girls.

⁵⁹ MICS 2018-2019.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

Girls are more frequently early school-leavers,⁶¹ except in 2017, when the share of boys registered was higher. There is no apparent reason for this. Yet, for both sexes, the numbers declined from 22% for women and 18% for men in 2007, to only 8.4% and 5.9%, respectively, in 2019. Although the gender gap in early school leavers was lower in particular years, there is no clear narrowing trend.

The situation concerning school enrolment and time out of school is very different for both Roma boys and girls, however. In the 2018/2019 academic year, for instance, 19% of Roma girls and 18.4% of Roma boys were not enrolled in primary school.⁶²

The highest percentage of Roma children out of primary school occurs in the teenage years (ages 13-14), at the time of puberty. This age could also be connected to trends in child labour, exploitation of children (for begging, collection of plastic bottles, iron, etc.). 3.2% of Roma boys and 3.4% of Roma girls aged 12-14 (vs 2.4% boys and 0% girls of the general population) have been exposed to economic activities for 14 or more hours per week, which is considered child labour.⁶³ Moreover, 1.3% of Roma boys and 9.6% of Roma girls (vs 1.5% of boys and 0% of girls from the general population) between the ages of 12-14 carry out household chores for more than 21 hours per week.⁶⁴ This may also be a reason that Roma children, especially Roma girls, are out of school during the last two years of primary education.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy works with the police to seek out street children in need of assistance and tracks cases of forced child labour through the Department of Social Inclusion. It registers complaints about hazardous child labour and investigates children's participation in street work through 30 Centres for Social Work (CSWs) and the Ombudsman's Office, which includes a special unit for the investigation of violations of children's rights and refers complaints to the State Labour Inspectorate. In 2020, a total of 157 children on the street up to 15 years of age were registered, of which 67 were girls.⁶⁵

At the secondary school level, the likelihood that Roma children will be out of school increases. In the 2018/2019 academic year, more than half (52.8%) of all Roma children aged 15-18 were out of secondary school.



⁶¹ From LFS: Share of the population aged 18-24 with no or with at most lower secondary education and not in further education or training.

⁶² MICS 2018-2019.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ State Statistical Office (2021) Social Welfare of Children, Juveniles, and Adults, 2020, Available at: <https://www.stat.gov.mk/publikacii/2021/2.4.21.03.917.pdf>

SDG indicator 4.1.2 
Completion rate
 (primary education, 
 lower secondary education,
 upper secondary education)

Completed education for 2018/2019 academic year



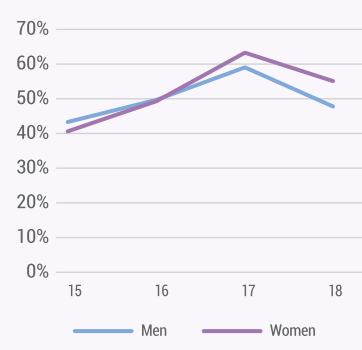
Gymnasiums	53% GIRLS		47% BOYS	
Vocational education	44% GIRLS		56% BOYS	




Figure 20. Percentage of Roma children of high school age out of school (2018/2019)



Source: MICS 2018-2019

Top three fields of study, dominated by girls/boys (2018/2019)

GIRLS

-  **73%** Health
-  **73%** Personal services
-  **66%** Textile and leather processing

BOYS




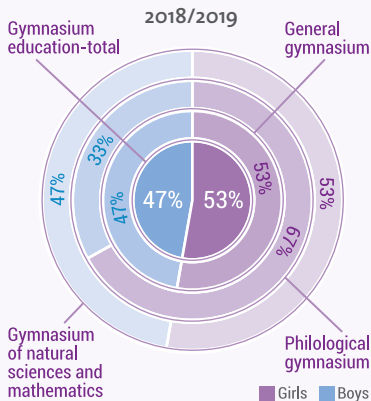
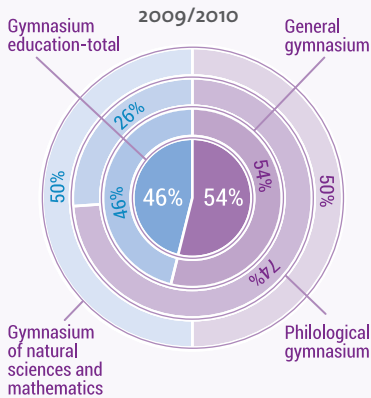
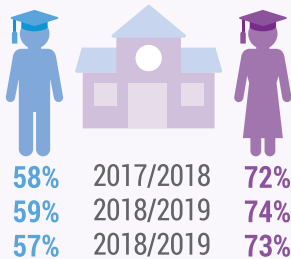
-  **100%** Manufacturing and processing
-  **91%** Mechanical engineering
-  **86%** Electrical engineering

Figure 21.
Students who completed upper secondary education at a gymnasium, by field of study



Transition from secondary to tertiary education



Roma girls have a slightly higher rate of non-attendance of secondary school - 54.1% were not in school, while the share of out-of-school Roma boys was 51.6%. Roma children are among the most marginalized and poorest groups, and so the high dropout rate in secondary education usually corresponds to child labour, as well as child marriage - a phenomenon that is more common among Roma girls.

A total of 12.7% of Roma boys and 2.8% of Roma girls aged 15-17 are involved in economic activities for up to 43 hours per week, while 3.8% do some kind of labour for more than 43 hours.⁶⁶ Among children who are involved in economic activities, 11.7% do not attend school.⁶⁷ The lack of high-school education has direct impacts on the high levels of unemployment among Roma, as well as their over-representation in low-paid and informal jobs.

GENDERED CHOICES IN SECONDARY EDUCATION

By the time that girls and boys reach the level of secondary education, gender stereotypes play a role in their decisions to study specific subjects. Both boys and girls are streamed toward fields of education that are considered appropriate areas for future work. A slightly higher percentage of girls in upper secondary education completes their education at a gymnasium (53% of gymnasium graduates were girls in 2019), while boys are more likely to complete vocational education at this level (56% of vocational graduates were boys in the same year). Comparing academic years, there has been a slightly increasing trend for girls to study at gymnasiums that specialise in natural sciences and mathematics, rather than general education.

In vocational education, however, some fields of study remain strongly associated as “feminine” and others as “masculine”. For example, in the 2018/2019 academic year, girls represented over 60% of graduates with specialities in health, law, personal services, and textiles. In the health and personal services specialities, for every one male graduate there are almost three female graduates. In contrast, boys dominate in such perceived “masculine” fields of study such as manufacturing, mechanical and electrical engineering, agriculture, and hospitality (travel, tourism, hotels, and catering). Chemical engineering and art education are more gender balanced fields of study, for example.

Where educational choices become more balanced at the upper secondary level, the trend seems to be driven by more girls enrolling in and completing their studies in non-traditional fields.

⁶⁶ MICS 2018-2019.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

ENROLMENT IN TERTIARY EDUCATION

A larger share of women enrolls in tertiary education than men. The share of women and men among first years in tertiary education has fluctuated from year to year, but women consistently represent more than half of enrolled students.

The university enrolment rate for women has been increasing, and since men’s enrolment rates are stagnant, the gender gap has slightly widened. This gender gap in enrolment rates became especially pronounced after 2007 - the year that the government launched a state program to open and/or expand branches of universities, faculties, and programs throughout the country in order to increase access to tertiary education. At the same time, the Government introduced a program to encourage people in their 30s and 40s to enrol in universities, aimed at increasing the level of education of the population. Based on enrolment data, it appears that these measures had a positive impact on encouraging a greater share of men to enrol. By 2020, women represented 54% of enrolled students in tertiary education.

Women’s greater enrolment in higher education is usually a reflection of the fact that young men have greater opportunities to find work with lower levels of qualifications and enter the job market at an earlier age.

Stagnant enrolment rates at university have been accompanied by a surge in completion rates. After 2007, the number of graduates almost doubled compared to the early 2000s, but since then there has been a gradual decline. Still, similar to enrolment rates, women are more likely to graduate from tertiary education than men. Women continue to exhibit a slightly higher graduation-to-enrolment ratio, even though the gender gap narrowed after 2007.

GENDERED CHOICES IN TERTIARY EDUCATION

Patterns of gendered educational choices that are seen in secondary education also continue into tertiary education. Medical sciences and the humanities are viewed as “feminine” subjects, based on the fact that for every one male graduate, there are two to three female graduates. In contrast, technical and biotechnical sciences are “masculine” fields study, although the share of women graduating in these fields increased from 2006 to 2019. The field of biotechnical sciences is virtually gender balanced in terms of the share of graduates.

Figure 22. Students who completed upper secondary vocational education (by selected fields of study)

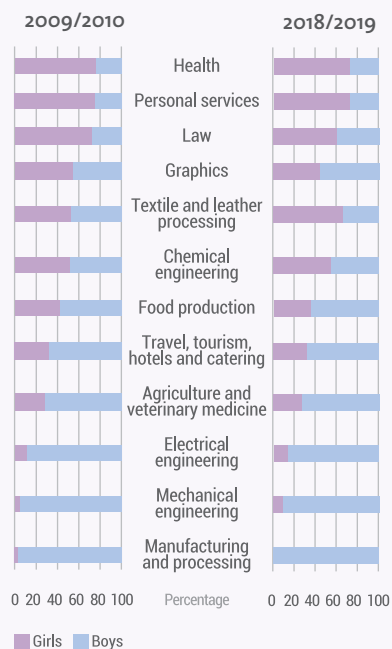


Figure 23. Women and men enrolled in the first year of tertiary education for the first time

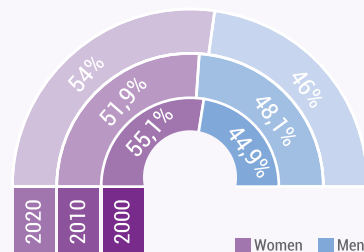


Figure 24.
Graduated students, in undergraduate studies and higher schools according to scientific fields

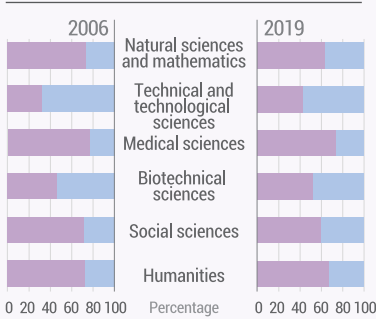


Figure 25.
Share of women and men who graduated with Master's degrees by field of study and year

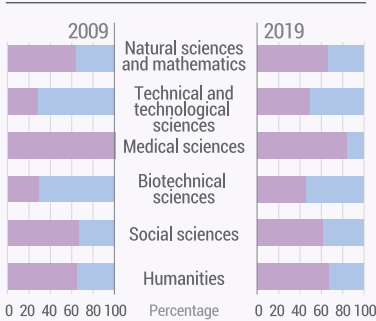
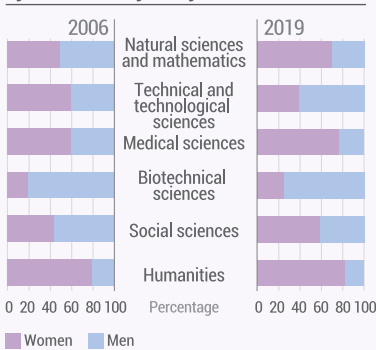


Figure 26.
Share of women and men who graduated with PhD degrees by field of study and year



The gendered patterns seen in undergraduate study are replicated at both the master's and PhD levels. A larger share of women graduates with **Master's** degrees in medical sciences, humanities and natural sciences, while men make up a large proportion of graduates in biotechnical sciences. There are notable changes over time: in all fields except social sciences, women have been enrolling more frequently than men, and particularly in medical sciences in 2019, almost 4 women enrolled for each man. Women have been, likewise, the larger percentage of graduates in medical sciences, while technical and technological sciences has become gender balanced in terms of graduates with Master's degrees. To compare, whereas in 2019, there were 199 male and 197 female MA graduates in technical and technological sciences, in 2020, there were 180 female and 156 male MA graduates in the same field.⁶⁸

At the **PhD** level in the past, more men than women had enrolled in programs in natural sciences, technical and technological sciences, biotechnical sciences and social sciences, but by 2019, this trend changed and the share of women as enrolled students increased. In terms of graduates with PhDs, medical sciences and humanities have long been a preferred areas of study for women, and this tendency has become stronger over time. On the other hand, women PhD graduates have increased in natural sciences and social sciences.

The changes observed at the level of tertiary education, and to a lesser extent in upper secondary education, of more women enrolling and completing their studies in technical fields may reflect measures adopted by the government to encourage girls and young women to pursue educational fields traditionally considered "masculine". Positive measures, such as scholarships, as well as awareness raising campaigns most likely contributed to this trend.

However, the road to having more girls in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) remains long. As shown in section 2.5 on work and the labour market, conceptions of educational choices as "appropriate" for either young women or young men determines future employment possibilities and the segregation of professions, with female workers over-represented in non-technical fields that are accompanied by lower pay and less prestige.

⁶⁸SSO, MakStat database, Graduated students at master's studies and specialists by scientific field, gender, and higher education institution, by years

LIFELONG LEARNING

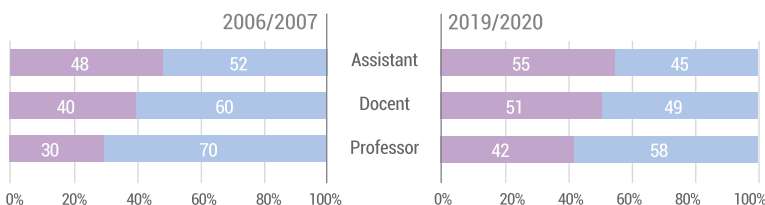
Overall, the share of the working-age population (aged 15-64) attending formal education has been on the decline, for both women and men, with no apparent gender differences. With respect to attending learning activities outside the regular educational system (informal education), the take up is still very low, for both women and men, with slightly higher participation of women.

TEACHING AS A PROFESSION

The teaching profession, at the primary and secondary school levels, is not only dominated by women, but it has become increasingly feminised in recent years. For every one male teacher in primary schools, there were 2.3 female teachers in the 2019/2020 academic year compared to 1.3 female teachers in 2000/2001 academic year. The picture is similar in secondary schools; the ratio of female teachers increased from 1.2 to 1.6 for each male teacher during this same period.

Teaching at the university level attracts more men, most probably due to the status and the higher pay of the position. On the whole, there is close to gender parity in teaching staff at the tertiary level. However, men more frequently hold positions of full professor and associate professor, with a larger share of women at lower positions, such as lector. This situation has begun to change and by the 2019/2020 academic year, the percentage of women increased among assistants, docents, and professors.

Figure 28. Share of women and men teaching staff in tertiary education (for selected categories)

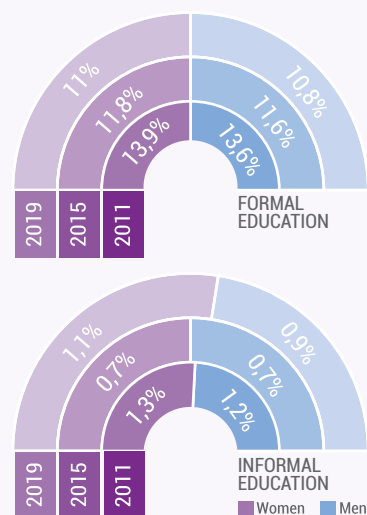


SDG indicator 4.3.1

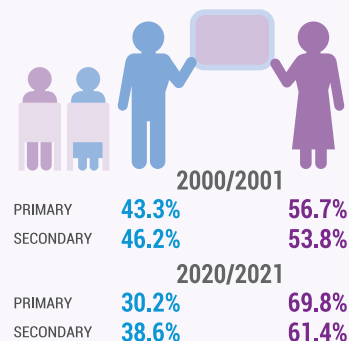


Participation rate of youth and adults in formal and non-formal education and training in the previous 12 months, by sex

Figure 27. Share of working-age population (aged 15-64) in formal and informal education



Share of women and men teaching staff

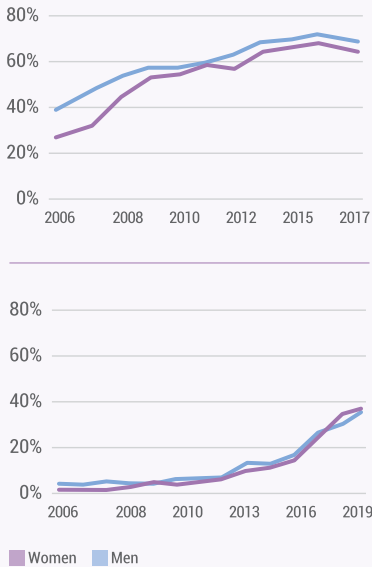


SDG indicator 4.4.1

Proportion of youth and adults with information and communications technology (ICT) skills, by type of skill



Figure 29. Share of computer users (top) and of persons (aged 15-74) purchasing goods and services over internet (bottom)



SDG indicator 17.8.1

Proportion of individuals using the Internet



2.4 THE GENDER DIGITAL DIVIDE

Although it is narrowing, there is still a gender digital divide in North Macedonia, referring to how men and women use information and communication technologies (ICTs). Comparing 2006 to 2019, women use the internet less frequently than men, but they are catching up. Women and men use the internet for online purchase to the same degree, for example. There has been a particularly strong increase in the share of people who made online purchases since around 2017, which indicates that the population had been becoming more used to using ICTs even before the global COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.

However, due to lack of reliable systematized data, some important differences in access to digital technologies cannot be seen in the available data, such as access for women living in rural areas, elderly women, or women with only primary education.

2.5 WORK AND THE LABOUR MARKET

WOMEN OUTSIDE OF THE LABOUR FORCE

The economically active population refers to country’s labour force, that is, people who are employed, as well as those who are unemployed, but actively looking for work. People who are considered to be economically *inactive*, or outside the labour force, are those who are jobless and not looking for or unavailable to work. In North Macedonia, women (aged 15 and over) are significantly less active in the labour market than men of the same age group. In 2020, women’s participation rate in the labour market was 45.7%. This means that 54.3% of women would be considered to be economically inactive. In comparison, in the same year, men’s participation rate in the labour market was 67.1%, leaving only 32.9% of men who would be considered inactive.

The differences in women’s and men’s rates of participation in the labour market results in a gender gap. In North Macedonia, the gender gap in employment rate for people aged 20-64 is 17.5%. While a gender gap is to be expected, as it reflects the fact that women are far more likely to take time out of the labour market to raise children and for other family responsibilities, the gap in North Macedonia is larger than that in the EU. In comparison, in the EU, the gender gap in 2020 was 11%.⁶⁹

A notable trend in North Macedonia is the fact that the share of economically inactive women has been progressively decreasing since 2000. More women have moved into employment as opposed to unemployment. Still, the overall gender gap in labour force participation has persisted since men have also benefited from increased employment.

Looking at the gender gap in labour market participation, it has remained steady for youth (aged 15-24) and for individuals over age 45, while it has narrowed for the 25-44 age group. This suggests that women in these age groups have become more active in the labour market over the recent years. This particular change could be the result, at least partially, of explicit targeting of women to increase their participation in the labour market, such as grants for self-employment, wage subsidies and training aimed at increasing their professional skills. Since 2012, the Ministry of Economy implements a specific measure for support of women entrepreneurs, and to

Figure 30. Women and men inside and outside of the labour force (+15)

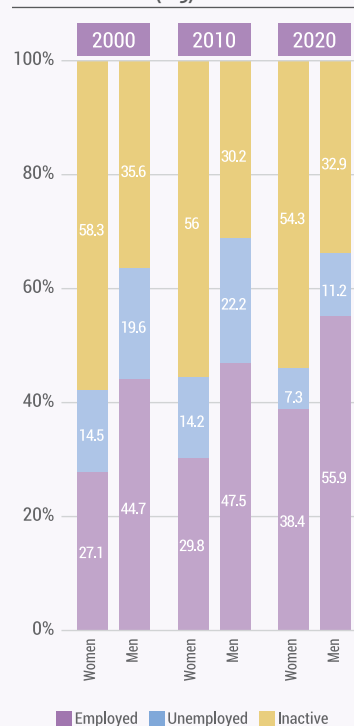
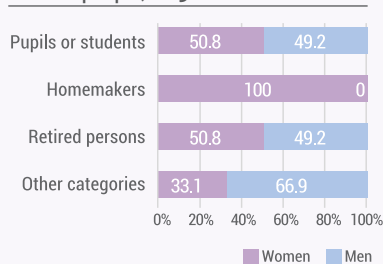


Figure 31. Share of women and men in the main groups of economically inactive people, 2019



⁶⁹Eurostat. 2022. Gender Statistics. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Gender_statistics#Labour_market

Figure 32.
Distribution of employed women and men by level of education, 2019

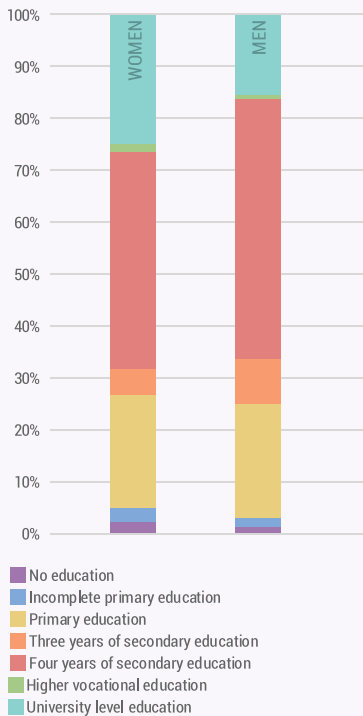
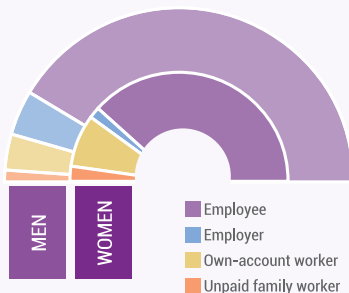


Figure 33.
Distribution of employed women and men by employment status, 2019



strengthen such activities, in 2018, the Strategy for Development of Female Entrepreneurship 2019-2023 was adopted by the Government.

Data about the reasons that women and men are outside of the labour force reveal the influence of gender stereotypes. As mentioned, above, men and women are equally likely to be economically inactive because they are in education, and so the gender gap is small for the age group 15-24. Similarly, among people who are inactive because they are retired, women and men are represented equally. The most significant difference, however, concerns people who are outside of the labour market due to domestic responsibilities of some kind. This category is made up entirely of women, an indication of the difficulty that some women find in combining employment with family life.

EMPLOYMENT PATTERNS

When comparing the education levels of people who are employed in North Macedonia, the data indicate similar patterns for women and men. For example, around half of both men and women in employment have four years of secondary education. The most significant difference is the share of employed people with university education - among women, a quarter have university education, and the same is true for 16% of employed men. As described in section 2.3, more women make up a larger percentage of students who enrol in and complete tertiary education, which suggests that women may find it more difficult to find work with lower levels of qualifications, as compared to men.

Most people who are employed work full-time jobs, but women more frequently than men are part-time workers when they are starting to work (up to the age of 24) and again when they have considerable work histories (after the age of 54). Women take on part-time work as it is easier to combine with other activities related to household responsibilities and caring for family members. Over time, fewer women are choosing, or have the possibility to choose, part-time work, however.

Men more frequently work as employers or are considered own account workers; whereas women tend to work as employees. Own-account workers are self-employed, typically in small businesses. Women are far more likely to be unpaid family workers, and this trend has been increasing over time. Unpaid family workers generally work in agriculture, on household farms, a topic that is discussed in more detail below.

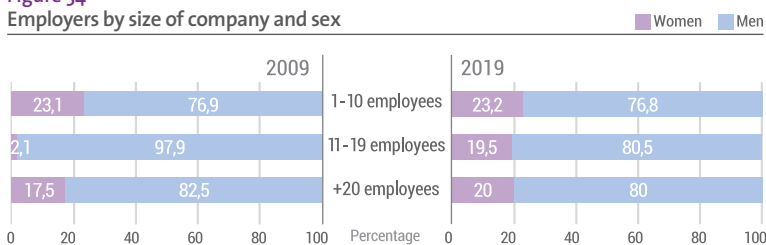
The prevalence of men among employers and the self-employed speaks to the fact that women encounter barriers to establishing and running their own businesses in North Macedonia. In the private sector, women

are less likely to be employers compared to men for any size of enterprise. However, over the last decade, women have made gains as employers in enterprises that employ from 11 to 19 people. This may well be the result of government measures to support women entrepreneurs, which seems to have had a particular impact on small enterprises.

In fact, small enterprises dominate the business landscape in North Macedonia. Out of a total of 72,922 active business entities in 2021, 82% were micro enterprises (employing 1-9 people). Small and medium enterprises represented 7.5% and 2% of the total of business entities, respectively.⁷⁰

Informal employment (as a share in total employment) has been on the decline for both women and men. However, men have been consistently more active in the informal economy, with a five-percentage point difference between the informal employment rate of men and women.

Figure 34
Employers by size of company and sex



GENDER-BASED OCCUPATIONAL SEGREGATION

The labour market of North Macedonia demonstrates occupational segregation, which means that women and men tend to be concentrated in particular sectors - the same fields that are the focus of their professional education.

Women predominate in the financial, educational, and health sectors, while the large majority of employees in mining, construction, and transport are men. Men are also more prevalent in agriculture (as paid employment), trade, electricity and water supply, and hospitality. Public sector work, private services, and manufacturing tend to be gender balanced in terms of the share of employees.

⁷⁰ The categories used by the SSO in the Women and Men publication differ from those used in other SSO data collections, where the SSO uses the national classifications: micro enterprises - 1-9 employees; small enterprises - 10-49 employees; medium-sized enterprises - 50-249 employees; large enterprises - more than 250 employees.

Figure 35
Types of enterprises, 2021



Source: SSO. 2022. News release. Number of active business entities, 2021 Preliminary data.

Figure 36
Informality rates

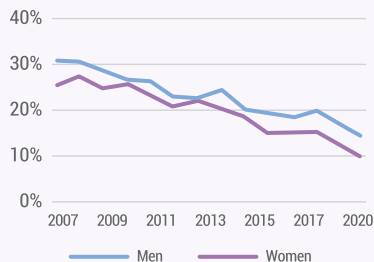


Figure 37
Women in senior management positions and on corporate boards of listed companies

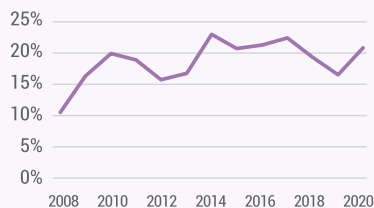


Figure 38.
Share of women employed in selected sectors (2019)

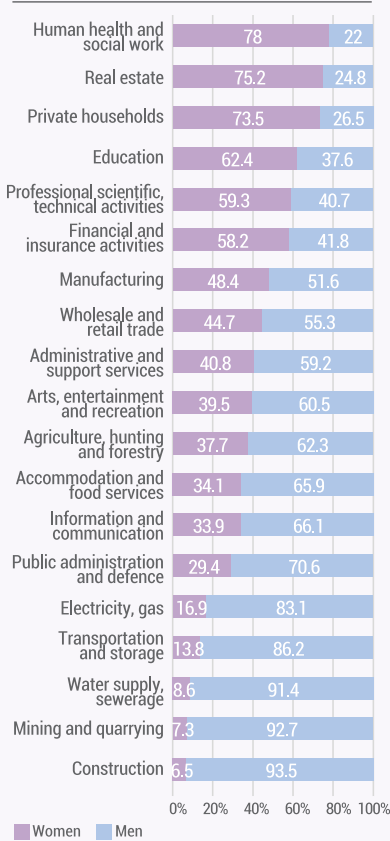
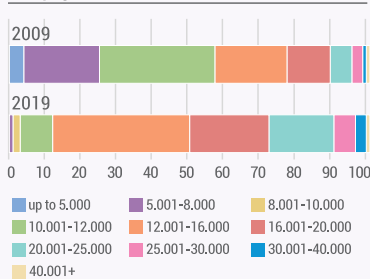


Figure 39.
Employed women's monthly wages/net pay in denars, 2009 and 2019



Another form of occupational segregation refers to the fact that men dominate in higher status jobs, and women less frequently occupy managerial posts. In North Macedonia, there is gender balance in technical and associate (mid-level) positions, although women appear to have been losing ground in these positions over the recent years. Senior managers, as well as employees in highly-skilled occupations, are predominantly men. While there has been some improvement over the last decade, the “glass ceiling effect” is still a reality for many women in North Macedonia. In listed companies, in 2020, women held only 21.3% of senior management positions and on the corporate boards, which is an increase from 16.7% in 2019, and 19.7% in 2018, but a decrease from 23.0% in 2017 and 23.6% in 2014. For comparison, in 2008, women held only 10.3% of senior management positions of listed companies.⁷¹

Women are overly represented as clerical and support workers and in un-skilled occupations. This type of vertical labour market segregation reflects prevalent stereotypes about women’s and men’s competencies and ideas about the gendered division of labour.

One of the consequences of labour market segregation is women’s lower wages on average, which result in gender pay gap. The gap is a result of the fact that women are concentrated in low-paying sectors and positions. Information about gender pay gap is not included in the *Women and Men* publication, nor is it officially calculated by the SSO.

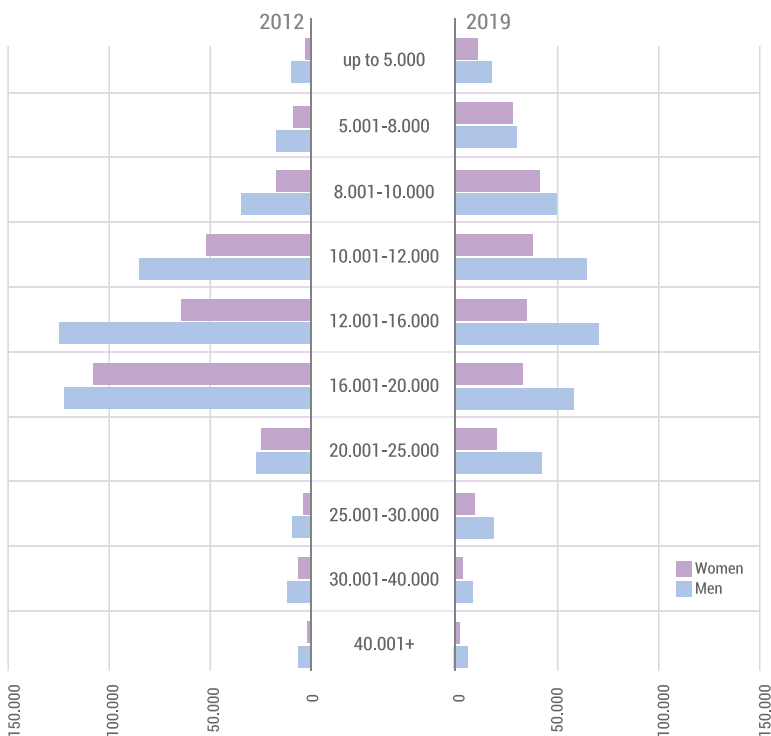
The available information about net wages indicates that women earn less than men across all wage categories. However, over time, women’s remuneration has been steadily improving. This trend is driven by increases in the minimum wage, introduced in 2012 for specific sectors, such as textile and leather manufacturing. These were low-paid sectors where women are disproportionately employed.

There has been an increase in the relative number of women at the middle wage ranges (above 16,000 denars per month), which suggests that overall improvements in labour market conditions, beyond the minimum wage increase, have led to an increase in women’s wages. An exception is the highest wage category (over 40,000 denars per month), where women have made no significant gains. This indicates that the glass ceiling for women is present not only in terms of occupations but also in terms of positions that have the highest levels of remuneration.

⁷¹ SSO, MakStat database, Participation of women in senior management positions, in companies listed on the stock exchange, board members, number of positions.

Changes in the wage distribution for working women can also be seen over time. In the decade from 2009 to 2019, the number of women receiving a wage of up to 12,000 denars dramatically declined, while the number of women receiving a wage between 12 000-16 000 denars, as well as those receiving 20,000-25,000, increased.

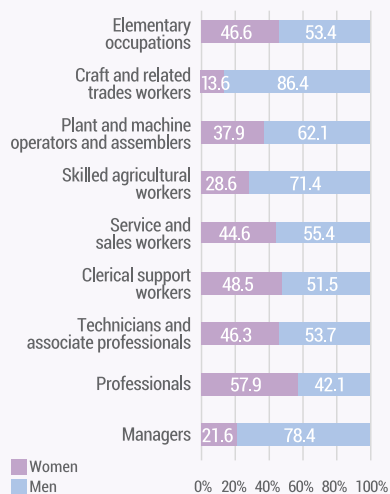
Figure 40
Employed individuals by wage category (net, denars)



UNEMPLOYMENT AND NEET

Unemployment rates have been similar for both men and women, declining with a similar pace over time. However, there are more unemployed women than men with no education, with incomplete education and also with higher education.

Figure 41.
Share of employed women and men by occupation (2021)



Note: military occupations are excluded as women account for less than two percent of employees.

Figure 42.
Unemployed individuals by level of education

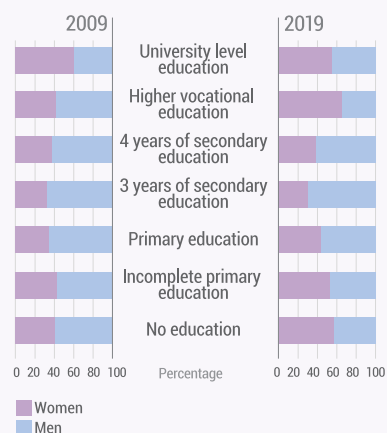


Figure 43.
Unemployed persons by duration of unemployment

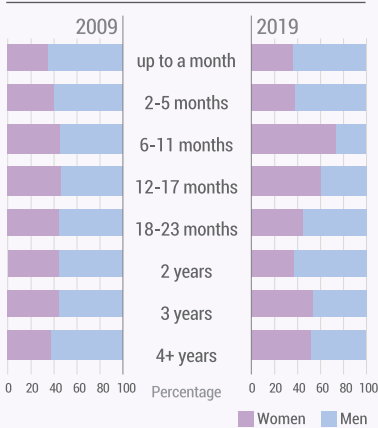


Figure 44.
Long-term unemployment rate

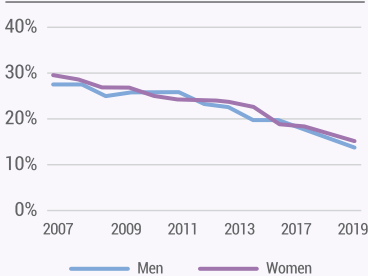
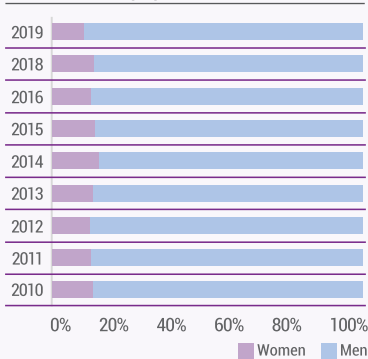


Figure 45.
Persons aged 15-19 not in employment, education, or training (share in total population)



Once unemployed, most people in North Macedonia remain out of work for a considerable length of time. While the share of persons who have been looking for a job for four or more years halved over a decade, still the number of men who face long-term unemployment is double that of women. However, the long-term unemployment rates are similar for women and men.

The share of individuals not in employment, education or training (NEET) (aged 15-19)⁷² in the total population has been on the decline, particularly after 2018. Such a decline could be associated with the introduction of the Youth Guarantee, which aimed to bridge the gap between the completion of formal education and the first job, by offering jobs, internships, or further training to recent graduates. Despite the fact that in most of the years young women exhibit a higher NEET rate, there is no clear gender pattern. For example, in 2019, the NEET rate was even between young women and men. It is nevertheless worth noting that among young people in the NEET group, men are more often unemployed (searching for a job), while women are more often inactive (not searching for work). This difference reflects societal expectations for women and men as well as gender roles.

RURAL AND AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYMENT

In North Macedonia, employment patterns are very different in urban and rural areas, and these differences also have a gender dimension. Overall, women living in rural areas have the lowest employment rates, as compared to rural men and to the urban population generally. For men, employment rates are very similar across urban and rural areas. Rural women are especially disadvantaged regarding employment due to such factors as the gendered division of labour in households and the lack of social services that would allow them to (re)enter the labour market, notably childcare services. In rural areas, significantly fewer children aged 36-59 months attended early education services - 19.9%, compared to 46.6% in urban areas.⁷³

Employment rates have increased for both sexes, for both urban and rural regions, and across all age groups, with particularly notable increases for rural women. This positive development may be a consequence

⁷² Note that Eurostat defines the NEET age group as 15-24 years. However, the SSO uses the age range of 15-19 in its data-collection and in the “Women and Men” publication.

⁷³ MICS 2018-2019.

of the creation of a state subsidies program for agricultural and rural development, introduced in 2007.

In rural areas, men are more likely to be engaged in wage employment while women undertake unpaid family work, which can be on family farms or in household-based businesses. Women in the agricultural sector are more overworked than men in terms of working hours. On average, women work 11.06 and men 9.68 hours a day. Men’s work is mostly paid for work, while almost half of the time women spend on work is unpaid (41.7% of women’s total working time is unpaid).⁷⁴ In fact, women living in rural areas is the largest group of unpaid family workers, compared to both women in urban areas and men generally.

The large share of rural women’s as unpaid family workers is an indicator of the significant role they play in farming. On individual agricultural holdings, women represent 42% of all household farm workers. They are also 39% of all seasonal farm workers. Yet, despite the agricultural labour they provide, women are only the registered holders of 10% of all farms in North Macedonia.⁷⁵

Women are likewise underrepresented in the Program for Direct Financial Support of Agriculture.⁷⁶ For example, from 2013-2017, only 16.9% of applications were submitted by women, and they received only 12.4% of the total value of all financial support that was granted.⁷⁷ One of the obstacles that women face in applying for support is the lack of recognition of the role they play in farming, combined with a lack of empowerment. For instance, according to one study, around 62% of women did not even consider themselves eligible to apply for an EU-supported Rural Development Program (IPARD), while 68% did not consider that they were eligible for loans offered by the Development Bank of North Macedonia.⁷⁸

⁷⁴ http://www.fznh.ukim.edu.mk/images/stories/proekti/unwzfzh/wp72020/infografiki_mk.pdf

⁷⁵ SSO (2017) Structure and Typology of Agricultural Holdings, 2016, pp. 71, 72, 76.

⁷⁶ IPARD programme, Agency for Financial Support of Agriculture and Rural Development.

⁷⁷ Dimitrievski et al. (2019) Measuring women’s empowerment, agriculture with survey-based and experimental economics method, Faculty of Agricultural Sciences and Food, Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje, UN Women, p. 60.

⁷⁸ Ibid, p. 33.

Figure 46. Employment rates by geographic settlement and sex

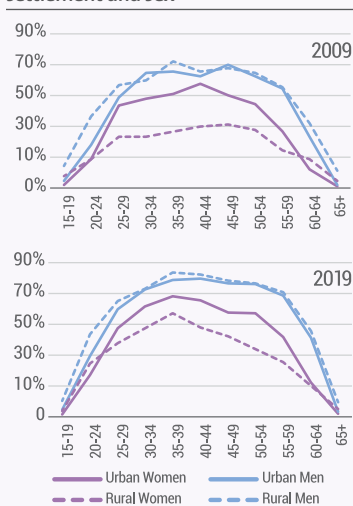
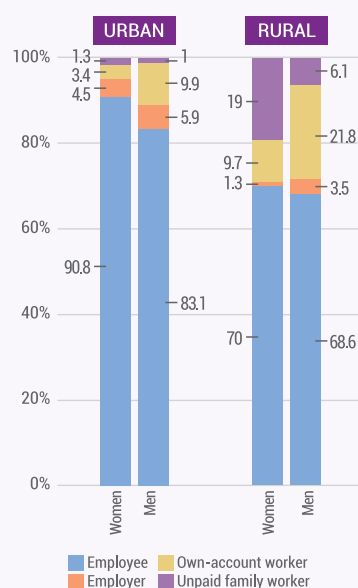


Figure 47. Women and men in employment, by employment status in urban and rural areas (2019)

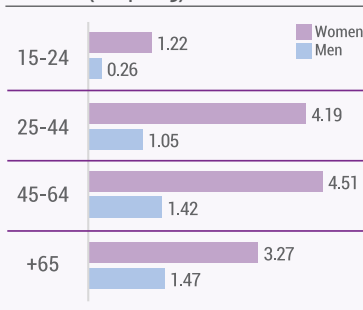


SDG indicator 5.4.1

Proportion of time spent on unpaid domestic and care work, by sex, age and location

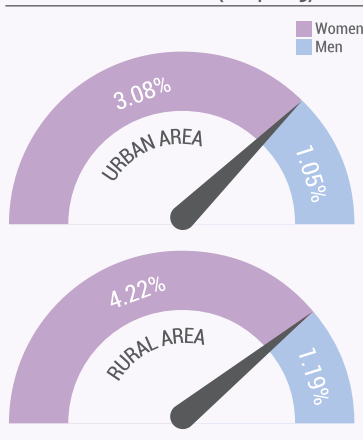


Figure 48.
Average time used per day on domestic activities (2014-2015)



Source: SSO. Time Use Survey 2014/2015.

Figure 49.
Average time used on domestic activities in urban and rural areas (2014-2015)



Source: SSO. Time Use Survey 2014/2015.

WOMEN'S UNPAID WORK

Gender stereotypes, and traditional gender roles, are still dominant in the country. Women take on the large share of unpaid domestic and care work. The percentage of women spending time on such unpaid domestic activities is seven times higher than that of men – the difference is 60.7 percentage points. As a result of the time spent in domestic activities and care work, women have less time for sports, cultural and leisure activities, including for voluntary and charitable activities, compared to men.⁷⁹ Especially significant, women's unpaid work burden has a direct impact on limiting their participation in the labour market. It is one of the reasons that women are economically inactive.

Women living in rural areas spend significantly more time on domestic activities compared to men, approximately three hours more per day. Additionally, women living in rural areas spend on average one hour and 14 minutes more on domestic activities than women in urban areas.

Women living in rural areas are burdened with paid employment and unpaid household work, such as cleaning, cooking, taking care of the children, grocery shopping, in addition to any work on household farms, such as producing fruits, vegetables, meat and dairy products.⁸⁰

⁷⁹ Bashevskva, M. (2019) Gender Equality Index for North Macedonia. Available at: https://eurogender.eige.europa.eu/system/files/events-files/gender_equality_index_for_north_macedonia_.pdf

⁸⁰ Time-Use Survey 2014-2015.

2.6 SOCIAL PROTECTION

The number of recipients of social cash benefits has been on a decline in the last two decades, with some worsening of the position of women observed recently. Women are significantly less frequently the heads of social cash-receiving households, about one woman for three men, with a sex ratio slightly improving over time and with a recent decline. This is due to the fact that, traditionally, the man is the head of the household, a role that is even more emphasized in poorer households. Observed through the gender of individuals in the receiving households, the two sexes have been almost on par, but this ratio then worsened since 2017 so that men are twice as likely to be recipients.

Women are more frequently users of **adult care institutions**, which is related to their longer life spans. By the time women are over age 80, they outnumber men in care homes by two to one. There has been no noticeable change in this trend over the years.

There are no significant gender differences among **children in institutions for care and education**, with the exception of children with disabilities. Namely, in 2019 there were three times more boys than girls with disabilities living in such institutions, an increase from the previous years. There is still widespread stigmatization of children with disabilities, and the figures indicate that such stigmatization is even more widespread for girls than for boys. As a result, girls are more often kept at home, which then limits their opportunities for education, socialization and participation in the society and their communities.

Special measures to increase the **employment of people with disabilities** are stipulated in the Law on Employment of Disabled Persons.⁸¹ Among such measures is establishment of trade company for employment of people with disabilities, as well as financial and other support for employment of persons with disabilities. With at least 40% of employed persons with disabilities (of a minimum of 10 employees), such trade companies, called “protection” companies, are the largest employers for persons with disabilities in the country.

Men with disabilities are almost double more employed in the trade companies that employ people with disabilities, as compared to women. One reason for this might be that such companies are mainly manufacturing facilities, where women with disabilities are additionally discriminated against. This further demonstrates the disadvantaged position of women with disabilities and the need for an intersectional approach when discussing gender inequalities.

Figure 50. Recipients of social cash benefits, households (top) and individuals (bottom)

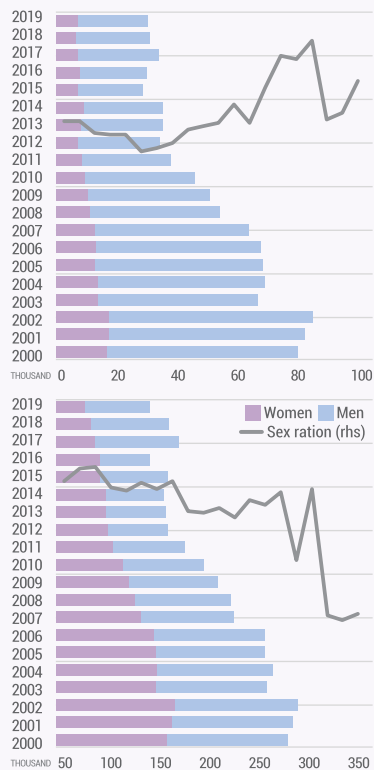
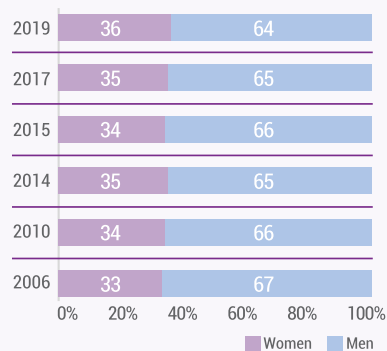


Figure 51. Employed persons with disabilities in “protection” companies



⁸¹ Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia no. 44/2000, 16/2004, 62/2005, 113/2005, 29/2007, 88/2008, 161/2008, 99/2009, 136/2011, 129/15 and 147/15.

SDG indicator 5.5.1

Proportion of seats held by women in
(a) national parliaments and
(b) local governments



Figure 52.
Ministers in the Governments
of North Macedonia

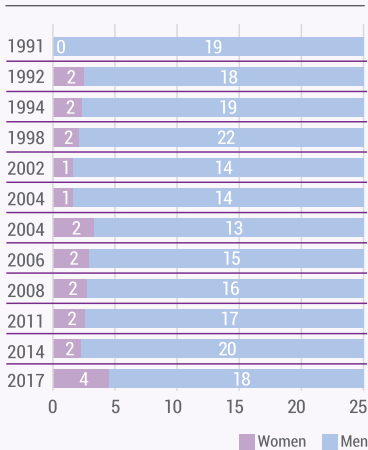
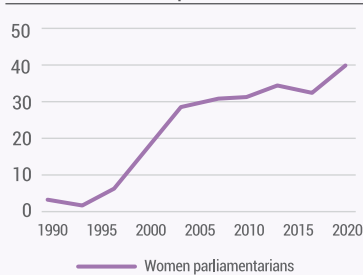


Figure 53.
Number of women parliamentarians



2.7 POWER AND DECISION-MAKING

The *Women and Men* publication does not include data about how women and men are represented in decision-making positions, which is an important indicator of the level of women’s empowerment. In North Macedonia, the State Electoral Commission is responsible for collecting, processing and analysing data on electoral candidates at central and local level. However, the data is not currently disaggregated by sex, but by political party of elected candidates.

Since 1991, no woman has been elected as President of North Macedonia, Prime Minister of the Government of North Macedonia nor President of the Assembly of North Macedonia. Two transitional Governments of North Macedonia were led by a female Prime Minister, both for short periods in 2004 - 21 days and 24 days.

Women are under-represented in ministerial positions of the executive power. In the first Government of 1991, no women were appointed to ministerial position. Increase in women’s participation occurred when the second Government was formed in 2004⁸² - 2 women were appointed ministers (15.4%). In the last two Governments of 2017 and 2022, the number of women ministers has increased to 4.

As described in section 1.3 above, continuous improvement of election regulations has had a positive effect on women’s participation in national politics in North Macedonia. Namely, amendments to the Electoral Code, requiring first 30% and then 40% of the under-represented sex to be included on candidate lists, have contributed to a steady increase in the number of women parliamentarians in the Parliament of North Macedonia. While the number of women parliamentarians was extremely low from 1990 until 2002 when affirmative measures (quotas) were first introduced, by 2020, 39.2% of parliamentarians were women - the highest share of women in the National Parliament. Still, there is currently only one Roma woman parliamentarian, and from 1991-2020, out of total number of 34 Vice-Presidents of the Parliament, only six have been women.

⁸² The elected Prime Minister of the first Government in 2004 was elected President of the Republic of Macedonia in the early presidential elections in 2004, therefore, a new Government was formed in 2004 and new Ministers were appointed.

Women’s representation in local executive offices is low and has remained so for the past decades. Since the country’s independence, local elections have been held seven times. In a 25-year period, only 18 women have been elected mayor in local elections, as compared to 642 male mayors. In some years - 1996 and 2009 - not a single woman was elected as a municipal mayor. The highest percent of female mayors to be elected was 7.4% (6 women), in 2017. Despite their low representation as mayors, women are active and vocal during election campaigns. The greatest number of female mayoral candidates ran for elections in 2013, while in 2017, 37.5% of mayoral candidates were women, and six of every 16 women who ran were elected.⁸³ In 2021, only two women were elected as mayors, one of whom is the mayor of Skopje.

One reason that women still have limited access to decision-making is the limited support they receive as candidates for leadership positions. The lack of women in decision-making positions at local and central levels is closely connected to insufficient internal support within political parties, pervasive hate speech directed against women in politics, as well as pervasive gender roles, stereotypes, and prejudices in society.

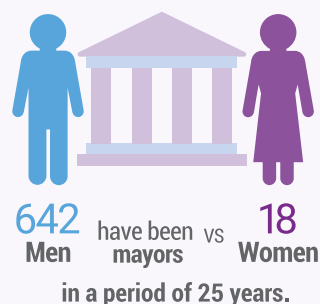
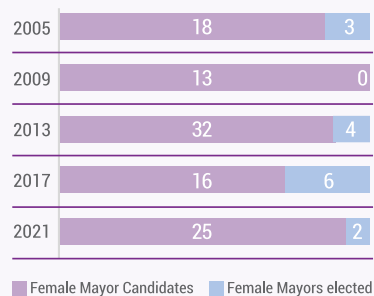


Figure 54. Number of women candidates and elected mayors in local elections



Source: State Electoral Commission

⁸³ Data from State Electoral Commission.

Figure 54.
Share of adults in the criminal justice system

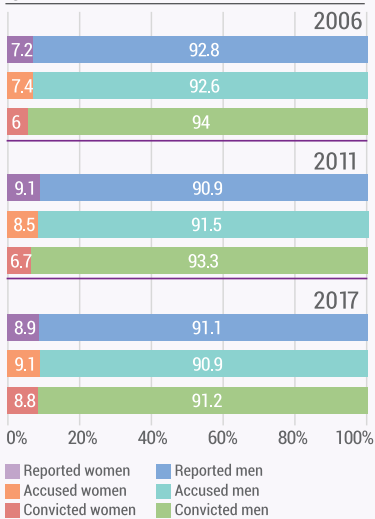
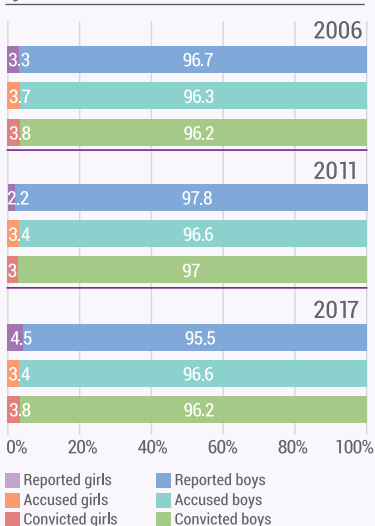


Figure 55.
Share of juveniles in the criminal justice system



2.8 CRIME AND JUSTICE

The *Women and Men* publication contains limited data about women and men as perpetrators of crime and no statistics on victims of crimes.

In general, women are significantly less likely to be involved in criminal activity and the criminal justice system than men. This pattern is consistent over the years. Women represent around six to nine percent of people reported as perpetrators, accused of and convicted of crimes.

The general pattern is the same for juveniles (under the age of 18), but girls are even less often involved in the criminal justice system than adult women. Girls are around three to four percent of juveniles reported as perpetrators, accused of and convicted of crimes.

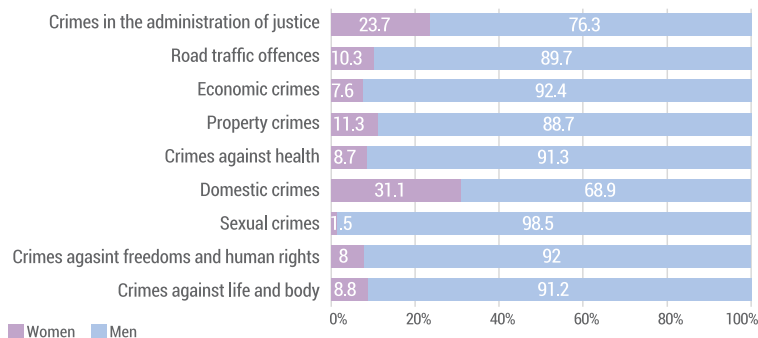
The reasons that men have a greater propensity for criminal behaviour are complex and often a reflection of gender roles, or the inability to fulfil societal perceptions of gender roles. It is also the case that women and men are treated differently by the criminal justice system, and this may explain why the number and proportion of women and girls involved in criminal proceedings is especially low.

Statistics about the types of crimes that women and men are involved in give some further insights into gender-based differences in criminal behaviour. Men are overly represented among those who are reported to have perpetrated violent crimes (for instance, murder and physical injury), sexual crimes, property crimes (theft, robbery, embezzlement) and economic crimes (money laundering, counterfeiting, tax evasion, smuggling, for example). While women are overall far less often reported to have committed criminal acts, when they are reported, it is for crimes connected with domestic life, such as crimes against children. Women are also more likely to be reported for crimes committed in the administration of justice, for example, making false criminal reports, giving false witness statements, or obstructing the collection of evidence.⁸⁴ While there is no statistical evidence of this, it is possible that women's involvement in the latter category of crimes occurs when their spouse or other family member is involved in criminal proceedings as a way to protect them.

Women's lesser involvement in violent crimes reflects their overall lower propensity for violence. Men's greater involvement in economic crimes is an indication that they have greater opportunities to commit such crimes given the types of positions they occupy in the economy generally.

⁸⁴ See, SSO (2018) Perpetrators of Criminal Offences in 2017.

Figure 56.
Share of reported adult perpetrators of crimes, by type of criminal offence and sex (2021)



GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Gender-based violence (GBV) refers to specific types of crimes that disproportionately victimise women and girls. Violence against women and girls occurs through their lifetimes, and it is most often perpetrated by a family member, spouse, or partner.

As noted in section 1.2, above, the establishment of a data collection system on GBV against women and domestic violence (DV) is outlined in national law and policy. The SSO and MLSP have responsibility for creating such a database. The Law on Prevention and Protection from Violence against Women and Domestic Violence envisions an integrated system, under which all relevant state bodies are obliged to collect statistical and administrative data.⁸⁵

Currently, the MLSP maintains internal statistics on domestic violence from data of the 30 Centres for Social Work that operate under the Ministry. These statistics are not published nationally and refer only to victims of domestic violence.

A starting point for the creation of the integrated database is a prevalence survey on GBV and DV that will provide basic data on the situation of women in North Macedonia. Such survey is being conducted at the time of the finalisation of this analysis.⁸⁶

⁸⁵ Government of the Republic of North Macedonia (2022) Report submitted by North Macedonia pursuant to Article 68, paragraph 1 of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Baseline Report), p. 12.

⁸⁶ SSO (2022) Survey on the safety of women in the family and society. 29 July 2022. https://www.stat.gov.mk/Aktivnosti_en.aspx?rbra=323.

SDG indicator 5.2.1



Proportion of ever-partnered women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to physical, sexual or psychological violence by a current or former intimate partner in the previous 12 months, by form of violence and by age

SDG indicator 5.2.2

Proportion of women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to sexual violence by persons other than an intimate partner in the previous 12 months, by age and place of occurrence

3. CONCLUSIONS

North Macedonia still has a long road ahead to achieve a gender equal society. Gathering, analysing, and regularly updating statistical data is crucial for monitoring the situation and taking the correct measures for the wellbeing of the entire population that would ensure progress of the country.

This analysis presents not only the trends of gender equality and the status of women over time, but it also identifies the challenges and gaps regarding gender data and gender statistics. The identification of these challenges will serve as a guide for the future work on improving gender data production, dissemination, analysis, and presentation.

MAIN CONCLUSIONS ON TRENDS IN GENDER EQUALITY:

- When looking at the population as whole, **there are more boys and men among the younger age groups, but more women as the population gets older.** By the time that people reach the age of 85, women outnumber men by almost two to one.
- **Women are deciding to have children later in life,** and this has led to a decline in the total number of births and an overall reduction in the fertility rate in the country since the 1990s. Whereas a woman had an average of 2.1 children in 1994, the rate declined to 1.6 children by 2000 and further to 1.3 children per woman by 2020.
- **Almost a third (29.2%) of Roma girls have had a live birth before the age of 18.** While the adolescent birth rate for the female population as a whole is 21 births per 1 000 women, for the Roma population in North Macedonia the rate is 114 births per 1 000 women.
- Compared to a decade ago, **Macedonian women and men are both entering marriages later.** The age at which women marry has increased from 24.5 years in 2005 to 26.9 years in 2019, while for men it increased from 27.6 to 29.7 years over the same time span.
- Child marriage for girls aged 15-19 has declined for the general female population (to a rate of 8.3%), but **for girls from the Roma community child marriage is still a frequent occurrence.**
- **Women migrate more both internally and externally.** From 2000 to 2015, the annual number of women that migrated to the capital has been consistently double that of the number of men.
- The average age of the population of North Macedonia has increased from 33.1 and 31.8 years for women and men, to 40.3 and 38.5 years, respectively, in 2020. Today, **a girl born in Macedonia can expect to live 77.9 years, and a boy - 73.6 years.**
- Women have a high level of knowledge about contraception methods. In contrast to knowledge, however, **the overall use of the contraceptive methods is low,** especially when it comes to forms of modern contraception.
- The majority of pregnant women receive antenatal care. Almost all women deliver in a public health facility (95.8%). **Post-natal care visits for new-borns are significantly higher than those for mothers.**
- **Maternal mortality in the official records is rare** (0-2 cases per year over the last decade). There were no maternal deaths registered from 2015-2019, but this suggests a high probability of under-registration, mostly due to misclassification of the cause of death.

- **Transition from primary to secondary education is consistently higher for boys, while transition from secondary to tertiary education is higher for girls.** Girls are more frequently early school-leavers.
- By the time that girls and boys reach the level of secondary education, **gender stereotypes play a role in their decisions to study specific subjects.** In health and personal services, for every one male graduate there are almost three female graduates. In contrast, boys dominate in perceived “masculine” fields of study such as manufacturing, mechanical and electrical engineering, agriculture, and hospitality (travel, tourism, hotels, and catering).
- **A larger share of women enrolls in tertiary education than men.** Women consistently represent more than half of enrolled students.
- Patterns of **gendered educational choices** that are seen in secondary education also continue into tertiary education.
- The share of the working-age population (aged 15-64) **attending formal education has been on the decline, for both women and men**, with no apparent gender differences. In relation to informal education, the take up is still very low, for both women and men, with slightly higher participation of women.
- The **teaching profession, at the primary and secondary school levels, is not only dominated by women, but it has become increasingly feminised in recent years.** For every one male teacher in primary schools, there were 2.3 female teachers in the 2019/2020 academic year compared to 1.3 female teachers in 2000/2001 academic year. In secondary schools, the ratio of female teachers increased from 1.2 to 1.6 for each male teacher during this same period. **Teaching at the university level attracts more men**, most probably due to the status and the higher pay of the position.
- Although it is narrowing, **there is still a gender digital divide**, referring to how men and women use information and communication technologies (ICTs). Comparing 2006 to 2019, women use the internet less frequently than men, but the numbers are equalizing.
- The **gender gap in employment rate for people aged 20-64 is 17.5%.** Women (aged 15+) are significantly less active in the labour market than men of the same age group. In 2020, women’s participation rate in the labour market was 45.7%. In comparison, in the same year, men’s participation rate in the labour market was 67.1%.
- **Men more frequently work as employers or are considered own account workers;** whereas women tend to work as employees.
- **Women are far more likely to be unpaid family workers**, and this trend has been increasing over time.
- There is **gendered occupational segregation on the labour market**, which means that women and men tend to be concentrated in particular sectors - the same fields that are the focus of their professional education. Women predominate in financial, educational, and health sectors, while the large majority of employees in mining, construction, and transport are men.
- Unemployment rates have been similar for both men and women, declining with a similar pace over time. However, **there are more unemployed women than men with no education, with incomplete education and with higher education.**

- **Women living in rural areas have the lowest employment rates**, as compared to rural men and to the urban population generally. Rural women are especially disadvantaged regarding employment due to such factors as the gendered division of labour in households and the lack of social services that would allow them to (re)enter the labour market, notably childcare services.
- **Gender stereotypes, and traditional gender roles, are still dominant** in the country. Women take on the large share of unpaid domestic and care work.
- In a 25-year period, **only 18 women have been elected mayor in local elections**, as compared to 642 male mayors. In some years - 1996 and 2009 - not a single woman was elected as a municipal mayor.
- Women are significantly less likely to be involved in criminal activity and the criminal justice system than men.

MAIN CONCLUSIONS RELATED TO THE STATISTICAL PUBLICATION “WOMEN AND MEN IN NORTH MACEDONIA”:

- This analysis showed that the publication *Women and Men in the Republic of Macedonia/North Macedonia* followed the same structure throughout the years, with no variations from one year to another, with some small exceptions.
- In all the sectors that are covered in the publication, the gender data presented is mainly produced by the SSO, while administrative gender data and statistics are mainly missing, showing lack of coordination and standardization among the various data producers in the public administration system.
- Important information missing from the publication is data related to GBV and DV, as well data about women in decision-making positions - women in politics, government, and at managerial positions. Showing data related to women’s participation in the government structures, women in parliament, women-ministers, women-mayors, women in corporate boards, women-entrepreneurs etc., is indispensable in understanding how women feature at the top of the power and income ladder in the society compared to men. It will also provide information about the potential existence of the glass ceiling, which was observable from the limited information contained in the occupational disaggregation.
- Important surveys, such as Time-Use Survey (TUS) or Demographics and Health Survey (DHS) have not been included in the publication, despite including a considerable number of gender indicators with consolidated methodology at international level, which is also in line with the SDG gender-related indicators.
- Intersectional approach that would allow further disaggregation is generally lacking in the presentation of gender statistics (e.g., age, disability, regional disaggregation, level of education, marital status, etc.).

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