



KYRGYZSTAN

Kyrgyzstan, or the Kyrgyz Republic (pop. 6 million), located in Central Asia, is a landlocked country, bordering the Himalayas and China on the East, and three other former republics of the Soviet Union (Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan). The country consists of 6 oblasts, 41 regions, 20 cities, 29 towns and 422 rural administrations. Kyrgyzstan is a rural country: more than 70% of the population lives in rural areas and 64% of villagers are women.

The dissolution of the Soviet Union and the Soviet trade bloc resulted in a loss of markets for Kyrgyzstan and severe economic difficulties. As of 2017, 31.7% of the country's population lives below the poverty line. However, it is worth noting that as the country transitioned to a market economy, its economic performance improved significantly, particularly since 1998. With regards to religion, Kyrgyzstan is a secular state, although Islam is becoming increasingly influential in politics.



WOMEN'S RIGHTS

The Kyrgyz Republic has undergone significant political and economic changes, which undoubtedly affected gender equality in the country. In 2010, Rosa Otunbayeva was appointed interim president and became the first female head of state of a member of the Commonwealth of Independent States. Considerable attention was paid to the development of a gender equality policy since 2010, although implementation remains slow. Women's representation in the parliament increased to 24%. There is a wide gap in men's and women's rates of participation in the labor force, with 77% of men but only 52% of women participating (data from 2010). Cultural practices, such as the kidnapping of brides and early marriage for girls still persist, but they are being increasingly challenged by women's rights NGOs.

However, a legislation equating the abduction of women for marriage against their will with kidnapping under the criminal code was signed into law in January 2013. The Law On State Guarantees of Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities for Men and Women (2008) establishes the principle of gender equality. The Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic, reformed in 2010, guarantees equal rights and opportunities for men and women and prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex. A government resolution in May 2012 established the National Council for Gender Development, chaired by the deputy prime minister. A month later, in June 2012, the National Strategy on Gender Equality 2020 was adopted.

52%
women's participation
in the labor force

24%
women's participation
in the parliament





WOMEN2030 IN KYRGYZSTAN

Rural Women's Association "Alga" Kyrgyzstan, is part of the Women2030 program, which aims to engage women's organizations in the process of achieving the SDGs of Agenda 2030.

In the framework of the Women2030 Programme, from April to June 2017, "Alga" and WECF conducted a gender assessment in 10 communities in 3 oblasts: Osh, Ysuk-Kul, and Chui. The assessment consisted of focus group discussions and questionnaires. In total, 814 villagers 601 of which were women participated in the assessment.

The overall aim of the gender assessment was to explore the population's opinions on and perceptions of the process of implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Kyrgyzstan, with a particular focus on SDG 5 and the distribution of power, resources and opportunities between women and men in Kyrgyz society. The results indicate that despite the Kyrgyz government's attempts to actively promote gender equality, gender discrimination persist in the society. The detailed results of the gender assessment are presented in this factsheet and form the basis of the Women2030 Shadow Report.



DEMOGRAPHIC

The gender assessment questionnaires were filled in by 631 people- 450 women (71%) and 181 men (29%), from 10 rural, peri-urban and urban communities in 3 oblasts. Additionally, focus group discussions were carried out with another 151 women and 26 men. The results of the questionnaires are community-generated data, based on a well-founded survey methodology, which can be used as input into the national SDG monitoring.

Customary laws, such as early or unregistered civil marriages, still limit women's access to education and economic resources and violate their inheritance rights.

Rural respondents, especially women, are more dissatisfied with their living conditions than urban respondents.

Women's participation in decision-making at home is reliant on their income. In the political and economic sectors women are largely underrepresented.

Polygamy is technically illegal, but still widely practiced. It has been endorsed by some public figures and 22% of the population supports the practice, according to a 2017 poll.

Study participants listed improving pre-school child care and getting official marriage and divorce papers as their highest priorities.

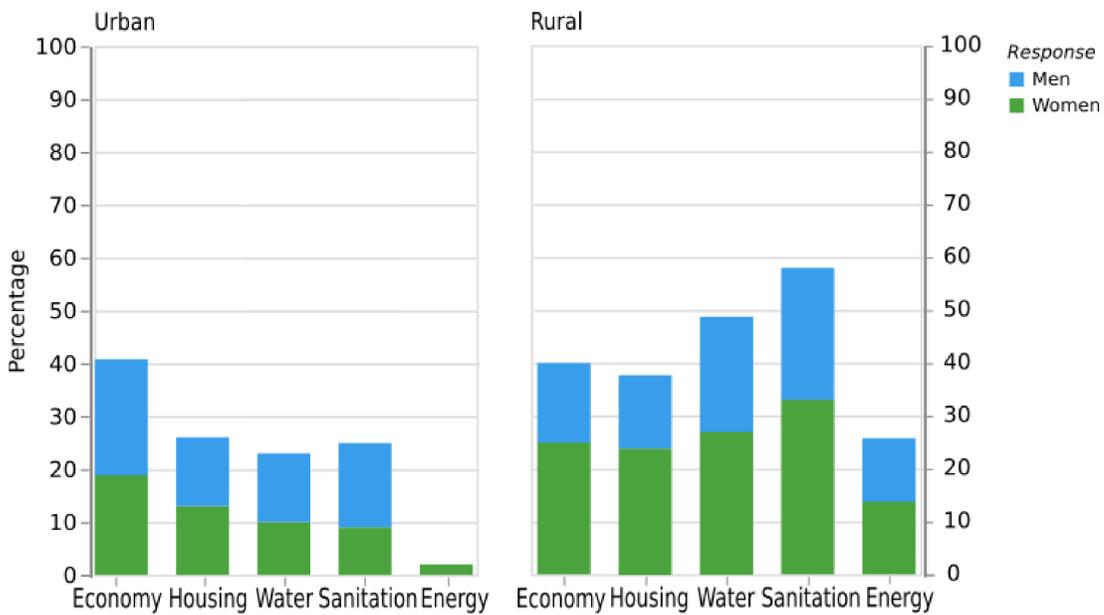
22%
of the population support the legalisation of polygamy





LIVING CONDITIONS

Survey respondents who think their living conditions are bad or very bad



41%

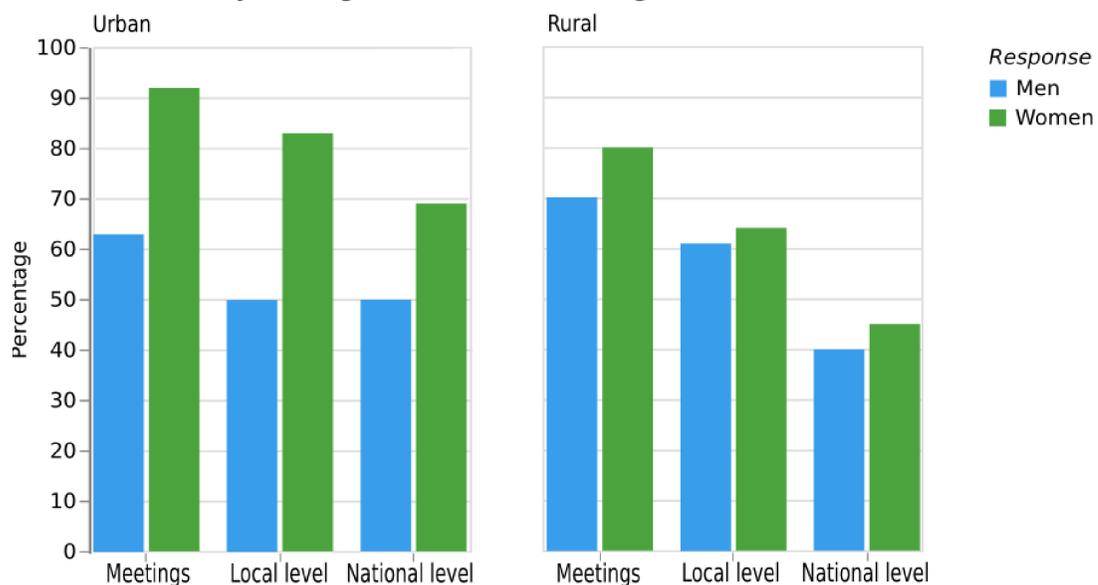
of respondents in urban areas consider their economic situation to be bad

59%

of respondents in rural areas have poor or very poor access to sanitation services

DECISION-MAKING

Survey respondents who expressed a positive opinion on women's participation in community meetings and in decision making at the local and national levels

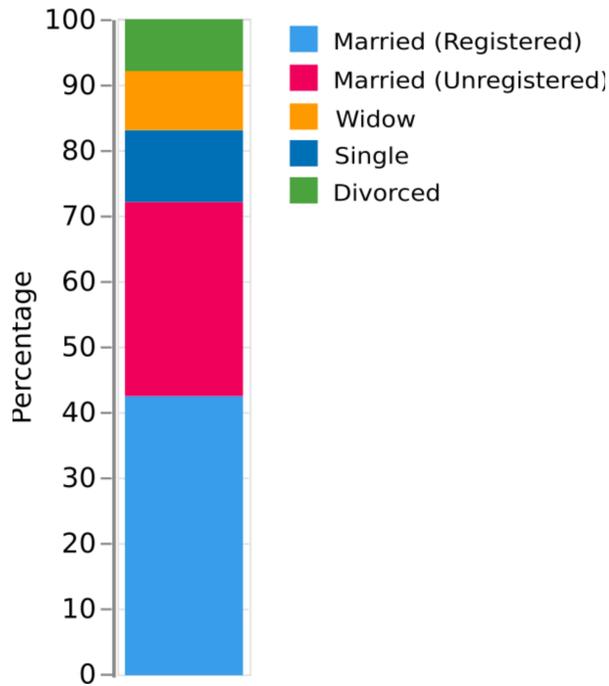


While female respondents think they have a decision-making power, especially in their neighbourhood and on the local level, all participants agreed that the decision-making power belongs to men and the influence of women is very limited. Women's decision-making power in rural regions is particularly limited and closely related to their age, employment status and religious/customary practices. In the education and health care sectors women do participate in decision-making, but remain particularly underrepresented in the political and economic sphere.



WOMEN BEFORE THE LAW

Women's marital status



Customary laws, such as early marriage, unregistered civil marriage, limited or no access to education and inheritance practices governing the access to economic resources continue to dictate women's lives. Discriminatory customary laws govern the right of women in case of a divorce.

Women are likely to stay in unwanted marriages, so as not to lose their rights in the household or child custody as these rights are typically vested in the husband. Additionally, men often register property, cars or equipment on their parent's or unmarried sibling's name, so as to circumvent any rights their wife may have in this property upon divorce.

41%
of women who are married have not registered their union

3%
of men who are married have not registered their union

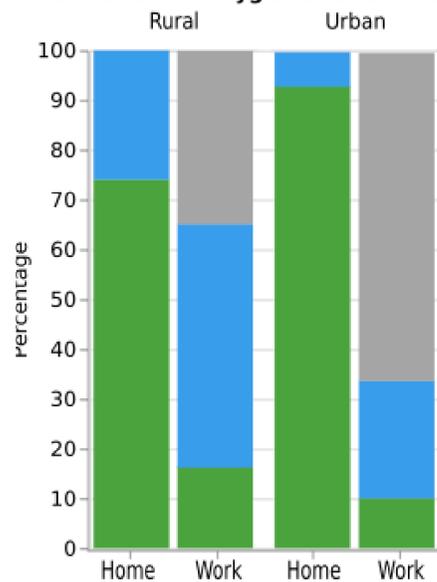
Women and men are equal by law but the implementation of the law remains insufficient, leaving women in Kyrgyzstan at a disadvantage.

8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

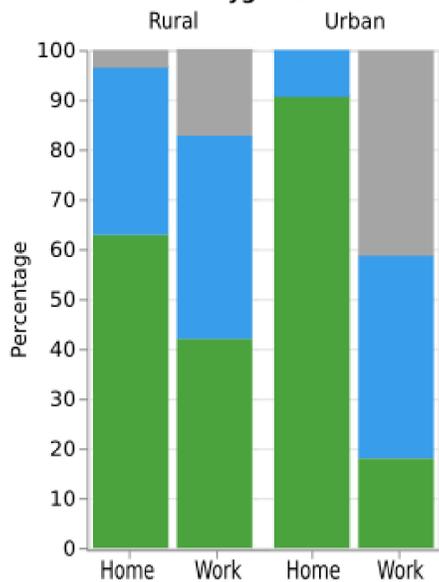


INADEQUATE HYGIENE

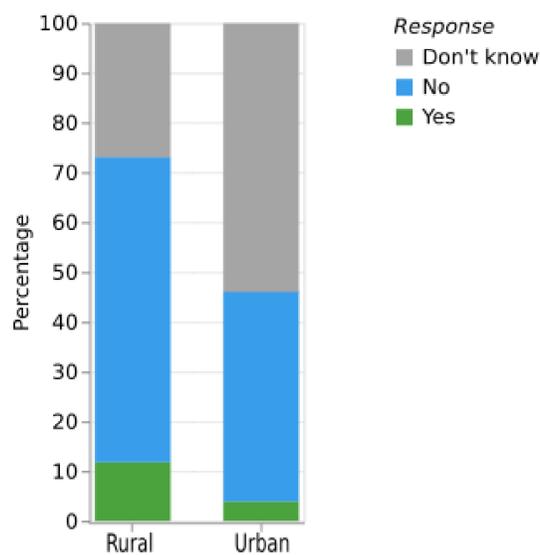
To women: Do you have decent sanitation and hygiene conditions?



To men: Do you have decent sanitation and hygiene conditions?



Do your daughters have decent sanitation and hygiene conditions at school and are they able to wash and change in privacy?



6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION



Limited access to sanitation and safe water supplies affects the lives of Kyrgyz women and girls disproportionately. They face the additional burden of collecting and treating water, as well as serious health risks resulting from poor hygiene conditions during their periods or pregnancies. Public toilets often lack door-locks or even doors, and bad hygiene conditions at schools force girls to run home between classes to change during their periods. Women working in agriculture are also greatly affected because there are no private spaces to change.



POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the gender assessment, the following policy recommendations are made to advance gender equality and the implementation of the SDGs in Kyrgyzstan.

Raise public awareness on SDGs

One of the main challenges in Kyrgyzstan and the region is the lack of awareness of the SDGs. For this reason, awareness campaigns, related publications and media coverage are essential.

Improve living conditions

There is an urgent need for action with regard to living conditions. National programmes are needed to ensure the provision of safe drinking water, sanitation and hygiene, affordable and reliable energy, as well as adequate funding for implementation. The population in rural areas is particularly severely affected and must be taken into account with special measures.

Promote women's participation

At the national level, efforts are being made to increase women's participation in decision-making (e.g. through a 30% women's quota in the national parliament and city municipalities). However, there is still a need for action to involve women in rural areas. A campaign is currently underway to apply the 30% women's quota to the rural councils as well. In addition, information about women's rights is essential and should go hand in hand with monitoring the implementation of existing laws.

Safe spaces for women and girls

In Kyrgyzstan there is a big difference in the time women spend on unpaid domestic work and childcare compared to men. This is considered the norm, with patriarchal structures still prevalent in the country. The trend towards strengthening religious fundamentalism is further alarming.

Targeted measures to counteract are education on gender equality and stereotypes as well as information on best practices from other countries. In addition to access to basic services, it is particularly important to create safe spaces for women and girls to pursue their hobbies and develop freely.

Stand up for gender equality

A clear political positioning of the government in support of gender equality is needed. In addition, international commitments related to Agenda 2030 must be met. In this regard, it is also important to ensure involvement, consultation and coordination with key stakeholders, grassroots movements and vulnerable groups, and secure funding for their mobilisation and capacity building.

