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Ministry of Human
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GENDER EQUALITY

PROFILE OF MONTENEGRO

Podgorica, 2025





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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS:

AC	Agricultural census
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women
CGA	Country Gender Assessment
CoE	Council of Europe
CSO	Civil society organizations
DS	Department of Security
EBM	Employment Bureau of Montenegro
EBRD	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
EC	European Commission
EIDHR	European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights
EU	European Union
EUD	Delegation of the European Union in Montenegro
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GREVIO	Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence
HRMA	Human Resources Management Authority
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IECS	Institute for Execution of Criminal Sanctions
ILO	International Labor Organization
IPARD	Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance in Rural Development
MOD	Ministry of Defense
MOI	Ministry of Interior
MONSTAT	Statistical Office of Montenegro
MP	Member of Parliament
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	Non- governmental organization
NSA	National Security Agency
OSCE	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
PAR	Public Administration Reform
PD	Police Directorate
SAI	State Audit Institution
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SSPO	Supreme State Prosecutor's Office
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
WPN	Women's Political Network
WPS	Women, Peace, and Security

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INTRODUCTION

Gender disparities persist across various aspects of political, social, and economic life in Montenegro. This report examines these inequalities, providing an in-depth analysis of progress and challenges, as well as the structural and cultural barriers that continue to limit gender equality.

Montenegro's approach to gender equality in legal sense demonstrates a commitment to creating an equitable society, but this vision is often hindered by fragmentation in the implementation of policies and programs. While legal frameworks are in place, translating these into consistent practices remains a challenge. The disconnect between laws and their application underscores the need for strengthened institutional mechanisms and cross-sectoral coordination.

The role of public discourse and societal values is critical in shaping perceptions of gender equality. Although there has been increased attention to these issues in policy discussions, societal engagement and awareness remain limited. Efforts to elevate gender equality as a priority often compete with other political and economic challenges, diluting their impact. A more inclusive dialogue, involving diverse stakeholders, is essential to embedding gender equality as a core principle of Montenegro's development.

Socioeconomic conditions further complicate efforts to achieve gender equality. Regional disparities, particularly between urban and rural areas, exacerbate inequities, leaving rural communities with fewer resources and opportunities. This geographical divide impacts access to essential services, education, and employment, disproportionately affecting women and reinforcing systemic barriers.

This is why it is crucial to develop a comprehensive gender equality profile that systematically identifies and maps the various vulnerabilities and gaps in the implementation of gender equality principles in Montenegro. By critically examining the current situation and analyzing available data, this profile would provide valuable insights into the structural, institutional, and societal barriers that hinder progress toward achieving gender equality.

A robust analysis of gender-disaggregated data or the lack of it thereof, is essential to understanding the nuanced realities of various societal groups. These insights should serve as a catalyst for informed decision-making and evidence-based policy development. By identifying critical gaps and providing actionable recommendations, this analysis reminds how it is important to motivate policymakers, institutions, and civil society to strengthen their efforts and align resources toward achieving tangible outcomes in gender equality.

This study analyses the data, legislation and institutional mechanisms in the various sectors, such as:

- ❖ Rule of Law (Political Participation, Public administration reform, Violence against Women, Trafficking in Human Beings)
- ❖ Education and Science
- ❖ Employment and Social Protection
- ❖ Health care
- ❖ Agriculture
- ❖ Energy, Transport, Environment and Climate Change

- ❖ Competitiveness and Innovation
- ❖ Media and Communication
- ❖ Security and defense

The Gender Equality Profile offers a comprehensive view of Montenegro's progress toward gender equality, highlighting both achievements and areas in need of urgent attention. It calls for not only systemic reform but also a shift in cultural attitudes to build a more inclusive society.



1. COUNTRY CONTEXT

Montenegro is the smallest country in the Western Balkans, with 13,812 square km and an estimated population of 623,633. According to the 2024 census, women make up 50.8% of the population.

After regaining independence in 2006, Montenegro became the 192nd UN member on the same year and has been actively contributing to the work of the UN and its specialized and affiliated agencies since. Montenegro joined the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in 2006 and has contributed to its initiatives in political, economic-environmental, and human dimensions. In 2007, Montenegro became the 47th member of the Council of Europe, reflecting its dedication to upholding human rights, democracy, and the rule of law. Its accession to NATO in 2017 marked a significant step in ensuring its security and strategic integration with Western alliances. Montenegro's aspirations for European Union (EU) membership have been a central pillar of its foreign and domestic policy, with accession negotiations ongoing since 2012. Of the 35 chapters required for EU membership, 29 have been opened, and six provisionally closed.

Since independence, the country has made substantial strides in establishing a legal framework that aligns with international norms. The Constitution of Montenegro, adopted in 2007, enshrines the principles of equality, human rights, and the rule of law. Notably, Article 9 of the Constitution integrates ratified international agreements into its legal system, granting them supremacy over national legislation. This foundational principle underscores Montenegro's commitment to upholding international standards.

Regarding advancing gender equality, key international conventions were ratified, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Istanbul Convention on combating violence against women. Despite these commitments, significant challenges remain. Women are underrepresented in political decision-making, holding only a fraction of leadership roles in government and parliament. The introduction of gender quotas in electoral processes has increased women's participation but has yet to achieve parity. At the local government level, fewer women hold mayoral or assembly president roles, reflecting ongoing structural barriers.

Economic inequality is another persistent issue. Women, particularly in rural areas, face obstacles such as limited access to credit, land ownership, and entrepreneurial opportunities. Traditional gender roles and the disproportionate burden of unpaid care work further hinder their economic empowerment.

Gender-based violence remains a critical concern. The implementation of the Istanbul Convention has improved legal protections and support services, but gaps in enforcement and societal attitudes persist. Recent amendments to domestic violence laws have strengthened penalties and expanded definitions, but coordinated efforts are necessary to ensure effective implementation.

Education and media also play pivotal roles in shaping societal attitudes toward gender equality. Additionally, integrating gender perspectives into public administration reform ensures that policies and services address the diverse needs of men and women.

Finally, deeply rooted gender stereotypes remain a significant barrier to achieving comprehensive gender equality. These stereotypes not only limit opportunities for women but also reinforce systemic inequities across all sectors of society. Addressing these challenges requires sustained efforts at all levels, from legislative reforms and institutional capacity building to cultural shifts in societal attitudes.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The **Gender Equality Profile of Montenegro** provides a detailed examination of progress and challenges across multiple sectors. While advancements have been made in aligning legal frameworks with international norms, systemic challenges and stereotypes continue to impede full gender equality.

This analysis shows that in **politics**, women's representation is improving, yet it remains below European averages. Women occupy 28.4% of parliamentary seats and 33.8% of local assembly seats. Quotas introduced in the Election Law have increased women's participation, but insufficient party support and entrenched prejudices, persist.

In **education**, Montenegro has achieved gender parity in primary and secondary education, yet disparities persist in STEM fields and higher education. Traditional gender norms continue to influence subject choices and career aspirations, limiting opportunities for women in high-demand sectors. Efforts to integrate gender-responsive content in curricula and improve teacher training are ongoing but require greater scale and impact.

In **employment**, women face significant barriers, including a gender pay gap, limited access to leadership positions, and the disproportionate burden of unpaid care work. Women's labor force participation is lower than men's, especially in rural areas, where access to economic opportunities is limited. Traditional gender roles continue to shape occupational choices, with women underrepresented in high-paying industries and overrepresented in lower-paying, precarious jobs. Policies promoting women's entrepreneurship, such as the Strategy for the Development of Women's Entrepreneurship (2021–2024), aim to improve access to financing and training, but their reach remains limited.

The **health sector** reveals mixed outcomes. While Montenegro has achieved near-universal access to basic healthcare, significant gaps remain in addressing women's specific health needs, particularly in sexual and reproductive health services. Women from rural areas face additional barriers to accessing quality healthcare due to geographic and economic constraints. Mental health support services, particularly for survivors of gender-based violence, are underdeveloped. Additionally, societal stigma and traditional norms limit discussions and access to comprehensive reproductive health education, further exacerbating disparities.

In the **media**, gender stereotypes are deeply entrenched, with women often portrayed in traditional or subordinate roles. Media organizations have been slow to adopt gender-sensitive practices, and coverage often reinforces discriminatory attitudes. Advocacy campaigns have emphasized the importance of balanced and fair representation, but systemic change remains limited.

In the **agriculture sector**, women face significant barriers, particularly in rural areas where they are underrepresented in decision-making roles and have limited access to land ownership and credit. Traditional gender roles often confine women to unpaid labor, perpetuating economic disparities. Despite these challenges, initiatives aimed at empowering women in agriculture through access to training and financial resources are showing promise, though their reach remains insufficient.

In **public administration and governance**, gender mainstreaming is highlighted in the Public Administration Reform Strategy (2022–2026). However, significant gaps persist, with only 25% of public administration employees receiving relevant training. Women remain underrepresented in leadership roles, and awareness of gender equality principles among civil servants is limited.

The **defence sector** remains heavily male-dominated. While there is growing acknowledgment of the need for greater gender integration in defence policies and practices, progress has been slow. Training programs and initiatives to promote gender equality in security and defence institutions are at early stages and lack the resources for large-scale impact.

Gender-based violence continues to be pervasive, affecting one in four women. Recent amendments to domestic violence laws expanded protections and strengthened penalties, but enforcement is inconsistent. Only 6.24% of cases result in prison sentences, and crisis centers for victims remain insufficient. Societal attitudes often trivialize violence, with 41% of citizens viewing it as a private matter.

Institutional mechanisms, including Department for Gender Equality are in place but face resource and capacity constraints. Data collection and monitoring mechanisms across sectors are insufficient, hindering informed policymaking. Overall, while Montenegro has made progress in aligning its policies with international standards, substantial efforts are needed to address gender disparities in agriculture, education, media, defence, and other sectors. Cultural attitudes, systemic barriers, and insufficient enforcement of existing laws continue to challenge the realization of gender equality as a principle and as a value.



3. LEGISLATIVE AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

Preconditions for achieving gender equality in Montenegro are laid in international and national legislative and institutional framework.

3.1 INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS

The basis for the integration of international standards regarding gender equality in Montenegro's legal system is found in Article 9 of the Constitution.

"The ratified and published international agreements and generally accepted rules of international law shall make an integral part of the internal legal order, shall have the supremacy over the national legislation and shall be directly applicable when they regulate the relations differently from the internal legislation."

Montenegro has ratified key international conventions dedicated to advancing gender equality. Despite these efforts, significant implementation challenges remain.

Gender equality is globally guided by various norms and standards. Numerous international regulations have a significant role in advancing gender equality and there are few milestones worth mentioning. First, we have the UN Charter (1945) and the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948). Equality between men and women in the exercise and protection of human rights was proclaimed in both these documents. After the United Nations was founded, the Commission on the Status of Women was established within the UN Economic and Social Council in 1946 with the mandate to monitor the status of women and accordingly make proposals to the General Assembly and reports on women's rights in the political, economic, civil, social, and educational spheres.

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), as the fundamental Convention that regulates the area of gender equality, was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1979. It entered into force on 3 September 1981 after the twentieth country had ratified it. By the tenth anniversary of the Convention in 1989, almost one hundred nations have agreed to be bound by its provisions. It was mainly the result of the work by the Commission on the Status of Women.

- ❖ In Article 2 of CEDAW, it is stated that States Parties condemn discrimination against women in all its forms and agree to pursue by all appropriate means and without delay a policy of eliminating discrimination against women;¹
- ❖ It obliges the State Parties, among other things, to embody the principle of the equality of men and women in their national constitutions; to adopt appropriate legislative and other measures, including sanctions where appropriate, prohibiting all discrimination against women; to establish legal protection of the rights of women on an equal basis with men;²
- ❖ In line with Article 3, States Parties are obliged to take all appropriate measures, including legislation, in

1 CEDAW, <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/cedaw.htm>, accessed on 10th of August, 2024.

2 CEDAW, <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/cedaw.htm>, accessed on 10th of August, 2024.

all fields, in particular in the political, social, economic, and cultural fields, to ensure the full development and advancement of women;³

- ❖ Article 4 stresses that the adoption of temporary special measures aimed at accelerating de facto equality between men and women shall not be considered discrimination as defined in the present Convention, but shall in no way entail as a consequence the maintenance of unequal or separate standards; these measures shall be discontinued when the objectives of equality of opportunity and treatment have been achieved;⁴
- ❖ Article 7 sets the ground for establishing the appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the political and public life of the country. In particular, it ensures to women the active and passive right to vote on equal terms with men; the right to participate in the formulation of government policy and the implementation thereof, and to hold public office and perform all public functions at all levels of government; the right to participate in non-governmental organizations and associations concerned with the public and political life of the country.⁵

With the purpose of monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the Convention, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women was established, as a body that consists of 23 independent experts on women's rights from around the world.

Montenegro reported on CEDAW implementation three times so far, in 2011, 2017 and 2021. The CEDAW Committee's concluding observations on each report commended progress made in relation to the legislative framework. The biggest complaint in the observations after the 2011 and 2017 reports was the lack of information on any judicial or administrative proceedings in which the Convention has been directly applied or invoked. This was the principal area of concern in 2021 report, as well. In addition to complaints related to judicial or administrative proceedings, the Committee has highlighted the need for enhanced access to justice for women and girls.⁶

Another important international standard is Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995.

It was a major turning point since it set the Platform for action in various areas with ambitious goals. The following areas were included: Women and Poverty, Education and Training of Women, Women, and Health, Violence against Women, Women and Armed Conflict, Women and the Economy, Women in Power and Decision Making, Institutional Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women, Human Rights of Women, Women and the Media, Women, and Environment and The Girl Child.⁷

Montenegro chose to act in eight thematic areas: Promotion of women's human rights and gender equality, Gender-sensitive upbringing and education, Gender equality in the economy; Gender-sensitive health care, Gender-based violence, Gender equality in the media, culture, and sports, Equality in the decision-making process in political and public life, Institutional mechanisms for implementation of gender equality and international cooperation.

The latest 2019⁸ report on the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA) in Montenegro highlighted progress in legal frameworks, institutional mechanisms for gender equality, resource

3 Ibid

4 Ibid

5 Ibid

6 CEDAW, <https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/n21/422/53/pdf/n2142253.pdf?token=K6CV3BQe3s1TAfsiZh&fe=true>, accessed on 10th of August, 2024.

7 Beijing Platform, <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/pdf/Beijing%20full%20report%20E.pdf>, accessed on 10th of August, 2024.

8 National Review Montenegro, <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/CSW/64/National-reviews/Montenegro.pdf>, accessed on 10th of August, 2024.

allocation, capacity building, and data collection and evaluation. Priority areas of concern were related to the quality of education, training and life-long learning for women and girls, eliminating violence against women and girls, access to affordable quality health care, political participation and women's entrepreneurship.

Additional significant international mechanism is the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention), which Montenegro ratified in 2013. Istanbul Convention requires member states to develop laws, policies, and services to end violence against women and domestic violence.

The implementation of Istanbul Convention is monitored by the Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO), which performed its first thematic evaluation visit in Montenegro in 2024⁹, to observe how national laws and policies in the state deliver support and provide access to justice for women victims of violence, based on the Istanbul Convention standards. In its 2024 Report, GREVIO acknowledged that the authorities "have taken important steps to further align their legal and policy framework with the requirements of the Istanbul Convention".¹⁰ However, some areas still need urgent actions, such as overcoming patriarchal attitudes across all sectors, strengthening the skills of professionals and offering psycho-social treatment programmes for perpetrators of violence.

Comprehensive framework to effectively prevent and combat violence against women and domestic violence is provided in **Directive (EU) 2024/1385 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024**¹¹, which reinforces and introduces measures in the following key areas: the definition of relevant criminal offences and penalties, victim protection and access to justice, victim support services, improved data collection, prevention strategies, and enhanced coordination and cooperation.¹² This Directive is built upon the existing provisions at both the EU and national levels that have previously addressed and prevented violence against women and domestic violence, such as the Directive 2011/36/EU and 2011/93/EU of the European Parliament and the Council, and Directive 2012/29/EU.

3.2 NATIONAL LEGISLATION

In the Constitution of Montenegro, the highest law in the country adopted in 2007, gender equality is addressed in two articles.

- ❖ Direct or indirect discrimination on any grounds is prohibited by Article 8. The provisions of this same article define that regulations and introduction of special measures aimed at creating the conditions for the exercise of national, gender, and overall equality and protection of persons who are in an unequal position on any grounds shall not be considered discrimination. It is emphasized, as well, that special measures may only be applied until the achievement of the aims for which they were undertaken. This article is directly incorporated in the Constitution from the CEDAW Article 4.
- ❖ In Article 18, it is defined that the state shall guarantee the equality of women and men and shall develop the policy of equal opportunities.

In addition to the Constitution, there are three laws that further regulate the area of gender equality in Montenegro – the Law on Prohibition of Discrimination, the Law on Gender Equality and the Law on the Protector of Human Rights and Freedoms.

9 Thematic Evaluation Montenegro, <https://www.coe.int/en/web/istanbul-convention/-/grevio-carries-out-its-1st-thematic-evaluation-visit-to-montenegro>, accessed on 10th of August, 2024.

10 GREVIO Report 2024, <https://rm.coe.int/first-thematic-evaluation-report-building-trust-by-delivering-support-/1680b28771>, accessed on 8th of May, 2025.

11 Directive (EU) 2024/1385 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2024/1385/oj/eng>, accessed on 8th of May, 2025.

12 Ibid

In the Law on Prohibition of Discrimination, which was adopted in 2010, and significantly amended in 2017¹³, direct and indirect discrimination are defined more precisely.

- ❖ Discrimination, as any unjustified, legal or factual, direct or indirect distinction or unequal treatment, or failure to treat a person or a group of persons in comparison to other persons, as well as exclusion, restriction, or preferential treatment of a person in comparison to other persons, based on race, the color of skin, national affiliation, social or ethnic origin, affiliation to the minority nation or minority national community, language, religion or belief, political or other opinion, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, health conditions, disability, age, material status, marital or family status, membership in a group or assumed membership in a group, political party or other organization, as well as other personal characteristics, is defined by Article 2.
- ❖ Direct discrimination is defined as a situation in which a person or a group of persons, in the same or are brought in an unequal position by an act, action, or failure to act, on any ground referred to in paragraph 2 of this Article, while indirect discrimination exists if an apparently neutral provision of a regulation or general act, criterion or practice is bringing or can bring a person or a group of persons into unequal position in respect to other person or group of persons, on any ground referred to in paragraph 2.
- ❖ Discrimination based on gender identity and sexual orientation is defined explicitly by Article 19 as any differentiation, unequal treatment, or bringing a person in an unequal position based on gender identity or sexual orientation. It is stated as well that everyone has the right to express their gender identity and sexual orientation. Gender identity and sexual orientation are personal matters of every person, and no one can be invited to publicly declare its gender identity and sexual orientation.

The Law on Gender Equality presents one of the core legal acts in the area of gender. However, penal provisions are necessary for many articles of this Law, which would be imposed on institutions in case they do not develop rules and procedures to achieve gender equality.

The Law on Gender Equality was adopted in 2007, the same year as the Constitution, and presents one of the most important legal sources for achieving gender equality in Montenegro. The scope of the law is defined in Article 1, which identifies the law as a frame for “regulating the manner of providing and implementing rights based on gender equality, in accordance with the international regulations and generally accepted rules of international law, as well as measures to eliminate discrimination based on sex and create equal opportunities for participation of women and men, as well as persons of different gender identities in all spheres of social life”.¹⁴

Article 2 defines gender equality:

- ❖ “Gender equality shall mean equal participation of women and men, as well as persons of different gender identities in all spheres of the public and private sectors, equal position and equal opportunities to exercise all rights and freedoms and use personal knowledge and skills for the development of society, as well as realize equal benefits from work achievements.”¹⁵

13 In 2020 there were few changes regarding political or association discrimination, none of which were related to gender equality. See: <https://www.gov.me/dokumenta/bc00e64f-e828-4a31-a589-af7dfa190b8f>

14 Law on Gender Equality, https://legislationline.org/download/id/8174/file/Montenegro_law_gender_equality_2007_am2015_en.pdf, accessed on 10th of August, 2024.

15 Ibid



Article 3 of the law is the key foundation for developing rules and procedures to achieve gender equality. It also guides the monitoring and evaluation of these efforts.

- ❖ "In order to achieve gender equality in all phases of planning, making and implementing decisions, as well as taking actions in their competency, the state organs, organs of state administration and local self-government, public institutions, public enterprises and legal persons exercising public authority (hereinafter: organs), as well as business companies, other legal persons and entrepreneurs shall be obliged to assess and evaluate the impact of those decisions and activities on the position of women and men."¹⁶

The most important amendments to the law were given in 2015. The definition of discrimination based on gender has been modified to align with the definitions of discrimination as prescribed by the Law on Prohibition of Discrimination. Additionally, gender and sexual harassment was formally recognized as a form of discrimination.

- ❖ Article 4 defines discrimination based on gender as "every unjustified, legal or factual, direct or indirect distinction or unequal treatment, or failure to treat a person or a group of persons in comparison to other persons, as well as exclusion, restriction, or preferential treatment of a person or a group of particular gender in comparison to persons of another gender, which hinders or denies the recognition, enjoyment, or exercise of human rights and freedoms in civil and political, economic, social, cultural, and other areas of public and private life."¹⁷
- ❖ Article 4, paragraph 4, states that discrimination includes "harassment based on gender, sexual harassment, inducing another individual to discriminate, as well as using masculine-gendered words as generic-neutral forms for both genders."¹⁸

¹⁶ Ibid

¹⁷ Ibid

¹⁸ Ibid

Another important amendment has expanded the application of this law to individuals of diverse gender identities, whose experience of their gender does not align with the sex assigned at birth. This is very important addition since gender identity based on self-determination is an ongoing topic in Montenegro. Namely, the Draft Law on Legal Gender Recognition based on Self-determination was developed¹⁹ but it is not adopted yet.

This law should align Montenegrin legal framework with European and international standards to uphold the rights of individuals with diverse gender identities and to ensure their full inclusion in society. The need for enacting this law also arose due to the existence of a legal gap in the Registry Law²⁰. The legal practice regarding changing gender markers in documents for transgender and gender-diverse individuals, had previously implied the requirement of medical procedures known as complete transition, or full adaptation of sex to gender identity.

The Law on Legal Gender Recognition based on Self-determination would, therefore, prevent the forceful transition and allow each individual the right to choose their identity and be treated with dignity. This law would also mean that everyone has their gender identity recognized and respected by the state, without the fear of discrimination and violence. The hesitation to adopt the law gained various critics²¹, which emphasized that the law should be prioritized as a sign of state dedication to “upholding the rights and dignity of all individuals in Montenegrin society”²².

Although Law on Gender Equality presents the milestone in the area of gender, unfortunately, there are no penal provisions for many articles of this law that would be imposed on institutions or legal persons in case they do not develop rules and procedures to achieve gender equality. This is a clear obstacle to full implementation of the law as the absence of penal provisions makes institutions less motivated to prioritize and implement policies that promote gender equality.²³

The third source that legally regulates the area of gender equality is Law on the Protector of Human Rights and Freedoms, adopted in 2011²⁴. This law established Ombudsman, as an institutional mechanism for protection against discrimination.²⁵ The 2015 amendments of the Law on Gender Equality have established a full competence of the Ombudsman in acting on the bases of complaints against violation of the principle of gender equality.²⁶

When it comes to the national strategic framework, the National Strategy for Sustainable Development of Montenegro until 2030 was adopted in 2016²⁷ with the goal to integrate UN SDGs into Montenegro’s development goals. This strategy incorporates the principles of gender equality mainly through the section that treats “support to values, norms and behavior patterns significant for sustainability of the society”.²⁸

19 Draft Law on Legal Gender Recognition based on Self-determination, <https://www.gov.me/dokumenta/8bd84235-66a4-4536-90fd-68562e935589>, accessed on 10th of August, 2024.

20 Registry Law, <https://www.gov.me/en/documents/59d1d2d3-7096-4b88-af60-708b5928bb45>, accessed on 10th of August, 2024.

21 Academic Community on the Law, <https://www.portalanalitika.me/clanak/clanovi-akademске-zajednice-skupstina-da-usvoji-zakon-o-pravnom-prepoznavanju-rodnog-identiteta-na-osnovu-samoodredenja>, accessed on 10th of August, 2024.

22 Ibid

23 This is proven with the Law on the Election of Councilors and Members of Parliament, which will be commented in the following sections.

24 Law on the Protector of Human Rights and Freedoms, https://www.ombudsman.co.me/docs/Zakon_o_zastitniku_ci_ljudskih_prava_i_sloboda_Crne_Gore.pdf, accessed on 10th of August 2024.

25 Its institutional competencies are discussed further in the following section.

26 Amendments to the Law, <https://equineteurope.org/eb/cp-slug-32/>, accessed on 10th of August 2024.

27 National Strategy for Sustainable Development of Montenegro, <https://faolex.fao.org/docs/pdf/mne180387.pdf>, accessed on 10th of August 2024.

28 Ibid

Another important document that develops measures regarding gender equality is National Strategy for Gender Equality in Montenegro 2021–2025.²⁹ The Strategy is the fourth strategic document³⁰ based on the evaluation of the Action Plan for Achieving Gender Equality 2017– 2021. The Plan was based on eight areas of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in which Montenegro chose to act. The National Strategy for Gender Equality 2021–2025 is also harmonized with EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2025³¹, which set the following goals: “stop further dissemination of gender stereotypes, close gender gaps in the labor market, achieving equal participation of men and women across different sectors of the economy, addressing the gender pay and pension gaps, closing the gender care gap and achieving gender balance in decision-making and politics, as well as stopping gender-based violence.”³²

The principal strategic goal of the National Strategy for Gender Equality is to “achieve higher levels of gender equality in Montenegro by 2025”.³³

The operative goals are to improve the implementation of the existing normative framework regarding gender equality policy and protection against gender-based discrimination, as well as to improve education, culture, and media policies to reduce the level of stereotypes and prejudices towards women and persons of different gender identities. The final operative goal is to increase the participation of women and persons of different gender identities in areas that provide access to natural and social resources and the benefits of their use.³⁴

Some of the specific measures are:

- ❖ Standardization of the procedures for shaping public policies;
- ❖ Education of employees and management staff in institutions on key issues concepts in the field of gender equality and their obligations in the field of gender equality in accordance with the law;
- ❖ Introduction of gender-responsive content and mandatory use of gender-sensitive language in curricula and teaching;
- ❖ Encouraging the media to introduce gender-responsive programs and use gender- sensitive language;
- ❖ Organize campaigns for a more even distribution of work at home, care for children, the elderly, people with disabilities, etc. between men and women and regularly monitor data on the participation of men and women in unpaid care and household work;
- ❖ Empower women and people of different gender identities to participate in political decision-making.³⁵

Another important strategic document is the **Action Plan for the Implementation of the Istanbul Convention in Montenegro** (2023 – 2027)³⁶, which was developed after the evaluation of the previous strategy³⁷, produced in cooperation with the UNDP office in Montenegro.

29 National Strategy for Gender Equality in Montenegro 2021–2025, <https://www.gov.me/en/documents/33985332-d431-4c25-9643-e9a15d76e548>, accessed on 11th of August, 2024.

30 2009 – 2013, 2013 - 2017, 2017 – 2021.

31 EU Gender Equality Strategy, <https://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/just/items/682425/en>, accessed on 11th of August, 2024.

32 National Strategy for Gender Equality, <https://www.gov.me/en/documents/33985332-d431-4c25-9643-e9a15d76e548>, accessed on 11th of August, 2024.

33 Ibid

34 Ibid

35 Ibid

36 Action Plan for the Implementation of the Istanbul Convention in Montenegro, <https://www.gov.me/dokumenta/1f031d7b-7220-460a-a48b-bf093b37db6c>, accessed on 11th of August, 2024.

37 “Strategy for Protection against Domestic Violence 2016–2021”, <https://www.gov.me/dokumenta/81ef046d-d1f6-49c8-8f62-266d02b9942c>, accessed on 11th of August, 2024.



The current action plan is brought with the aim of creating a comprehensive document in accordance with the recommendations of GREVIO committee. Its major goal is ensuring that the following goals of the Istanbul Convention are achieved:

- ❖ Protection of women from all forms of violence and prevention, processing, and elimination of violence against women and domestic violence;
- ❖ Contribution to the suppression of all forms of discrimination against women and promotion of essential equality between women and men, including women's empowerment;
- ❖ Development of a comprehensive framework, policies and measures for protection and assistance to all victims of violence against women and domestic violence;
- ❖ Advancement of international cooperation regarding the elimination of violence against women and violence in the family;
- ❖ Providing support and assistance to organizations and internal affairs bodies in effective cooperation to adopt a comprehensive approach to eliminating violence against women and domestic violence.³⁸

To achieve the aforementioned goals, the Action Plan, in accordance with the suggestions from GREVIO committee, identified a number of priority issues for Montenegrin authorities, such as:

- ❖ Develop appropriate funding opportunities and long-term grants based on transparent procurement procedures to ensure a sustainable level of funding for women non-governmental organizations dealing with specialized support services for women victims of all forms of violence;
- ❖ Provide mandatory and systematic training on various manifestations of violence against women and its causes, intended for all professional groups that come into contact with victims, especially for law enforcement officers, prosecutors, judges, social workers, teachers and healthcare workers;
- ❖ Conduct regular training during the service, which will be mandatory and based on protocols and guidelines for intervention in case of all forms of violence against women;
- ❖ Introduce crisis centers and safe houses for victims of rape and/or sexual violence, in sufficient numbers and with professional staff trained to react in delicate situations;

³⁸ Action Plan for the Implementation of the Istanbul Convention in Montenegro, <https://www.gov.me/dokumenta/1f031d7b-7220-460a-a48b-bf093b37db6c>, accessed on 11th of August, 2024.

- ❖ Ensure a quick and objective response of all police officers in domestic and other forms of violence against women based on full respect of women's right to life and physical integrity.³⁹

In addition to the National Gender Equality Strategy and Action Plan for the Implementation of the Istanbul Convention in Montenegro, the third significant strategic document is the **Strategy for the Development of Women's Entrepreneurship** (2021-2024)⁴⁰. This strategy has set three strategic goals:

- ❖ Creating a favorable surrounding for sustainable development of women's entrepreneurship;
- ❖ Providing better access to finances and strengthening competitiveness in women's business;
- ❖ Advocating for interests and better positioning of women entrepreneurs.⁴¹

Specific challenge is intersectional discrimination that refers to the overlapping forms of discrimination that women face based on multiple aspects of their identity. This is why it is important that we also mention Strategy for Social Inclusion of Roma and Egyptians (2021-2025)⁴² and Action Plan for Protection of Persons with Disabilities from Discrimination (2022-2027)⁴³, as important strategic documents that should be aligned with the previously mentioned strategies. National strategic documents serve as comprehensive roadmaps outlining the country's commitments, goals, and actions that should contribute to creating an enabling environment for gender equality. Strategies mentioned in this chapter should have intersectional approach. The efficacy and implementation of specific national instruments regulating gender equality that we mentioned in this section, will be addressed in detail in the forthcoming chapters.

3.3 INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS

The principal institutional mechanism for gender equality, **Gender Equality Committee**, was established in 2001.

According to the Article 45 of The Rules and Procedures of the Parliament of Montenegro, the Committee's main competence is to consider proposals for laws, other regulations, and general acts related to the exercise of gender equality principles, as well as to monitor the application of these rights through enforcement of laws and improvement of gender equality principles, particularly in the area of rights of the child, family relations, employment, entrepreneurship, decision-making process, education, health care, social policy, and information. Within its competences, the Committee shall monitor and assess harmonization of the laws of Montenegro with the Acquis Communautaire, and, based on the Government reports, monitor and assess the implementation of the adopted laws, especially those which establish the obligations complied with the Acquis Communautaire.⁴⁴

The primary competence of the Committee is to monitor the implementation of the Law on Gender Equality. In addition to this mandate, the Committee has the authority to review and consider other relevant laws and regulations as an interested party, particularly in cases where these laws intersect with or impact issues of gender equality. This broader scope enables the Committee to contribute to the advancement of gender equality across various legislative and policy frameworks.

39 Ibid

40 Strategy for the Development of Women's Entrepreneurship, https://www.gov.me/biblioteka?page=1&sort=published_at&q=Strategija%20za%20razvoj%20zenskog%20preduzetnistva%202021-2024, accessed on 1st of August, 2024.

41 Ibid

42 Strategy for Social Inclusion of Roma and Egyptians, <https://www.gov.me/clanak/strategija-socijalne-inkluzije-roma-i-egipcana-u-crnoj-gori-2021-2025>, accessed on 1st of August, 2024.

43 Action Plan for Protection of Persons with Disabilities from Discrimination, <https://www.gov.me/dokumenta/e9659c4e-e7f6-41f2-ab98-0fd115b80601>, accessed on 1st of August 2024.

44 Rules of Procedure, <https://api.skupstina.me/media/files/1616748663-rules-of-procedure-of-the-parliament-of-montenegro.pdf>, accessed on 1st of August, 2024.

The Department for Gender Equality Affairs under the auspices of the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights is another institutional mechanism. Due to merging of several ministries when the 2020 Government was elected, Department for Gender Equality Affairs has been downgraded to Division for Gender Equality under the Directorate for Human Rights within this new MJHMR holding the lower level within the organizational structure of public administration and this Ministry, becoming again Department in the Government elected on 2022 when Ministry of Human and Minority Rights and Ministry of Justice one again became separate entities. According to recently adopted systematization by the Government of Montenegro⁴⁵, the Department for Gender Equality Affairs has five employees, which is an increase from 2021, when it was reduced to three employees.

The mandate of this institutional mechanism is to coordinate and monitor government policies regarding gender equality, among other things, to ensure the implementation of the National Strategy for Gender Equality with an accompanying Action plan.

The **National Council for Gender Equality**, established in 2016 as an advisory body with the aim of discussing the issues of the implementation of gender equality policy at the national and local levels, is another institutional mechanism. There are no records of any significant activities of this institutional mechanism.

Focal points for gender equality

In accordance with the Law on Gender Equality, all public institutions at the national and local levels exercising public authority are obliged to appoint a person who will perform the activities of coordinator of activities related to gender equality. These coordinators should monitor the implementation of an Action Plan for Gender Equality within their institutions. Even though the focal points have been appointed at most of the institutions, the main obstacle in their work is that being a focal point for gender equality is not their principal job description, nor they necessarily have gender equality expertise.

Protector of Human rights and Freedoms (Ombudsman)

Article 81 of the Constitution of Montenegro defines the Protector of Human Rights and Freedoms as an independent and autonomous authority that takes measures to protect human rights and freedoms.⁴⁶

In Article 3 of the Law on Protector of Human rights and Freedoms, it is defined that the Protector can be addressed by anyone who believes that an act, action, or failure to act of the authorities violated his/her rights or freedoms. The Protector shall, as well, act on his/her own initiative. Proceeding before the Protector shall be free of charge.⁴⁷

Article 9 defines that The Protector shall have one or more Deputies. Additionally, it describes the internal division of work which shall provide specialization, especially the protection of rights of persons deprived of their liberty in order to prevent torture and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment, protection of the rights of members of minority nations and other minority national communities, the protection and promotion of children's rights, protection of the rights of persons with disabilities, gender equality and protection from discrimination.⁴⁸

Specific institutional mechanisms in charge of implementing gender equality-related policies in different sectors will be addressed in detail in the forthcoming chapters.

45 Systematization - Government of Montenegro <https://www.gov.me/dokumenta/561c38bf-5a23-4f08-9b67-d6e5a781e513>, accessed on 1st of August, 2024.

46 Consitution of Montenegro, <https://www.paragraf.me/propisi-crnegore/ustav-crne-gore.html>, accessed on 1st of August 2024.

47 Law on Protector of Human rights and Freedoms, https://www.ombudsman.co.me/docs/Zakon_o_zastitniku_ci_ljudskih_prava_i_sloboda_Crne_Gore.pdf, accessed on 1st of August, 2024.

48 Ibid

4. GENDER EQUALITY IN SPECIFIC SECTORS

4.1 THE RULE OF LAW

4.1.1 Political Participation

One of the primary indicators of gender inequality in politics is the underrepresentation of women in positions of power and decision-making. This why it is very important to ensure effective implementation of a legal framework that would guarantee the equality in political participation for both men and women. In addition to the Constitution and general laws and international standards that support the creation of a legal and social environment for equal political participation of men and women, the crucial provisions are found in the **Law on the Election of Councilors and Members of Parliament**⁴⁹ (Election Law).

The current Law on the Election of Councilors and Members of Parliament was adopted in 1998 and it has been amended nineteen times since. When the law was adopted, there was 7,04% of women in the Parliament of Montenegro⁵⁰. In 2011, the mandatory quota for underrepresented sex was introduced in the Election Law for the first time. The crucial factor was the pressure from the international community, particularly the EU, since the adoption of the amended Law was one of the necessary criteria Montenegro had to fulfill to begin the negotiation process.

In the new **Article 39a** of the Election Law, it is defined that to exercise the gender equality principle, there **shall be at least 30% of candidates on the candidate list from the underrepresented sex**.⁵¹

Ensuring women's access to funding within political parties is essential for breaking barriers to political participation, empowering women and addressing gender disparities in political representation.

This resulted in the increase of the female candidates at Parliamentary elections held in October 2012.⁵² However, the position of women on candidate lists was not satisfactory since the majority of them were in the second half of the list.

The new changes of The Election Law were introduced in 2014, and this time the improvements were somewhat more purposeful. In the **Article 39a**, the following provisions were added:

"Among every four candidates in the candidate list order (the first four places, the second four places, and so on until the end of the list), there shall be at least one candidate who is a member of the underrepresented sex."⁵³

In addition to this change, **Article 104** was amended as well.

49 Law on the Election of Councilors and Members of Parliament, https://www.paragraf.me/propisi-crnegore/zakon_o_izboru_odbornika_i_poslanika.html, accessed on 1st of August, 2024.

50 UNDP Political History of Women in Montenegro, https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2024-01/undp_-_80_godina_politicke_istorije_zena_crne_gore.pdf, accessed on 1st of August, 2024.

51 Law on the Election of Councilors and Members of Parliament, https://www.paragraf.me/propisi-crnegore/zakon_o_izboru_odbornika_i_poslanika.html, accessed on 1st of August, 2024.

52 See Table 1.

53 Ibid

It was defined that if the term of a councilor or MP from the underrepresented sex terminates, the successive candidate on the candidate list from among the underrepresented sex shall be elected in their place. If there are no more candidates of the underrepresented sex in the candidate list from which the councilor or MP was elected, the successive candidate in the order of the list shall be elected.⁵⁴

Another important legal instrument that directly impacts women's political participation is the **Law on the Financing of Political Entities and Election Campaigns**⁵⁵. The pioneering changes of the law proposed by the Women's Political Network that allowed the finances for the work of women's groups within parties happened in 2019.

Article 13 refers to budgetary assets for the financing of the regular operation of the political entities. It is defined that 20% of the funds shall be distributed in equal amounts to political entities that win seats in the Parliament and municipal assemblies, respectively, and the remaining 60% of funds in proportion to the total number of MP and councilor seats they have at the time of distribution while remaining 20% shall be distributed in equal amounts to political entities in the Parliament or municipal assemblies, in proportion to the number of elected representatives of the less represented gender.⁵⁶

Additionally, **Article 14** refers to the allocation of budget funds for **regular financing of women's organizations within political parties**. It defines that budget funds for regular activities of women's organizations within political entities in the Parliament shall amount to 0.05 % of the planned total budget funds. In contrast, they shall amount to 0.11 percent of the planned total budget funds in the municipal assembly.⁵⁷

The obligation of the political party is to open a separate bank account and submit the annual consolidated financial statement for the previous year, including the special report on the manner and purpose for which the funds were spent. The report should be submitted to the State Audit Institution (SAI) and the Agency for the Prevention of Corruption by the end of March of the current year, for the previous year. The Law entered into force in 2020. By the end of that year, around 500,000 euros were allocated for the regular financing of women's organizations, according to Article 14.

Currently, no political party in Montenegro is led by a woman.

In 2024, political parties will receive 693,500 euros for women's organizations. Currently, on the SAI website⁵⁸, financial reports for the year 2022 are available, but not from every party. Another noticeable point from the report analysis is that not all of the parties have submitted the organization's statute alongside the report, detailing how the funds deposited into the account of women's organizations are to be spent. The new provisions of the Law were intended as an incentive for political parties to position women higher on candidate lists to get more funding and to strengthen the capacities of women's organizations. Ensuring women's access to funding within political parties is essential for promoting gender equality, empowering women, breaking barriers to political participation, enhancing democracy, and addressing gender disparities in political representation. However, the actual implementation of the legal provision should be thorough observed. For an example, OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission in its 2023 election report stated that "parties are not using funds for meaningful improvement in the participation of women in political life."⁵⁹

54 Ibid

55 Law on the Financing of Political Entities and Election Campaigns, https://www.paragraf.me/propisi-crnegore/zakon_o_finansiranju_politickih_subjekata_i_izbornih_kampanja.html, accessed on 1st of August, 2024.

56 Ibid

57 Ibid

58 State Audit Institution, <https://www.dri.co.me/revizorski-izvjestaji>, accessed on 1st of August, 2024.

59 OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission, <https://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/montenegro/560256>, accessed on 1st of August, 2024.



Two additional legislative initiatives regarding the **Rules of Procedure of the Parliament of Montenegro happened** during 2020. The Working group with the mandate to improve the existing Rules of Procedure of the Parliament of Montenegro was established after the Parliamentary elections.

It was proposed that at least **one Vice President should be elected from underrepresented sex**.⁶⁰ The provision became an integral part of Article 2 of the Rules of Procedures of the Parliament of Montenegro.⁶¹ Since this change was introduced, two women were serving as vice presidents of the Parliament in Montenegro – in 2020-2023 term and in the current parliamentary mandate.

The other proposed change of this document was defined in Article 34 that **in the process of approving the composition of Parliamentary Committees, including the chairperson and deputy chairperson of the board, the appropriate participation of the underrepresented sex shall be taken into account**.⁶² The analysis of the gender composition of parliamentary committees is available in the forthcoming sections.

Additionally, **Article 210** was amended, and it was defined that **in the procedure of determining the composition of the delegations of the Parliament of Montenegro, the appropriate participation of the underrepresented sex shall be taken into account**.⁶³

When we analyze political dynamics for both women and men in Montenegro, one of the most important legal provisions are those related to quotas for increased political participation of underrepresented sex. The first time these provisions were enacted at the national level was during Parliamentary elections in 2016, and the result was the highest percentage of women in Parliament ever (23,5%). However, since the introduction of the 30% quota in 2011, the percentage of women in Montenegrin Parliament has never reached the prescribed norm.

This was an opportunity to advocate for the revision of current legal solutions regarding equal political participation of women and men. Women's Political Network demanded 40% of women on electoral lists and positioning on lists of at least one in three candidates should be from the under-represented sex. These

60 Rules of Procedures of the Parliament of Montenegro, <https://www.skupstina.me/me/poslovnik-o-radu>, accessed on 1st of August, 2024.

61 Ibid

62 Ibid

63 Ibid

requests became an integral part of the Draft of Election Law. The request is set as one of the goals in the new National Strategy for Gender Equality in Montenegro 2021-2025. The changes to the Law were not adopted due to the lack of 2/3 majority necessary to amend the Law.

In December 2023, the Committee for Comprehensive Electoral Reform was established⁶⁴, with the task of revising and amending the electoral legislation, which implies the implementation of recommendations from the European Commission's progress report⁶⁵ and the OSCE/ODIHR mission report⁶⁶. The Committee has 14 members - seven representatives from the parliamentary majority and seven representatives from the opposition, while the representatives of the non-governmental sector (up to three members) and academia (up to two members) can also participate in the work of the Committee, without decision-making rights.⁶⁷ The Committee should prepare the draft laws and other acts by the end of this year. It is important to emphasize that during the latest review of Montenegrin case in May 2024⁶⁸, the CEDAW Committee suggested that the electoral quota should be increased to 50%, aiming for gender parity in politics. Another significant recommendation is that electoral lists should be compiled using a zipper system, where men and women will alternate. When we observe the evolution in political participation of women since 2006 until 2023, it is visible that quotas have positively affected the number of women in legislative branch. However, to increase the number of female parliamentarians in the Assembly, it is essential to adopt a new quota system that would guarantee a minimum of 40% women in the initial term.

Table 1: Parliament of Montenegro (2006-2023)⁶⁹

Term	Men	Women	Men%	Women%
2006-2009	63	8	90,1%	9,9%
2009-2012	71	10	87,7%	12,3%
2012-2016	66	15	81,5%	18,5%
2016-2020	62 (57)	19 (24)	76,5% (70,4%)	23,5% (29,6%)
2020 – 2023	59 (63)	22 (18)	73% (77,78%)	27% (22,22%)
2023 -	59 (64)	22 (17)	73% (79,02%)	28% (27%, 20,98%)

The data from Table 1. demonstrates an increase in number of female MPs after the introduction of condition that ***among every four candidates in the candidate list order there shall be at least one candidate who is a member of the underrepresented sex***. However, what is also visible from Table 1. is that usually there are fewer women elected at the beginning of the parliamentary mandate. The increase in the number of female parliamentarians is often the result of the resignation of male MPs who switched to executive or ministerial positions. Namely, the initial composition of 2020 Parliament had 22,22% of women. This was the first time since 2006 that it happened that fewer women were elected to a parliamentary term than in the one that preceded it.

64 Committee for Comprehensive Electoral Reform, <https://www.skupstina.me/me/radna-tijela/odbor-za-sveobuhvatnu-izbornu-reformu-2>, accessed on 1st of August, 2024.

65 European Commission's progress report, https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/montenegro-report-2023_en, accessed on 1st of August, 2024.

66 OSCE/ODIHR mission report, <https://www.osce.org/odihr/556068>

67 Committee for Comprehensive Electoral Reform, <https://www.skupstina.me/me/radna-tijela/odbor-za-sveobuhvatnu-izbornu-reformu-2>, accessed on 1st of August, 2024.

68 CEDAW Review of Montenegrin Case, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/05/un-womens-rights-committee-review-republic-korea-montenegro-singapore>, accessed on 1st of August, 2024.

69 Source: www.skupstina.me and https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/gender_equality_profile_montenegro_0.pdf, accessed on 1st of October, 2024.



Women are typically dominantly represented in Gender Equality Committee, but significantly less in the Security and Defense Committee, in the Committee on Economy, Finance, and Budget, and in the Committee on Political System, Judiciary and Administration.

After the June 11, 2023 extraordinary parliamentary elections, 22 out of 81 members of the parliament (27%) were women. There were fewer women elected initially (17), and now it is 23 women parliamentarians - the proportion increased again due to appointments of elected male politicians into the executive government. The current composition of the Parliament of Montenegro is below the European average⁷⁰, where women hold 32,7% of all seats in national parliaments across the EU. This is also the fifth term since the renewal of Montenegrin independence with the man as the president of the Parliament. In the history of women's political participation in Montenegro, two women served as presidents of the Assembly – Vesna Perovic from 2001-2002 and Danijela Djurovic from 2021 until 2023⁷¹. It is important to note that Djurovic's selection was primarily justified based on her gender rather than her qualifications and experience, which were comparable to her male counterparts.⁷²

70 EU women hold third of seats in national parliaments, <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/w/edn-20230308-2>, accessed on January 9, 2024.

71 UNDP Political History of Women in Montenegro, https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2024-01/undp_-_80_godina_politicke_istorije_zena_crne_gore.pdf, accessed on 1st of August, 2024.

72 Ibid

Another indicator of effective political participation is the composition of working bodies in Montenegrin Parliament. Table 2. shows that women are still the majority in the Gender Equality Committee. The other committees in which women are represented with more than 30% are Constitutional Committee, Legislative Committee, Committee on European Integration, Committee on Education, Science, Culture and Sports, Committee on Health, Labor and Social Welfare, Administrative Committee, and Committee on Tourism, Agriculture, Ecology and Spatial Planning.

Table 2: Working bodies in the Parliament of Montenegro

Working Bodies	N (%) male MPs	N(%) female MPs	Male Chairpersons	Female Chairpersons
Constitutional Committee	9 (69.2%)	4 (30.8%)	0	1
Legislative Committee	7 (63.3%)	4 (33.3%)	0	1
Committee on Political System, Judiciary and Administration	13 (100%)	0 (0%)	1	0
Security and Defence Committee	10 (77%)	3 (23%)	1	0
Committee on International Relations and Emigrants	10 (71.4%)	4 (28.5%)	1	0
Committee on European Integration	7 (58.3%)	5 (41.6%)	1	0
Committee on Economy, Finance and Budget	10 (76.9%)	3 (23.1%)	1	0
Committee on Human Rights and Freedoms	10 (77%)	3 (23%)	1	0
Gender Equality Committee	5 (41.6%)	7 (58.4%)	0	1
Committee on Education, Science, Culture and Sports	8 (61.5%)	5 (38.5%)	1	0
Committee on Tourism, Agriculture, Ecology and Spatial Planning	8 (61.5%)	5 (38.5%)	1	0
Committee on Health, Labour and Social Welfare	9 (69.2%)	4 (30.8%)	1	0
Anti-corruption Committee	11 (84.6%)	2 (15.3%)	1	0
Administrative Committee	7 (53.8%)	6 (46.2)	0	1
Commission for Monitoring and Control of the Privatisation Procedure	9 (90%)	1 (10%)	1	0

An improvement compared to data from 2021⁷³ is that this term has women as members in the **Security and Defense Committee** and in the **Committee on Economy, Finance, and Budget**. However, this term does not have women in **Committee on Political System, Judiciary and Administration**, which had 30% of women in 2021.⁷⁴ This Committee deals with a wide range of issues related to governance in Montenegro, including laws, regulations, and responsibilities of authorities. It addresses topics such as state symbols, electoral systems, citizenship, and judicial matters. Additionally, the Committee proposes the election of members to key bodies like the Judicial Council and the Prosecutorial Council. It also plays a crucial role in ensuring the laws of Montenegro align with EU standards.⁷⁵

It is very worrisome that women are absent from this working body, especially given its scope and importance. It is also indicative that this Committee is the only working body without women, in 2023 parliamentary term, compared to Security and Defense Committee in previous term.⁷⁶ Such gender composition of parliamentary committees reinforces stereotypes about women's participation in politics and their traditional attachment to administration, education and social issues. On the other hand, their ability to show expertise in predominantly "male" areas, such as defense, security, economy or political system, remains very limited.

When we analyze the local level, five municipalities have the lower percentage of women in local assemblies compared to the Parliament of Montenegro – **Andrijevica, Mojkovac, Petnjica, Plav, and Plužine**.



73 Gender Equality Profile of Montenegro, https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/gender_equality_profile_montenegro_0.pdf, accessed on 1st of October, 2024.

74 Ibid

75 Committee on Political System, Judiciary and Administration, <https://www.skupstina.me/en/working-bodies/committee-on-political-system-judiciary-and-administration>, accessed on 1st of October, 2024.

76 Ibid

Table 3: Municipal assemblies, 2024.

Municipality	Councilors Total	Female	Male	Female Mayors	Local assemblies' female presidents
Andrijevisa	31	8 (25.8%)	23 (74.2%)	0	0
Bar	37	12 (31.2%)	25 (68.8%)	0	0
Berane	35	11 (31.4%)	24 (68.6%)	0	1
Bijelo Polje	38	13 (34.2%)	25 (65.8%)	0	1
Budva	33	18 (54.5%)	15 (45.5%)	0	0
Cetinje	33	12 (36.3%)	21 (63.7%)	0	1
Danilovgrad	33	10 (30.3%)	23 (70.7%)	0	0
Gusinje	30	9 (30%)	21 (70%)	0	0
Herceg Novi	35	14 (40%)	21 (60%)	0	0
Kolašin	31	10 (32.2%)	21 (67.8%)	0	0
Kotor	33	11 (33.3%)	22 (66.7%)	0	1
Mojkovac	31	7 (22.6%)	24 (77.4%)	0	0
Nikšić	41	14 (34.1%)	27 (65.9%)	0	0
Petnjica	31	6 (19%)	25 (81%)	0	0
Plav	31	7 (22.5%)	24 (77.5%)	0	0
Pljevlja	34	11 (32%)	23 (68%)	0	1
Plužine	30	7 (23.3%)	23 (76.6%)	0	0
Podgorica	61	27 (44.2%)	34 (55.7%)	1	1
Rožaje	34	10 (29.4%)	24 (70.6%)	0	0
Šavnik	30	9 (30%)	21 (70%)	0	1
Tivat	32	14 (43.7%)	18 (56.2%)	0	0
Tuzi	32	10 (31.2%)	22 (68.8%)	0	0
Ulcinj	33	11 (33.3%)	22 (66.6%)	0	1
Zeta	32	10 (31.2%)	22 (68.8%)	0	0
Žabljak	30	7 (23%)	23 (77%)	0	0
Total	851	288 (33.8%)	563 (66.2%)	1 (4%)	8 (32%)

None of the 25 mayors of municipalities are women.

More than half of the citizens think that men are better political leaders than women.

When compared to 2021⁷⁷, Andrijević and Mojkovac did not change gender composition of their assemblies. Five municipalities - Žabljak, Plužine, Plav, Petnjica and Bar have lower number of women in comparison with the 2021 data. 10 municipalities – **Ulcinj, Tivat, Podgorica, Pljevlja, Nikšić, Kotor, Herceg Novi, Danilovgrad, Cetinje** and **Budva**, have increased the percentage of women in their local assemblies since 2021. This fact can support the view that it is easier for men to “give up power” at the local level since it is not considered as prestigious as politics at the national level. However, the higher percentage of women in local governance is encouraging and serves as a strong rebuttal to those who doubt women’s interest in politics, showcasing their dedication and active participation. Still, women are almost absent from leading positions, which is supported by the fact that no woman serves as mayor across 25 municipalities.

The current structure of the Montenegrin government also demonstrates stagnation in terms of political participation of women. As 2024, women now hold seven out of 26 ministerial positions⁷⁸ in the government. They cover areas of European affairs; Culture and Media; Education, Science, and Innovation; Labor and Employment; Tourism and Transport. None of the seven deputy prime ministers are women. The expose⁷⁹ of the Prime Minister that he presented to the Parliament mentioned gender equality only through gender-based violence.

In order to get the full picture regarding the barriers to women’s participation, it is worth mentioning various findings that reveal how gender stereotypes prevent involvement of women in politics. Namely, the **Gender Equality Index**⁸⁰, developed by UNDP in Montenegro in partnership with MONSTAT and the Ministry for Human and Minority Rights, was calculated for the first time in 2019 when it showed that **women face inequalities in the domain of power and still have substantive difficulties balancing family life and work**.⁸¹ The Index has shown that **every tenth man spends at least one hour doing household chores per day, compared to 68% of women**. The second Gender Equality Index (2023)⁸² confirmed that **gender inequality persists in political, economic, and social area**. Namely, one of the **lowest values (44.1)**⁸³ that Montenegro has is in the domain of power, which measures gender equality in the highest decision-making positions across the political, economic, and social spheres, as well as the gender imbalance in economic decision-making.

The marginalization of women in politics is not an occasional problem but rather an enduring tendency. Namely, UNDP Research on Gender Equality in Montenegro, revealed that **more than half of the citizens**

77 Gender Equality Profile of Montenegro, https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/gender_equality_profile_montenegro_0.pdf, accessed on 1st of October, 2024.

78 The number was different in 2020.

79 Expose of the Prime Minister, <https://www.gov.me/dokumenta/959151c9-edbe-446e-aabb-4e2e41465a46>, accessed on 1st of October, 2024.

80 Gender Equality Index Montenegro 2019, https://eige.europa.eu/about/eu-candidate-countries-and-potential-candidates/montenegro?language_content_entity=en#:~:text=Montenegro%20published%20their%20first%20Gender,2019%20and%20scored%2055%20points, accessed on 1st of October, 2024.

81 Ibid

82 Gender Equality Index Montenegro 2023, <https://eige.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/Montenegro%20Gender%20Equality%20Index.pdf>, accessed on 1st of October, 2024.

83 On a scale from 1 to 100, 1 indicating total inequality and 100 indicating total equality.

think that men are better political leaders than women.⁸⁴ Three-quarters of citizens are of the opinion that it is much easier for men to advance in politics. Private and family obligations, lack of support from the family, and lack of ambition are seen as the biggest obstacles for **women** to get actively involved in politics. On the other hand, **lack of qualifications, lack of funds, and support from voters and a political party** were cited as the biggest obstacles for men's political involvement.⁸⁵

It is especially worrisome that younger generations in Montenegro preserve stereotypical attitudes. Namely, **43,7% of young people believe it is not desirable "that women have a higher income than men."**⁸⁶ Furthermore, **67,4% of women claim nothing motivates them to become politically active.⁸⁷ Two-thirds of women agree that household and family responsibilities represent the primary demotivating factors for political engagement.⁸⁸**

The ongoing inequality in politics, along with the stereotypical representation of women, leads to various repercussions. One of the most pressing consequences is sexism, hate speech and discrimination, which continue to present a persistent problem in Montenegro. The latest EU Report⁸⁹ recognizes that women are the primary victims of gender-based violence, particularly prevalent in online sphere. The research on violence against women in politics⁹⁰, the first of that kind conducted in Montenegro, has shown that **7 out of 10 female politicians in Montenegro have experienced some form of violence**, while **more than half of women politicians (59%) argued that no one from their political party reacted to the violence they have experienced.**

Additionally, the newest analysis of the political history of women in Montenegro⁹¹, has shown that **Montenegrin parties currently do not have a woman as the party president, while only two out of 14 observed parties have 30% or more women in their main board.** The analysis of **party programs** has also demonstrated that, with some exceptions, **measures and policies for women are predominantly focused on their reproductive role, motherhood, or traditional gender roles.**⁹² Qualitative research conducted with citizens and institutional representatives from various parts of Montenegro⁹³, revealed that the "most vulnerable individuals in politics are young women, as well as women who are clearly recognized as advocates for women's rights."⁹⁴ As the analysis has confirmed, **women who actively advocate for their rights and participate in politics often become targets of inappropriate attacks and negative campaigns.**⁹⁵

84 Gender Equality in Montenegro and Assessment of Gender Mainstreaming in Public Authorities <https://www.rodnamapa.me/assets/documents/stavovi-2021.pdf>, accessed on 1st of October, 2024.

85 Ibid

86 Westminster Foundation for Democracy. Youth perceptions and attitudes towards politics. <https://www.wfd.org/sites/default/files/2022-04/Youth%20perceptions%20and%20attitudes%20towards%20politics%20in%20MNE.pdf>, accessed on 1st of October, 2024.

87 Westminster Foundation for Democracy. Women's political activism in Montenegro. <https://www.wfd.org/sites/default/files/2021-12/WFD-brosura-STAMPA-eng.pdf>, accessed on 1st of October, 2024.

88 Ibid

89 European Commission's progress report, https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/montenegro-report-2023_en, accessed on 1st of August, 2024.

90 UNDP, Violence toward Women in Politics, <https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/migration/eurasia/UNDP-mne-istrasivanje-zeneupolitici-2021.pdf>, accessed on 1st of October, 2024.

91 UNDP, Political History of Women in Montenegro, https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2024-01/undp_-_80_godina_politicke_istorije_zena_crne_gore.pdf, accessed on 1st of October, 2024.

92 Ibid

93 UNDP, Dialogues against Sexism, <https://www.undp.org/cnr/montenegro/publications/dijalogom-protiv-seksizma-diskriminacije-i-govora-mrznje-prema-zenama-i-djevojkama>, accessed on 1st of October, 2024.

94 Ibid

95 Ibid

It is clear that various factors affect women's political participation in Montenegro and several issues need to be addressed. Some of the possible courses of action in order to improve the current state are:

- ❖ Amending the Law on the Election of Councillors and Members of Parliament by increasing the mandatory quota to 50% with zipper system for electoral lists;
- ❖ Amending the Law on Political Parties by introducing the mandatory quota for all decision-making bodies in line with the requirements of the Law on the Election of Councilors and Members of Parliament, and the obligation of creating the gender-sensitive political programs;
- ❖ Political parties should develop an action plan that includes measures to increase the representation of women and men in party organs, on election lists for the Parliament of Montenegro, and in assemblies of local self-government units;
- ❖ Adopt laws on the Parliament and the Government that would provide quotas for underrepresented sex in the leadership bodies of legislative and executive institutions;
- ❖ Enhance the infrastructure and capacity of women's organizations within parties using funds that parties receive based on amendments to the Law on Financing of Political Subjects and Election Campaigns;
- ❖ Continuously educate party members about gender equality issues, as well as acquiring and strengthening skills such as public speaking, public relations, dealing with the media, and policy-making.



4.1.2 Public administration reform

Public administration reform (PAR) is one of the most important areas of the democratic system. PAR also represents core part of the EU accession process, demonstrating effectiveness, responsiveness, and accountability of the government. The latest EU progress report on Montenegro noted moderate preparation in the area of public administration reform.⁹⁶ While some improvements have been made, European Commission is warning that most limits remain in human resources whose plans are still not aligned with the budget process.

This is very important objection since institutions that manage human resources present one of the key pillars in gender mainstreaming of public administration. EU report is noting that “the legal and policy framework is in place to promote gender balance in civil service, and efforts are being made to mainstream gender across all aspects of the public administration reform.”⁹⁷ However, additional efforts are required to collect and disaggregate data on gender parity across all levels of the public administration.

The newest **PAR strategy (2022-2026)** was adopted in December 2021.⁹⁸ Strategy mainstreamed gender across various aspects of this document. First, it recognized gender as a cross-cutting issue “essential to further modernisation of public administration”⁹⁹ that should lead to:

- ❖ “Public administration based on diversity, gender equality, inclusion, antidiscrimination and equal opportunities for all;
- ❖ The use of data in processes of designing policies and services (data base, registries, data management) and the digitalisation of public administration.”¹⁰⁰

Integrating a gender perspective into the public administration system ensures that policies, programs, and services address the diverse needs of both men and women.

Gender is incorporated in three operational objectives:

- ❖ **Strengthening the evidence-based planning system** that leads to sustainable policies and achievement of Government priorities;
- ❖ **Improvement of information reuse and increasing the availability of open data;**
- ❖ **Public administration attractive employer** – efficient system of assessment, promotion and rewarding based on merits and continuous development¹⁰¹

Within these objectives, Strategy aims to upgrade the methodology for policy planning, drafting and monitoring of implementation of strategic documents related to gender mainstreaming but also to “revise contents of the Training Programme for Strategic Planning to cover gender mainstreaming and environmental impact assessment, with the pool of participants expanded to the civil servants working in other state institutions and local governments”.¹⁰² Incorporating gender perspective into major strategic documents is essential, especially taking into account the fact that 73.2% of national sectoral strategic documents do

96 European Commission’s progress report, https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/montenegro-report-2023_en, accessed on 1st of August, 2024.

97 Ibid

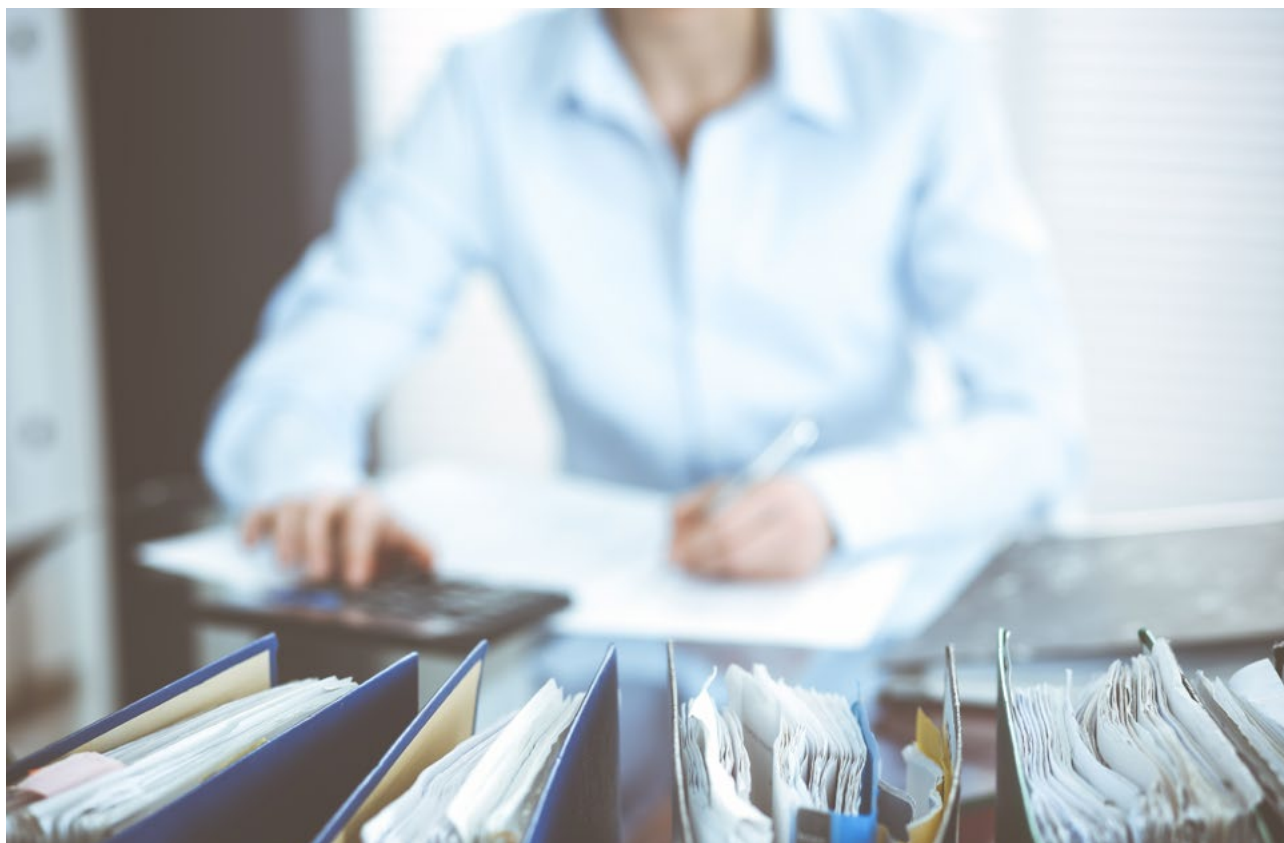
98 Public Administration Reform Strategy, <https://www.gov.me/en/documents/0aaa040b-0413-46b6-a8c7-5b2c10cdc9dc>, accessed on 1st of October, 2024.

99 Ibid

100 Ibid

101 Ibid

102 Ibid



not address gender equality in any way.¹⁰³ Considering the importance of gender mainstreaming for public institutions, UNDP supports the Human Resources Management Authority in building capacities, with a specific focus on integrating gender principles into all aspects of the institution's work.¹⁰⁴ The Partnership agreement focuses on working together to achieve the highest international standards in gender equality within all aspects of institutional functioning, including decision-making, policy development, capacity building, and strategic planning.

The goal of this collaboration is for the Human Resources Management Authority to exemplify good governance practices that align with human rights and gender equality principles. This will be accomplished by enhancing the skills of the personnel to effectively incorporate a gender perspective into their work, thereby establishing it as a leading model of excellence in this area.

Additionally, UNDP has published the Analysis of Gender Responsive Communication in Public Administration¹⁰⁵, whose purpose was to examine communication in public sector from gender perspective, by considering the strategic and legislative frameworks, evaluating the capacities of communication officials, and formulating recommendations for a strategic communication framework on this subject. Moreover, a set of guidelines for gender-responsive communication has been devised for individuals involved in public administration communications in Montenegro, either directly or indirectly, to ensure their practices align with gender equality principles.

¹⁰³ UNDP Gender Mainstreaming of Public Institutions, <https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2022-11/Rodno%20odgovorno%20komuniciranje%20u%20javnoj%20upravi.pdf>, accessed on 1st of October, 2024.

¹⁰⁴ UNDP Press Release, <https://www.undp.org/montenegro/press-releases/support-undp-introducing-gender-principles-public-administration-work>, accessed on 1st of August, 2024.

¹⁰⁵ UNDP Gender Mainstreaming of Public Institutions, <https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2022-11/Rodno%20odgovorno%20komuniciranje%20u%20javnoj%20upravi.pdf>, accessed on 1st of October, 2024.

Some of the key guidelines are:

- ❖ **Sharing a Handbook/Guide with all employees on gender-sensitive language and gender-responsive communication** to ensure that everyone works and contributes to achieving the common goal - the transformation of public administration into an inclusive system based on fairness, transparency, accountability, and non-discrimination;
- ❖ **Promoting the topic of gender equality from the highest levels** (president and vice president of the Government, ministers, state secretaries, CEOs) through both internal and external communication channels;
- ❖ Adopting a **four-year strategic framework for communications** in the field of gender equality with a corresponding action plan;
- ❖ **Developing a Communication Plan** that consolidates all communication activities outlined in various strategic documents, integrating gender equality principles in the applicable areas and corresponding communication/media activities.¹⁰⁶

One third of employees in the public administration state that it is men who, on average, enjoy benefits more often and are being more frequently rewarded than women.

Currently, the Government of Montenegro does not have a valid strategic framework for communication. The Communication Strategy for 2018-2020 has expired, and a new one has not yet been adopted. In the Communication Strategy for 2018-2020, the issue of gender equality was “partially addressed and recognized through planned campaigns within the goals of a Just and Safe State, Development of Employment and Higher Living Standards, and State as a Service to Citizens”.¹⁰⁷ The campaigns mentioned centre on promoting women’s rights and entrepreneurship, with a specific emphasis on empowering women and youth.

Integrating a gender perspective into the public administration system ensures that policies, programs, and services are designed to meet the diverse needs of both men and women. Moreover, reforming public administration from gender perspective helps addressing systemic inequalities and gender biases.

Namely, UNDP’s Research on Gender Equality in Montenegro and Assessment of Gender Mainstreaming in Public Administration¹⁰⁸, evaluated attitudes and perceptions of citizens and public administration employees about gender equality and gender mainstreaming.

Some of the key findings can be used for a more comprehensive analysis of potential areas for intervention and a baseline for recommendations for future courses of action:

- ❖ **Almost every third** employee in public administration does not have the capacity to assess whether **the principle of gender equality is being applied** in the processes of employment and selection of staff in public administration;

Almost every third employee in public administration does not have the capacity to assess whether the principle of gender equality is being applied in the processes of employment and selection of staff.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid

¹⁰⁷ Ibid

¹⁰⁸ UNDP’s Research on Gender Equality in Montenegro and Assessment of Gender Mainstreaming in Public Administration, 2024 <https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/migration/me/2158c2eecf784b135c772c8bd24ca8bbd522d72c5ffe8666bc5f6a4128c45bdd.pdf>, accessed on 1st of August, 2024.

- ❖ **One third** of employees in the public administration state that **it is men who, on average, enjoy benefits more often and are being more frequently rewarded than women**, while **only 4.6%** respondent states that it is women who enjoy benefits more often and are being more frequently rewarded;
- ❖ **65.3% of employees in public institutions have not attended any training in the field of gender equality in the last 12 months;**
- ❖ **Nearly half of the respondents (48.7%) believe that their institutions apply a gender perspective in public policies, while 21.5% think the opposite.** As many as **29.8% of respondents were unable to assess this practice.**
- ❖ In addition to the legal obligation for each public institution to have a body/department/unit in charge of gender equality issues, **only one-third of employees (33.6%) state that such a body exists in their institution, while 43.7% believe that it does not exist. Nearly one-quarter of employees (22.7%) are unsure whether their institution has such a unit, indicating a lack of awareness or visibility of these bodies within the institutions themselves.**

Key pillars of reformed public administration, able to apply gender mainstreaming concept are:

- ❖ Knowledge-based leadership;
- ❖ Strengthened capacities of institutions, including capacities of employees;
- ❖ A comprehensive system for measuring results and achievements;
- ❖ Partnership development that will include international actors, NGOs, and academia.

More concrete recommendations for the implementation of gender mainstreaming within institutions include:

- ❖ Independently of the National Strategy for Achieving Gender Equality, it is necessary to adopt and implement plans for achieving gender equality within the institutions with the obligation to report. The plan and report should contain the indicators for monitoring and evaluation of the achievements within the institution.

Some of the indicators could be grouped as follows:

- ➔ **Management and planning:** a strategy for gender equality (GE) in the institution, women make up 40–50% of management positions, a share of institution's budget funds are allocated for GE, management and staff are continuously educated in the areas of GE;
- ➔ **Institutional capacities for gender equality:** there is an in-house expert for GE in the institution, each sector has a gender person or team, the institution has clear goals and results that contribute to GE, all employees have passed at least two GE training programs, at least one public appearance of management focused on issues of GE, program, strategic, methodological forms contain instructions on the integration of gender aspects into strategies, programs;
- ➔ **Work environment:** the institution has developed measures to balance private and business life and encourages their implementation, applies active measures to promote zero tolerance for sexual harassment, abuse of power, and mobbing, at least 80% of reported cases resolved, regularly conducts anonymous employee satisfaction surveys, there are formal and informal support networks for employees who experienced violence;
- ➔ **Partnerships for achieving gender equality:** the institution has a developed partnership with other institutions with which it has close mandates, institutions exchange data and analyses that contribute

to better policies, laws, improvement of work, institutions cooperate with civil society dealing with GE, institutions have an active partnership with institutional mechanisms, institutions have created all the preconditions for citizens to be able to access the institution and responsible persons directly without administrative barriers.

- ❖ The budget of the institution with gender components, and its analysis, which includes the budget provided for the implementation of the Action Plan for achieving gender equality, and the percentage of the total program budget intended for targeted gender programs;
- ❖ Publication of gender statistics, which by law should be kept within the institution, as well as monitoring of gender aspects with regard to defined indicators;
- ❖ Implement measures to achieve a balance in the number of employed men and women.
- ❖ Knowledge of the basic principles of gender equality as one of the criteria in the recruitment process in public administration;
- ❖ Introduce the obligation to evaluate the contribution to achieving gender equality within the institution, the integration of the gender aspect during the annual evaluation of civil servants, especially when it comes to the heads of organizational units;
- ❖ Continuous and mandatory training in the field of gender equality for public administration, which would be conducted by the Human Resources Administration.



4.1.3 Gender-based violence

As stated in the first chapter, the most comprehensive international legal instrument in fighting violence against women is **Istanbul Convention**, whose monitoring mechanism is the Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO). As previously mentioned, one of the most important mechanisms that Montenegro will have to refer to when adjusting its national legal framework is comprehensive Directive (EU) 2024/1385 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024¹⁰⁹, which reinforces and introduces measures in the following key areas: the definition of relevant criminal offences and penalties, victim protection and access to justice, victim support services, improved data collection, prevention strategies, and enhanced coordination and cooperation.¹¹⁰

Despite the improvements in legal framework and national mechanisms, Montenegro still has the urgent need to address challenges regarding gender-based violence.

The most important national instrument in this area is **Law on Domestic Violence Protection**¹¹¹, adopted in 2010. The latest amendments of this Law were proposed in 2023.

The new version of the Article 2 expands the list of perpetrators of domestic violence:

“Domestic violence (hereinafter referred to as ‘violence’), for the purposes of this law, signifies any act of physical, psychological, or economic violence occurring within a family or household, or between former or current spouses or partners, regardless of whether the perpetrator shares or has shared a household with the victim.”¹¹²

The revisions of the Article 3 also redefine who family members are:

- 1) spouse, whether married or in a non-marital relationship, partner in a life partnership of the same sex, their joint children, and the children of each of them;
- 2) blood relatives and adopted relatives in direct line without limitation, and in the collateral line up to the fourth degree;
- 3) affinity relatives up to the second degree in a marital or non-marital union, regardless of whether the marriage has ended;
- 4) partner in an intimate relationship;
- 5) individuals living in the same household;
- 6) individuals who have a common child or who have conceived a child, even if they have never lived in the same household;
- 7) former marital or non-marital spouse, former partner in a life partnership of the same sex;
- 8) former affinity relatives up to the second degree and former partner in an intimate relationship.

¹⁰⁹ Directive (EU) 2024/1385 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2024/1385/oj/eng>, accessed on 8th of May, 2025.

¹¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹¹ Law on Domestic Violence Protection, <https://www.gov.me/dokumenta/072eb204-b885-43e2-8d30-3931bda88cef>, accessed on 1st of August, 2024.

¹¹² Amendments to the Law, <https://www.gov.me/dokumenta/3f409ae4-f33a-4107-8a70-31d047350f30>, accessed on 1st of August, 2024.

In Article 5, the Police, misdemeanor body, public prosecution service, social work center or other social and child protection agencies, health care institutions, and other agencies or institutions acting as care providers are defined as institutional mechanisms that have the duty to provide the victim with complete and coordinated protection, within their respective powers and depending on the severity of the violation. In this article, it is also defined that non-governmental organizations, other legal or natural persons, may provide protection in accordance with the law. Bodies and institutions are obliged to set incidences of violence in order of priority, ensure mutual communication, and provide assistance to prevent and detect violence, eliminate causes, and provide assistance to the victim in regaining security in life.

Article 5 has the new paragraph, which states that “the authorities mentioned in paragraph 1 of this Article are obligated to provide protection to victims who are persons with disabilities in a manner that is accessible and in accordance with the individual needs of the victim.”

Article 20 defines orders of protection abuser may be issued:

- 1) order of removal from place of residence or other premises ('removal from residence');
- 2) restraining order;
- 3) prohibition of harassment;
- 4) prohibition of stalking;
- 5) mandatory addiction treatment;
- 6) mandatory psycho-social therapy;
- 7) mandatory psychiatric treatment and custody in a healthcare institution.

Article 26 defines that an order of protection may be issued either in addition to a sanction or as a sanction in itself. A misdemeanor body may issue one or several orders of protection to the abuser provided pre-requisites for such orders as set by this act are satisfied. A misdemeanor body may decide to prolong the duration of protection measures imposed if reasons for imposing measures still exist, but no longer than for a period of two years. The revised version of the Article has the new paragraph, which specifies that the time spent serving a prison sentence is not included in the duration of the protective measure.

Since 2017, at least 17 women have been killed in Montenegro solely because they are women.

Another law that treats domestic violence is the **Criminal Code of Montenegro**.¹¹³ The Law underwent significant amendments in 2023, introducing a set of new criminal offenses, including:

- ❖ Misuse of someone else's video, photograph, portrait, audio recording, or document with sexually explicit content;
- ❖ Sexual harassment;
- ❖ Violation of special surveillance measures;
- ❖ Forced marriage, non-marital cohabitation, or life partnership of individuals of the same sex.

Another important amendment was made to the Article 220 of the Law, which prescribes the types of sentences for different forms of violence. Namely, whoever uses gross violence to violate the bodily or

¹¹³ Criminal Code of Montenegro, <https://www.paragraf.me/propisi-crnegore/krivicni-zakonik-crne-gore.html>, accessed on 2nd of August 2024.

mental integrity of his family member or member of a family community shall be punished **by a prison sentence for a term from six months to five years** (previously by fine or a prison sentence for a term not exceeding two years). If the offense was committed by means of weapons, dangerous tools, or other instruments suitable for inflicting serious bodily injury or seriously impairing one's health, the perpetrator should be punished by **a prison sentence for a term from one to five years** (previously from three months to three years).

One-third of citizens believe women fabricate claims of psychological abuse for attention.

If the offense resulted in a serious bodily injury or serious impairment of health or where they are committed against a minor, the perpetrator should be punished by **a prison sentence for a term from one to eight years** (previously from one to five years), and if it results in the death of a member of a family or family community, **the prison sentence term is from five to 15 years** (previously from three to twelve years). For violation of protection measures against domestic violence imposed by the court or another state authority under the law, punishment is a fine or a prison sentence for a term not exceeding one year.

The Law also recognizes offenses that can be related to domestic violence, such as Abduction of a Minor (Article 217), Neglecting or Ill-treating a Minor (Article 219), Failure to Pay Maintenance (Article 221), Violation of Family Obligations (Article 222).

The legal framework also includes Criminal Procedure Code, Family Law, Law on Free Legal Aid, Law on Social and Child Protection. Protocol on the treatment, prevention, and protection against domestic violence is another important legal instrument that establishes procedures in coordinated actions of the relevant institutions in the cases of domestic violence.

In June 2023, Montenegro adopted the National Plan for the Implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention).¹¹⁴ The National plan foresees the opening of the Crisis Center for victims of sexual violence in accordance with the recommendations of the Istanbul Convention. Also, one of the basic measures is the creation of conditions for the establishment of a support service for victims of arranged marriages.¹¹⁵ Currently, the Division for Protection from Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence at the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare is monitoring the implementation of the National Plan and policies and measures aimed at combating gender- based violence and domestic violence.

When it comes to existing shelters for victims of gender based violence, they are: NGO SOS telephone for women and children victims of violence Nikšić, NGO Safe women's house, NGO SOS telephone for women and children victims of violence Podgorica, NGO Action for women's and children's rights, NGO Sistem and NGO Lea Bar. Public institution Child and Family Support Centre is in the north. The capacity of these shelters is 78 places, which is 16 places more than required by the Istanbul Convention, which foresees 62 accommodation capacities. A shelter for victims of sexual exploitation as a form of human trafficking is also licensed in Nikšić with a capacity of three places.¹¹⁶

The need for systemic response and concrete measures in the area of GBV are emphasized in EU/MNE Reform Agenda, which supports gender equality as a cross-cutting priority, aligned with the principles and

114 National Plan for the Implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence - Istanbul Convention, <https://www.gov.me/dokumenta/1f031d7b-7220-460a-a48b-bf093b37db6c>, accessed on 2nd of August, 2024.

115 COE Montenegro, <https://rm.coe.int/ic-cp-inf-2024-8-montenegro-implementation-report-on-cop-conclusions/1680b08c71>, accessed on 2nd of August 2024.

116 Ibid

targets outlined in the EU's Gender Action Plan III (GAP III).¹¹⁷ It also contributes to the goals of Montenegro's 2021–2025 National Gender Equality Strategy and the gender-related objectives of the country's National Sustainable Development Strategy, in accordance with relevant national legislation. In the area of fundamental rights and the rule of law, the reforms aim to introduce standard operating procedures for the prosecution of sexual and gender-based violence cases, enhance the track record of judicial follow-up and final rulings in cases of gender discrimination, and establish centralized records for all forms of violence covered by the Istanbul Convention.

Simultaneously, despite the improvements in legal framework and national mechanisms, Montenegro still has the urgent need to address challenges regarding gender-based violence. Namely, European Commission (EC) in its latest Progress Report argues that Montenegro “must stress the issue of gender-based violence and domestic violence by amending the National Gender Equality Strategy”.¹¹⁸ The 2023-2024 action plan of the 2021-2025 National Strategy for Gender Equality is under preparation.

EC has also warned that “the establishment of crisis centers and clear protocols specifically designed for victims of sexual violence has yet to be realized”.¹¹⁹ As stated in the Report, one of the core challenges is the absence of a systemic gender-responsive approach and procedures for individuals who have experienced violence. Another critical issue is the limited specialization among justice, social, health, and police professionals who deal with gender-based violence and violence against women. This lack of specialization poses a significant obstacle in effectively addressing and supporting victims of violence. Furthermore, the investigative and judicial practices concerning gender-based violence have been notably lenient. Protective measures in misdemeanor proceedings are inconsistently enforced, and very few security measures are imposed in criminal proceedings. The latest EC' Rule of Law Report 2024 on Montenegro¹²⁰, notes that “serious challenges exist regarding the efficiency of justice, where the length of proceedings for administrative cases has further increased”¹²¹.

Very important remarks came from the GREVIO committee¹²², which welcomed the new legal provisions on domestic violence. However, GREVIO points out that measures concerning other types of violence, such as rape and forced marriage, need further improvement. GREVIO urges the Montenegrin authorities to “establish enough crisis centers for cases of sexual violence, ensure adequate training for professionals, and develop sufficient funding opportunities for women's non-governmental organizations that provide specialized support services to victims of violence.”¹²³

Only 10% of convictions for violence result in prison sentences.

When it comes to data, since 2017, **17 women have been killed in Montenegro solely because they are women.**¹²⁴ Most of these women had reported threats or violence to the police before their deaths, highlighting systemic failures in protection.

117 Commission Implementing Decision

118 Enlargement Report, https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/montenegro-report-2023_en, accessed on 1st of August 2024.

119 Ibid

120 EC' Rule of Law Report 2024 on Montenegro, https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/6e3ff77c-4a53-4e92-a030-9ea4cca3045c_en?filename=60_1_58089_coun_chap_montenegro_mn.pdf, accessed on 1st of August 2024.

121 Ibid

122 GREVIO Committee Report, <https://www.rolplatform.org/izvestaj-grupe-eksperata-saveta-evrope-za-borbu-protiv-nasilja-nad-zenama-i-nasilje-u-porodici-o-crnoj-gori-i-turskoj/>, accessed on 1st of August 2024.

123 Ibid

124 High Court Podgorica, as cited in Radio Free Europe 2024, <https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/crna-gora-ubistva-zene-femicid/32907966.html>, accessed on: 5th of August 2024.



Gender-based violence is pervasive, affecting women across different spheres of life. **One in four women** in Montenegro has experienced at least one type of partner violence—whether psychological, economic, physical, or sexual.¹²⁵ Despite the severity of the issue, societal attitudes remain troubling: **one-third of citizens** believe women fabricate claims of psychological abuse for attention.¹²⁶ Furthermore, accountability is minimal—**only 10% of convictions for violence result in prison sentences**.¹²⁷ The country also lacks crisis centres and clear procedures to address sexual violence, leaving survivors without adequate support, which is also noted in Commission Implementing Decision approving the Reform Agendas and the multiannual work programme under the Reform and Growth Facility for the Western Balkans.¹²⁸

Globally, as per the **UN Gender and Social Norms Index**, nearly **2 billion people believe men have the right to beat their wives**.¹²⁹ In Montenegro, this mindset manifests starkly in every aspect of the public and private sphere, as shown in UNDP research:

- ❖ **7 out of 10 women politicians** have faced violence.
- ❖ **9 out of 10 women politicians** have encountered sexism.
- ❖ Half of these women state that their political parties failed to address the violence they endured.¹³⁰

125 OSCE, De Facto and Safe Women's House 2022.

126 Ibid

127 Supreme Court of Montenegro, as cited in RTCG 2024, <https://rtcg.me/vijesti/drustvo/32715/nasilje-nad-zenama-i-dalje-veliki-problem.html>, accessed on: 5th of August 2024.

128 Commission Implementing Decision approving the Reform Agendas and the multiannual work programme under the Reform and Growth Facility for the Western Balkans, https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu/document/download/a732b6c0-ae10-4bc6-b301-5db4a97994b3_en?filename=SWD_2024_245_5_EN_autre_document_travail_service_part1_v3.pdf, accessed on 8th of May, 2025, EU Gender Action Plan, <https://www.coe-civ.eu/kh/eu-gender-action-plan-gap-iii#:~:text=GAP%20III%20is%20an%20ambitious,of%20GAP%20III's%20key%20areas>, accessed on 8th of May, 2025.

129 UN Gender and Social Norms Index, <https://hdr.undp.org/content/2023-gender-social-norms-index-gsni#/indices/GSNI>, accessed on: 5th of August, 2024.

130 Violence Towards Women in Politics in Montenegro, <https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/migration/eurasia/UNDP-mne-istrazivanje-zeneupolitici-2021.pdf>, accessed on: 5th of August 2024.

Public attitudes further exacerbate the issue. **One-third of citizens** personally know someone affected by family violence, **yet 41% believe it is a private matter** that does not warrant intervention.¹³¹ **Only 4% of citizens** recognize sexual harassment as a form of violence, and **74% of victims of sexual violence never disclose their experiences.**¹³²

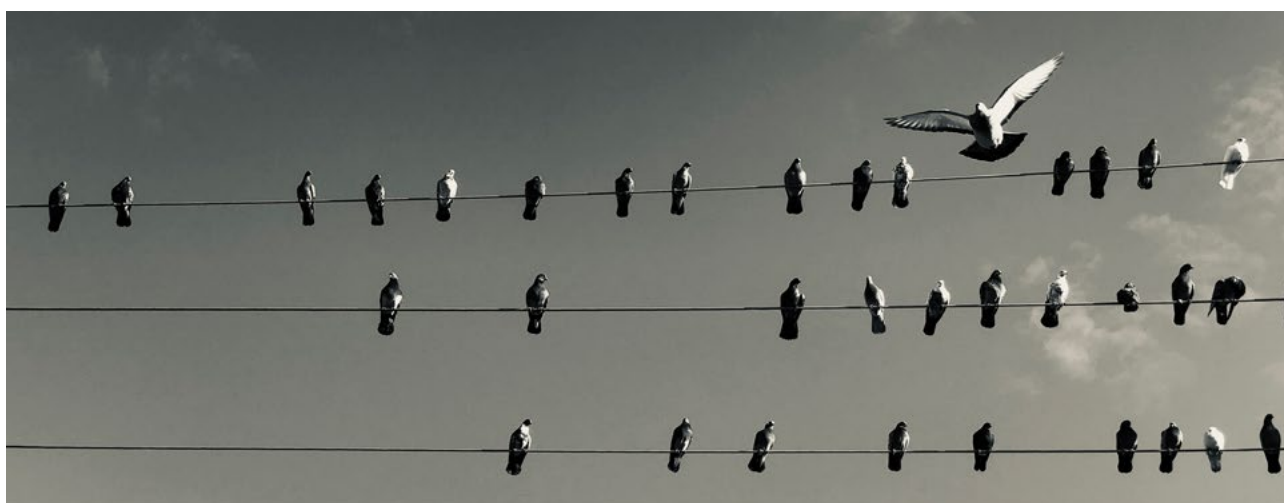
In August 2024 alone, **86 criminal acts of domestic violence** were recorded, alongside **four cases of rape.**¹³³ Between January and October 2024:

- ❖ The Supreme State Prosecutor's Office handled 586 cases of domestic violence involving 616 individuals, surpassing the total for the previous year.¹³⁴
- ❖ The Misdemeanour Courts processed 1,773 cases related to the Law on Protection from Domestic Violence:
 - 978 cases (55.16%) were resolved, with outcomes including 307 fines, 61 prison sentences, and 175 suspended sentences.¹³⁵

Protective measures were also imposed, including:

- ❖ 178 restraining orders,
- ❖ 190 measures prohibiting harassment and stalking,
- ❖ 72 cases of mandatory addiction or psychiatric treatment, and
- ❖ 69 eviction orders.¹³⁶

As shown in Table 4, the data highlights gender disparities and underscores the prevalence of male perpetrators in domestic violence cases. It also indicates a need for interventions targeting unemployed and less-educated individuals, as well as better resource allocation to improve case resolution rates in courts like Podgorica.



131 OSCE, De Facto and Safe Women's House 2022.

132 Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare, 2022.

133 Police Directorate, as cited in: Radio Free Europe, <https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/crna-gora-ubistva-zene-femicid/32907966.html>, accessed on: 5th of August 2024.

134 This data was provided by Supreme State Prosecutor's Office in December 2024.

135 This and subsequent data was provided by the High Misdemeanor Court of Montenegro in December 2024.

136 Ibid

Table 4: Aggregate Tabular Overview of Data for All Misdemeanor Courts

Court Location/ Department	Number of Cases in Progress	Number of Resolved Cases	Victims of Violence				Perpetrators				Profile of Perpetrators (based on available data)					
			Adults		Minors		Adults		Minors		Employment Status			Education Level		
			M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	Unemployed	Employed	Retired	Primary Education	Secondary Education	Higher and University Education
Podgorica	1.013	420 41,46%	154	281	39	32	357	105	1	0	193	221	3	103	220	39
Budva	499	365 73,15%	127	340	57	19	399	145	3	0	146	270	23	62	244	56
Bijelo Polje	261	193 73,95%	89	135	18	8	209	44	9	0	100	33	12	29	72	8
Total at Court Level	1.773	978 55,16%	370	756	114	59	965	294	13	0	439	524	38	194	536	103

Equally important information is about the type of sentence. The data in Table 5, provides insights into the resolution of misdemeanor cases in three courts in Montenegro: Podgorica, Budva, and Bijelo Polje. It outlines the distribution of penalties and other legal outcomes across these jurisdictions:

Table 5: Type of sentence

Court	Financial penalty	Prison Sentence	Provisional Sentence	Warning	Termination	Educational Measure	Dismissal	Acquittal	Other Resolutions
Podgorica	91	31	108	22	44	1	2	80	41
Budva	150	8	50	49	11	1	8	78	10
Bijelo Polje	66	22	17	18	11	2	3	52	2
Total	307 31,40%	61 6,24%	175 17,89%	89 9,10%	66 6,75%	4 0,41%	13 1,33%	210 21,47%	53 5,41%

Across all three courts, **financial penalties were the most prevalent resolution, comprising 307 cases, or 31.40% of all outcomes.** Provisional sentences followed, with 175 cases making up 17.89% of the total. Acquittals accounted for 210 cases, representing 21.47%. **Prison sentences were relatively rare, occurring in 61 cases, or 6.24%.** Warnings were issued in 89 cases (9.10%), and 66 cases (6.75%) were terminated. Other outcomes included four educational measures (0.41%), 13 dismissals (1.33%), and 53 cases resolved through alternative methods (5.41%).

The data highlights variations in how each court addresses misdemeanour cases, with Budva favouring financial penalties, while Podgorica demonstrated a higher reliance on provisional sentences and acquittals. The relatively low frequency of prison sentences across all courts indicates a tendency toward non-custodial resolutions in handling misdemeanours.

The statistics underscore a pressing need for systemic reform and societal change to combat gender-based violence in Montenegro. In October 2024, UNDP and the Supreme State Prosecutor's Office (SSPO), have signed a statement of intent with clear expectations and goals – to advance gender equality and effectively address gender-based violence.¹³⁷

¹³⁷ UNDP and SSPO, <https://www.undp.org/montenegro/press-releases/partnership-between-undp-and-supreme-state-prosecutors-office-advancing-gender-equality-and-strengthening-rule-law>, accessed on: 15th of October, 2024.

The partnership between UNDP and the SSPO aims to strengthen the judicial response to gender-based violence, promote gender-responsive practices, and establish a framework in which gender equality is embedded within the principles of justice and governance. Recognized as a pivotal institution, the SSPO is positioned to lead the charge in delivering swift and decisive actions against gender-based violence, reinforcing its vital role in advancing justice and accountability.

The statistics underscore a pressing need for systemic reform and societal change to combat gender-based violence in Montenegro.

Incorporating gender perspectives into prosecutorial functions represents more than a procedural change—it signifies a profound shift toward a more equitable legal system that fully acknowledges and addresses the vulnerabilities and experiences of women. The efforts to integrate gender perspective into the work of SSPO resulted in set of guidelines to ensure effective application of mechanisms in handling cases related to domestic violence.¹³⁸ For an example, whenever possible, victims should be heard directly by the prosecutor before being questioned by police officers. During these proceedings, special care must be taken to prevent any contact between the victim and the suspect within the premises of the prosecution office, in line with the Istanbul Convention.

Additionally, a coordinator has been appointed by the Supreme State Prosecutor to oversee the implementation of the Guidelines. This individual is responsible for monitoring their application and facilitating cooperation with relevant institutions, multidisciplinary teams, non-governmental organizations, international bodies, and ongoing projects in the field of combating domestic violence. Enhancing the SSPO's capacity to effectively handle gender-based violence cases ensures that gender equality is considered at every stage of the judicial process. This effort goes beyond improving individual case outcomes; it seeks to institutionalize gender-sensitive practices, leaving a lasting impact on Montenegro's legal system and advancing broader goals of gender equality.

Several improvements are noted, but still the issue of gender-based violence has such a large scope that it is necessary to implement several recommendations and measures, such as:

- ❖ Prioritize the development of comprehensive and specialized responses to gender-based violence;
- ❖ Establish and operationalize crisis centers for victims of sexual violence in line with Istanbul Convention recommendations;
- ❖ Strengthen the capacity of professionals across relevant sectors;
- ❖ Provide mandatory training on gender-responsive approaches for police, judicial, and healthcare professionals handling gender-based violence cases;
- ❖ Ensure amendments to laws on domestic violence and criminal codes are effectively implemented and monitored;
- ❖ Ensure that investigative and judicial practices align with international standards to effectively combat gender-based violence and uphold the rights of victims;
- ❖ Establish a centralized database to monitor cases of gender-based violence across institutions, ensuring accurate data to guide policy and intervention;
- ❖ Conduct regular reviews of investigative and judicial practices to identify and address inefficiencies.

¹³⁸ Guidelines for GBV Cases SSPO, <https://tuzilastvo.me/vrdt/sadrzaj/P8RL>, accessed on 8th of May, 2025.

4.1.4 Trafficking in Human Beings

Human trafficking remains a pervasive and heinous issue that presents a global threat to the fundamental rights and dignity of individuals worldwide. The latest **UN Global Report on Trafficking in Persons**¹³⁹ identified that the “number of victims detected globally fell by 11 per cent in 2020 from the previous year”¹⁴⁰. However, the impact of Covid-19 pandemic is not one-dimensional. The UN Report argues that the effects of pandemics not only limited traffickers’ opportunities but also potentially hindered law enforcement efforts in identifying victims. Research in 2022 highlighted a disturbing trend where **female victims faced physical or severe violence from traffickers at a rate three times higher than males**, while children were victimized nearly twice as frequently as adults.¹⁴¹

Moreover, statistics revealed that **women accused of human trafficking were more often convicted than men**, raising concerns about potential gender bias in the justice system and the evolving dynamics within trafficking networks.¹⁴²

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has launched in the new 2024 action to combat human trafficking and migrant smuggling¹⁴³. As part of its new initiative, the UNODC plans to emphasize the links between human trafficking and smuggling, as well as their associations with various organized criminal activities like cybercrime, money laundering, drug trafficking, firearms trafficking, and corruption.¹⁴⁴ The Action will involve a broadening of UNODC’s field operations by sending resident specialists to countries requiring urgent support, with a reinforced focus on fostering sustainable development and enhancing gender equality efforts in these regions.¹⁴⁵

Simultaneously, building on the **Anti-Trafficking Directive 2011/36/EU**¹⁴⁶ on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims, EU addresses trafficking in human beings comprehensively through coordination in all relevant areas, as emphasized in EU Gender Equality Plan 2020 – 2025.

When it comes to the legal framework in this area, besides Constitution, general laws, and international legal instruments, this issue is also regulated by the **Criminal Code of Montenegro**.

Article 444¹⁴⁷ of the Criminal Code has several revisions, which define that whoever by means of the threat, force, **abduction**, fraud or deception, of the abuse of power, trust, dependence, a position of vulnerability, withholding, taking away or destroying personal documents, counterfeiting personal documents, procuring or manufacturing of counterfeit documents or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, commits any of the following: recruits,

Female victims faced physical or severe violence from traffickers at a rate three times higher than males, while women accused of human trafficking were more often convicted than men.

139 https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/glotip/2022/GLOTiP_2022_web.pdf

140 Ibid

141 Ibid

142 Ibid

143 <https://unis.unvienna.org/unis/en/pressrels/2024/uniscp1174.html>

144 Ibid

145 Ibid

146 EU Gender Equality Plan 2020 – 2025, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0152>, accessed on 8th of May, 2025.

147 <https://www.paragraf.me/propisi-crnegore/krivicni-zakonik-crne-gore.html>

transports, transfers, surrenders, sells, buys, negotiates the sale of, harbors or receipts another person for the purpose of **exploitation of his labor, forced labor, submission to servitude, slavery or practices similar to slavery, commission of criminal activity, prostitution or other forms of sexual exploitation, beggary, exploitation for pornographic purposes, for conclusion of an unlawful marriage, removal of organs for transplantation, or for exploitation in armed conflicts, shall be punished by a prison sentence for a term from one to ten years.**

The Article has two new paragraphs, which define that the perpetrator shall be punished with imprisonment for a minimum of five years, if severe bodily harm is done to a child. Another paragraph states that individuals who were forced to take part in the criminal activities mentioned above, as direct victims will not face any penalties.

Another important document regulating this sphere is the **Strategy for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings 2019–2024**.¹⁴⁸

The strategy contains four key areas:

- ❖ Prevention of trafficking in human beings;
- ❖ Protection of victims of human trafficking;
- ❖ Criminal justice/prosecution response;
- ❖ Partnership, coordination, and international cooperation.

The principal institution in charge of the fight against trafficking in human beings is the Ministry of Interior – Department for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings. Another important institutional mechanism is Police Directorate. Within its Criminal Police Sector, a Department for combating trafficking in human beings, smuggling, and illegal migration was established. Other institutions involved in the fight against trafficking of human beings are the State Prosecutor's Office, Supreme Court, Ministry of Justice, Human and Minority Rights, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Health, Ministry Finance and Social Welfare, Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport, Directorate for Inspection Affairs and Institution of Protectors of Human Rights and Freedoms of Montenegro.

The implementation of 63 activities was monitored in the Action Plan for the implementation of the Strategy to combat human trafficking for the period 2019-2024, for the year 2023¹⁴⁹. Out of the total number of activities, 43 were completed, 5 activities were partially completed, while 15 activities were not implemented. These non-implemented activities are in the strategic areas of: Prevention of human trafficking (4), Protection of victims of human trafficking (3), Criminal justice response/criminal prosecution (1), and Partnership, coordination, and international cooperation (7).

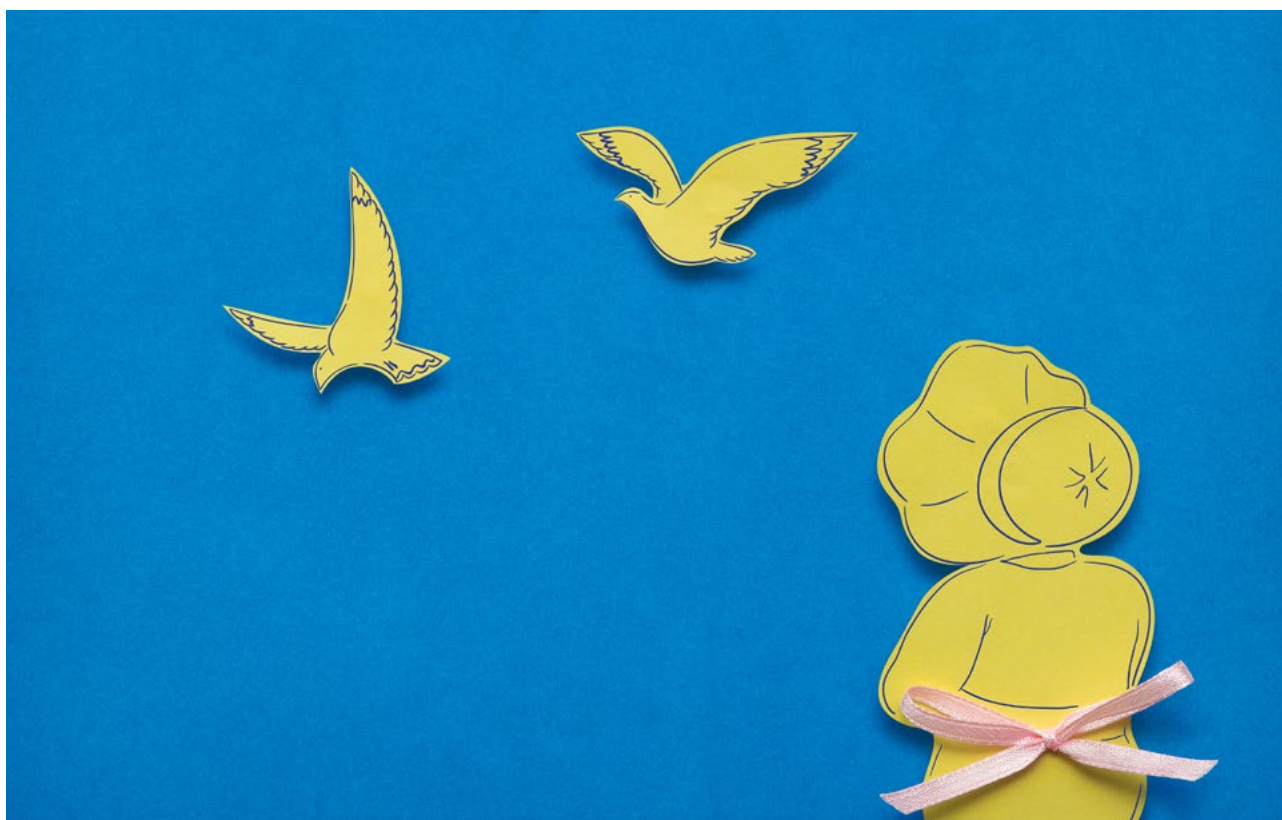
Within the strategic area of Prevention of human trafficking, the Action Plan identifies significant number of “training sessions that were conducted to enhance the professional capacities of representatives from relevant state authorities for the proactive identification, referral, protection, and reintegration of potential and actual victims of human trafficking, as well as for the effective prosecution of perpetrators of the crime of human trafficking.”¹⁵⁰

In the strategic area of **Protection of victims of human trafficking**, it is argued that “the activities carried out contributed to maintaining continuity in achieving results in the formal identification of victims of human trafficking, as well as ensuring the continued provision of protection services for victims of human

148 Strategy for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings 2019–2024, <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/8/d/424622.pdf>, accessed on October 2024

149 Action Plan for the implementation of the Strategy for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, <https://www.gov.me/dokumenta/8407370d-ac93-44dc-9e04-6cf1f6c549fe>, accessed on October 2024.

150 Ibid



trafficking accommodated in shelters/reception centers and alternative accommodation.” In 2023, the team responsible for formally identifying human trafficking victims conducted 28 meetings and oversaw the referral and accommodation process for potential victims. They conducted interviews when necessary to make decisions, issued identification determinations, and communicated with the victims’ countries of origin to facilitate their return home.

In the strategic area of **Criminal Justice Response/Criminal Prosecution**, it is noted that there has been an increase in the number of criminal reports filed for the crime of human trafficking.

Within the strategic area of **Partnership, Coordination, and International Cooperation**, the Action Plan states that “activities have been undertaken to promote the Protocol on the procedures of institutions and organizations with children living and working in the streets.”¹⁵¹

However, the EC’s Progress Report has warned that “no verdict related to trafficking in human beings has been issued by courts in the last two and the half years.”¹⁵² Moreover, it states that Montenegro must enhance its response to human trafficking by expediting legal proceedings and implementing stricter penalties. It is crucial to bolster efforts in detecting all forms of human trafficking and promptly identifying victims, particularly within high-risk sectors and among vulnerable groups. The Report also argues that the country should focus on enhancing support services for trafficking victims, especially those from marginalized communities, and prioritize the establishment of a dedicated shelter for victims. Moreover, Montenegro needs to improve assistance provided to victims during trafficking trials by ensuring access to specialized legal counsel and facilitating the process for victims to obtain free legal aid and compensation.¹⁵³

¹⁵¹ Ibid

¹⁵² EC Progress Report 2024. https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/document/download/e09b27af-427a-440b-a47a-ed5254aec169_en?filename=SWD_2023_694%20Montenegro%20report.pdf, accessed on October 2024.

¹⁵³ Ibid

The **State Department 2023 Trafficking in Persons Report on Montenegro**¹⁵⁴ notes similar concerns, since the country was downgraded to Tier 2 Watch List based on the following objections:

- ❖ “The Government of Montenegro does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking but is making significant efforts to do so. These efforts included prosecuting more defendants and identifying more trafficking victims;
- ❖ The government did not convict any traffickers and reorganized the police office dedicated to investigating trafficking, which reduced its ability to conduct proactive investigations.
- ❖ The government did not quickly act and establish alternative means of victim protection after experts published credible allegations of abuse by an employee with management duties of the government-funded, NGO-run anti-trafficking shelter (anti-trafficking shelter), including physical violence against victims, intimidation, and blackmail;
- ❖ The government attempted to organize accommodations for child victims in foster families; however, it did not develop a concrete plan to provide victim protection for adult victims..¹⁵⁵

On a positive note, the government maintained prevention efforts and a multi-disciplinary operational task force to identify and investigate trafficking.

The service of accommodation and protection of victims of all forms of violence, including victims of human trafficking, has been passed to the competence of the Ministry of Work and Social Welfare, which refers victims to licensed service providers only. At the end of 2020, a specialized shelter for victims of human trafficking was licensed, managed by the NGO “Institute for Social and Educational Policy.”

Other licensed service providers are several women’s organizations NGO “SOS hotline for women and children victims of violence Nikšić,” NGO “Safe Women’s House,” as well as PI “Center for Support of Children and Families in Bijelo Polje” and PI “Children’s Home Mladost.”

The two more women’s organizations worth mentioning because of their significant and valuable experience in this field and the partnerships with institutional mechanisms are Montenegrin Women’s Lobby and Centre for Roma Initiatives. When it comes to a current state in this area in Montenegro, according to the data available to the Ministry of the Interior’s Department for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings in 2023, the Team for Formal Identification of Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings conducted the procedure and granted the status of a victim of trafficking to 91 persons.

Table 6: Number of identified victims by sex by the Formal Identification Team for the period from January 1st, 2020 to December 31st, 2023

Male	Female	Total
40	51	91

Table 7: Number of identified victims by sex and age

Adult male	Adult female	Minor male	Minor female
27	24	13	27

154 State Department 2023 Trafficking in Persons Report on Montenegro,<https://www.state.gov/reports/2023-trafficking-in-persons-report/montenegro/>, accessed on October 2024.

155 Ibid

Table 8: Number of identified victims by sex by the Formal Identification Team in 2020 and in 2023

Year	Male	Female	Total
2020	31	21	52
2023	4	14	18

Table 9: Number of victims of trafficking identified by the Formal Identification Team for the period from January 1st, 2023 to December 31st, 2023, disaggregated by the type of exploitation and citizenship

Status	Sex	Type of exploitation	Citizenship
Victim	3 female minors	Exploitation for pornographic purposes	Ukraine (2) Israel (1)
Victim	1 adult female	Sexual exploitation - exploitation for pornographic purposes	Ukraine
Victim	1 adult female	Sexual exploitation	Serbia
Victim	1 minor female	Sexual exploitation	Montenegro
Victim	1 minor female	Sexual exploitation - coercion to commit a criminal offense	Montenegro
Victim	2 minor females	Forced beggary	Montenegro
Victim	4 minor males	Forced beggary	Montenegro
Victim	1 minor male	Coercion to commit a criminal offense	Albania
Victim	3 minor females	Conclusion of an unlawful marriage	Montenegro (2) Kosovo (1)
Victim	1 minor female	Conclusion of an unlawful marriage/forced beggary	Montenegro

Table 10: Number of identified victims by the form of exploitation in 2023

Type of exploitation	Adult Male	Adult Female	Minor Male	Minor Female
Sexual exploitation		2		5
Forced beggary			4	2
Coercion to commit a criminal offense			1	
Conclusion of an unlawful marriage				4

Table 11: Number of identified victims by the form of exploitation in 2023 and in 2020

Type of exploitation	Year	Total number of victims	Type of exploitation	Year	Total number of victims
Sexual exploitation	2023	7	1	2020	4
Forced beggary	2023	6	1	2020	1
Arranged marriage	2023			2020	7
Coercion to commit a criminal offense	2023	1	1	2020	
Conclusion of an unlawful marriage	2023	4		2020	1
Labor exploitation	2023			2020	39

From the data presented above, it is evident that **in total period of three years there were more female than male victims of the trafficking in human beings**. Although the number of victims is almost four times lower in 2023 compared to 2020, **women are as three times as likely than men to be victims of human trafficking**. When we analyze the data from 2020 and 2023, it is also visible that the form of exploitation has changed. The main type of exploitation in 2020 was labor exploitation, compared to **2023 where the sexual exploitation is most frequent**. It is also very worrisome that children are the majority of identified victims.

While advancements in legal frameworks and institutional capabilities are positive, the prevalence of human trafficking for sexual exploitation on a global scale and the likelihood of underreporting suggest that the full extent of these crimes might not be accurately captured. This issue mirrors the challenges faced in addressing gender-based violence. Another concern is the correct classification of offenses; even when investigations uncover instances of human trafficking, not all cases are prosecuted as such, with some being categorized under related offenses like mediation in prostitution in the Criminal Code. Moreover, a lack of awareness about human trafficking presents a barrier to developing a more effective response to combat this crime.

Possible recommendations that would contribute to the improvement in this area:

- ❖ Strengthening the cooperation between institutions that has competencies in the area of trafficking of human beings;
- ❖ Capacity building of the institutions which are in charge of implementing anti-trafficking policies;
- ❖ Strengthening capacities of service providers for victims, including the services regarding reintegration of trafficked persons;
- ❖ Conducting training for prosecutors and judges regarding international practices in the area of antitrafficking;
- ❖ Raise public awareness on trafficking in human beings, with the special emphasis on different forms of exploitation;
- ❖ Raise public awareness on eliminating child marriages;
- ❖ Establish specialized service support for the victims of child marriages;
- ❖ Promote cooperation of institutions and CSOs in order to provide solutions that are local, contextual, and integrated.

4.2 EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

The right to education under equal conditions is guaranteed by the Constitution of Montenegro. The same applies to compulsory and free primary education, as well as the autonomy of universities, higher education, and scientific institutions.

Fundamental national principles in the field of education mainly refer to further harmonization of national legislation with the EU regulations, international conventions, and UN recommendations.

One of the main goals of education defined in the General Law on Education and Upbringing is to provide an opportunity for the holistic development of the individual, regardless of gender, age, disability, social and cultural background, national and religious affiliation, and physical and mental constitution.

Another one refers to the development of the awareness, need, and ability to preserve and promote human rights, the rule of law, the natural and social environment, multiethnicity, and diversity.

The goals of the General Law on Education are the basis for all laws that regulate the field of education: the Law on Preschool Education, the Law on Primary Education, the Law on Gymnasium, the Law on Vocational Education, the Law on Education of Children with Special Educational Needs, Law on Higher Education, Law on Adult Education.

The Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation of Montenegro, has adopted the **Strategy for the Development of Higher Education 2024-2027**¹⁵⁶. The major strategic guidelines of this document are:

- ❖ Enhancing the model of practical training in higher education to provide all students with adequate practical training;
- ❖ Defining clear criteria and conditions for enrollment in higher education institutions;
- ❖ Ensuring the implementation of learning outcomes in a thorough manner, as well as their evaluation;
- ❖ Continuing activities to improve the quality of higher education;
- ❖ Ensuring the alignment of the Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education with the ESG and its inclusion in EQAR through an appropriate control process;
- ❖ Developing a range of lifelong learning opportunities, monitoring the quality of implementation of these programs, and recognizing non-formal and informal education;
- ❖ Further advancing student standards;
- ❖ Internationalization and alignment with EU recommendations and guidelines.

In the introductory part of the Strategy it is emphasized that “during the preparation of this strategic document in the context of gender mainstreaming in higher education policy, special attention was paid to the following: gender-sensitive language was used throughout the entire text of the strategic document; in the Needs Assessment section, gender-sensitive data was presented based on available official statistics.”¹⁵⁷ The Strategy does not specifically address how gender equality should be mainstreamed in higher education, but it indirectly touches upon this topic through recommendations on enhancing the

In ICT (Information and Computing Technology) women and men show almost the same level of skills.

¹⁵⁶ Strategy for the Development of Higher Education 2024-2027, <https://www.gov.me/clanak/strategija-visokog-obrazovanja>, accessed on November 2024.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid

diversity and inclusivity of teaching staff in higher education institutions, specifically by “encouraging the recruitment of faculty members from various social, cultural, and ethnic groups.”¹⁵⁸

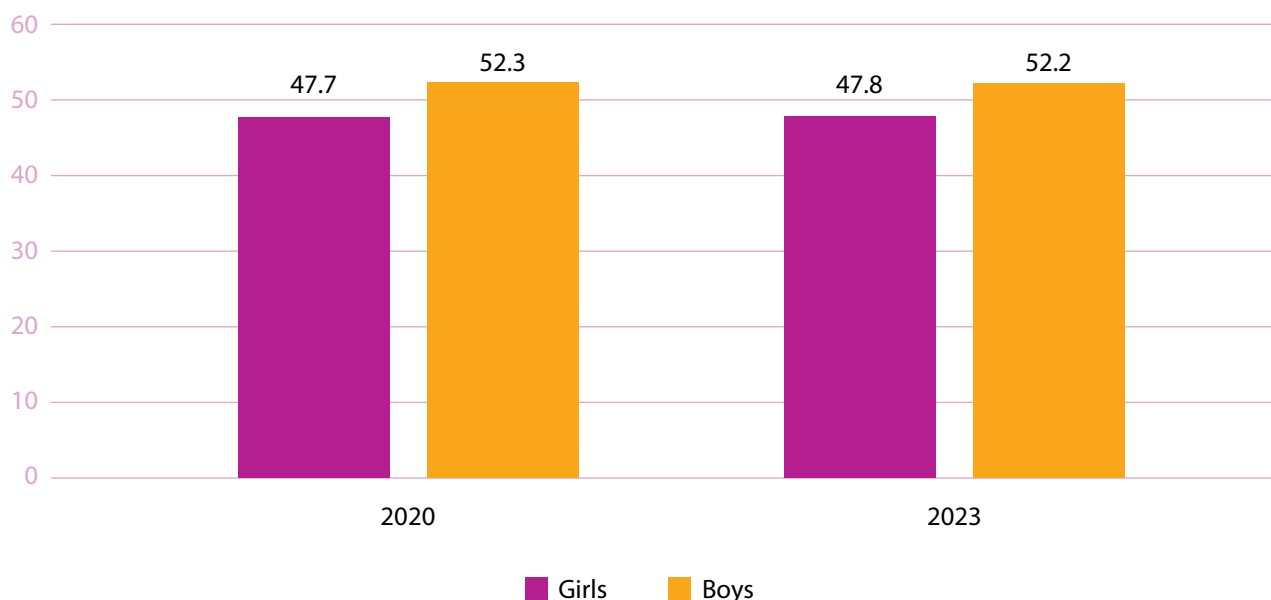
National Strategy for Gender Equality 2021-2025¹⁵⁹ acknowledges the importance of education in reducing gender-based discrimination through Operational Objective 2 – “Improve the areas of education, culture, and media to reduce the level of stereotypes and prejudices towards women and persons of different gender identities.”¹⁶⁰ Measures within this objective are as follows:

- ❖ Introduce gender-responsive content and mandatory use of gender-sensitive language in curricula and education;
- ❖ Educate members of educational staff to encourage the values of a civil and inclusive society, and gender equality among children and youth;
- ❖ Organize media literacy training to identify all types of stereotypes, including gender stereotypes;
- ❖ Introduce gender-responsive programs and mandatory use of gender-sensitive language in the programs of cultural institutions;
- ❖ Encourage the media to introduce gender-responsive programs and use gender-sensitive language;
- ❖ Introduce gender-related media monitoring (gender responsible media monitoring).

Starting from the pre-primary education, according to the official data of Statistical Office, there are 61 pre-primary institutions in Montenegro, of which 22 institutions are public, and 39 are private, with the network of 165 childcare units.

The total number of children enrolled in pre-primary institutions in the school year 2023/2024 is 25,077. Of the total number of children, there is **47.8% (11993) of enrolled girls and 52.2% (13804) of boys**. The share of enrolled children increased by 1.65% compared to previous year and by 15% compared to 2020/2021 school year.

Graph 1: Children enrolled in pre-primary institutions 2023 and 2020



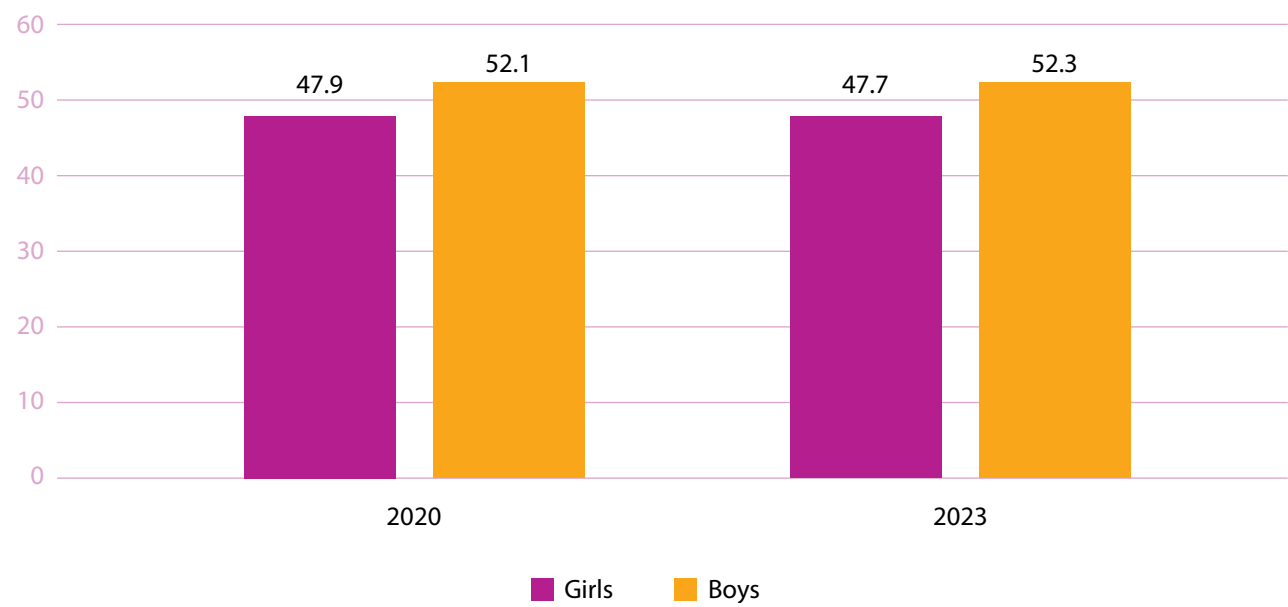
158 Ibid

159 National Strategy for Gender Equality 2021-2025, <https://www.gov.me/en/documents/33985332-d431-4c25-9643-e9a15d76e548>, accessed on November 2024.

160 Ibid

When it comes to primary education, the number of pupils enrolled in primary education at the beginning of the school year 2023/2024 is 70,173. **Of the total number of pupils enrolled in primary school (70,713), 47.7% (33761) are girls and 52.3% (36412) are boys.** When compared to 2020, the ratio of male and female pupils is almost unchanged.¹⁶¹

Graph 2: Pupils enrolled in primary education at the beginning of the school year 2023/2024 and 2020/2021

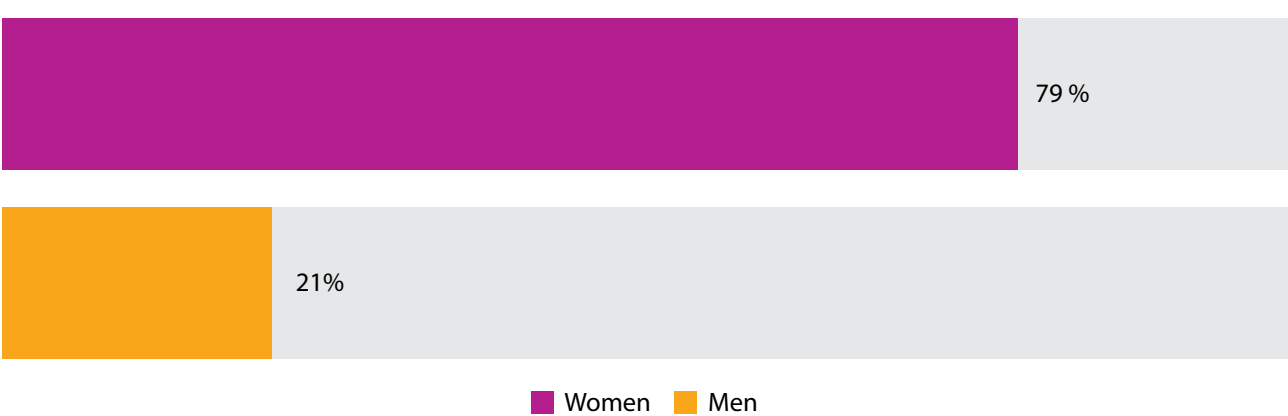


The number of pupils enrolled **in the first grade of primary school is 7,950, of which 49% or 3,926 are girls, and 51% or 4,024 are boys.** The **number of pupils who finished the ninth grade is 7,566, of which 47.9% or 3,627 are girls, and 52.1% or 3,939 are boys.**

The number of classes in primary schools in Montenegro is 3,690. The class-pupils ratio in regular primary education is 1:19, while the teachers-pupils ratio stands at 1:13.

The **gender structure of teaching staff shows that 79% or 4,143 are women, and 21% or 1,071 are men.**

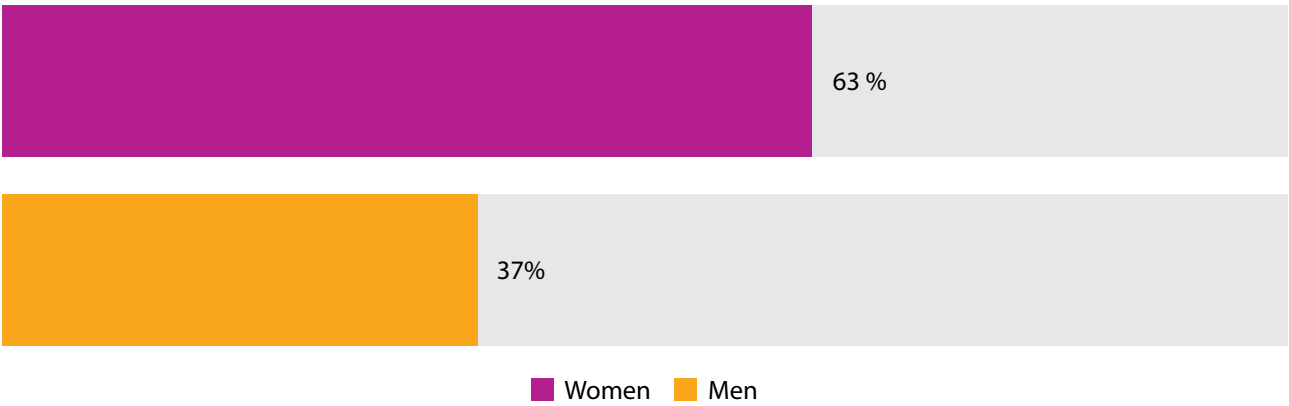
Graph 3: Teaching Staff in Primary Schools 2024



¹⁶¹ UNDP Gender Equality Profile Montenegro 2021, <https://tacso.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/MONTENEGRO.pdf>, accessed on November 2024.

When it comes to the teaching and managerial staff of the school, according to the data provided by the Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation, **women make up 63% of school directors, while men account for 37%.**

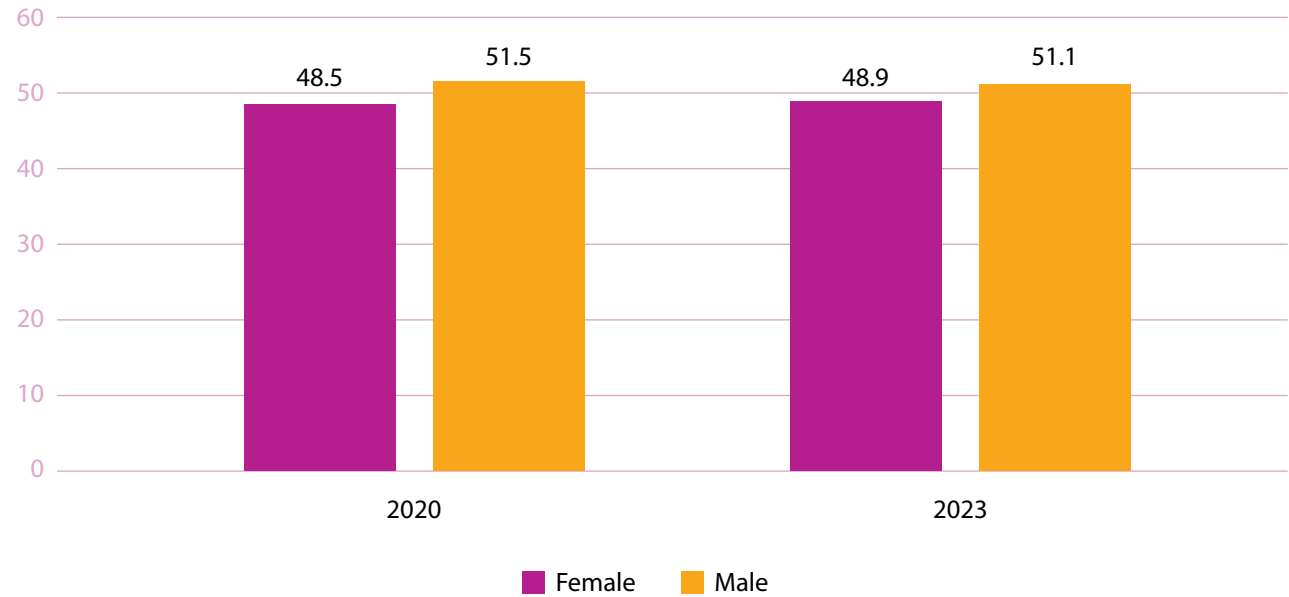
Graph 4: School Directors 2024



The number of pupils who enrolled in secondary education at the beginning of the school year 2023/2024 is 25,727. When it comes to enrollment in resource centers, there are 137 pupils using their services.

Of the total number of pupils enrolled in secondary school (25,727), 48.9% or 12,584 are female, and 51.1% or 13,143 are male.

Graph 5: Pupils enrolled in secondary schools by gender; the beginning of the school year 2020/2021 and 2023/2024



The number of pupils enrolled in the I grade of secondary school is 7373 or 9,5% higher than in 2020. Out of the total number of pupils enrolled in the first grade, **47.8% or 3,528 are female, and 52.2% or 3,845 are male.** The number of pupils who finished high school is 5859, and **51.4% or 3,016 are female and 48.6% or 2,843 are male.** When compared to 2020, the gender structure of the high school pupils remained unchanged.

Observing the areas of work, there are 7 823 pupils (30.9%) in the gymnasium and 17904 pupils (69.1%) in specialized schools. Of the total number of students enrolled in gymnasiums, 58% are female and 42% male, highlighting a notable female majority.

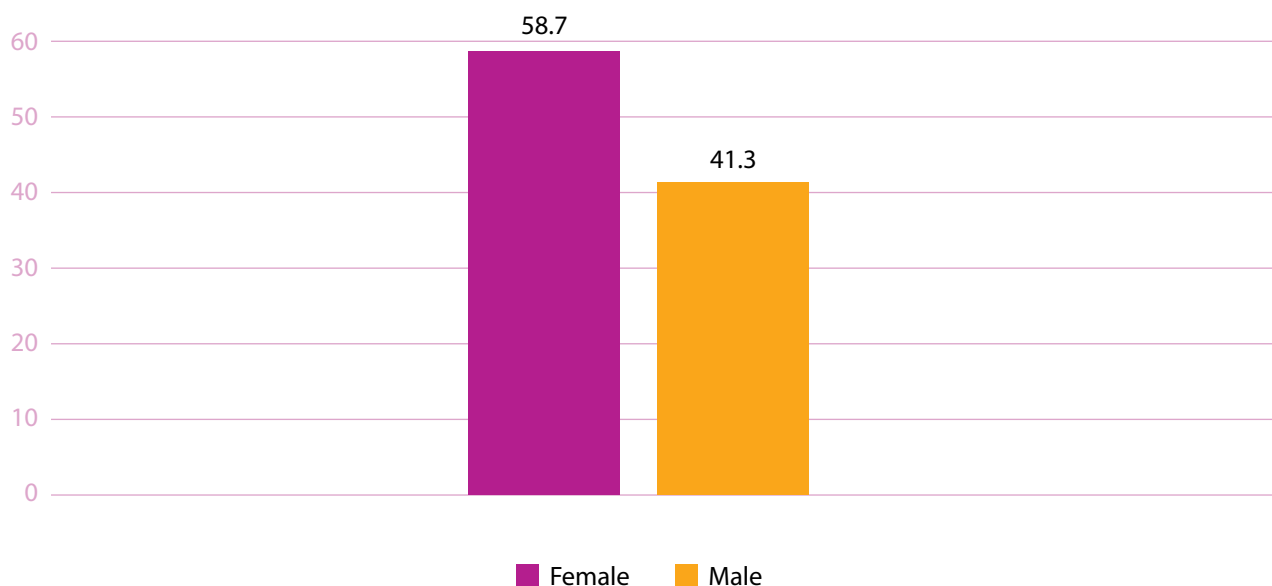
Participation in vocational education is relatively balanced, with 53% male and 47% female pupils. However, significant gendered trends exist in occupational fields. Male pupils dominate technical and industrial fields, such as mechanical engineering (95% male), electrical engineering (91% male), and transportation (74% male).

In contrast, female pupils are more prevalent in fields related to care, arts, and administration, particularly in public health and social welfare (75% female) and culture, arts, and public information (72% female). A positive trend is emerging in areas such as trade and tourism, architecture and construction, and geology, where there is more gender balance¹⁶².

In the context of higher education, during the academic year 2023/2024, **out of the total number of students (16,309) 58.7% (9588) are women and 41.3% (6721) are men.**

The representation of women at almost all levels of education is higher than men. The lower percentage at the pre-primary and primary levels could be ascribed to the fact that more boys than girls are born in the last decade due to the harmful practice of prenatal selection of sex.

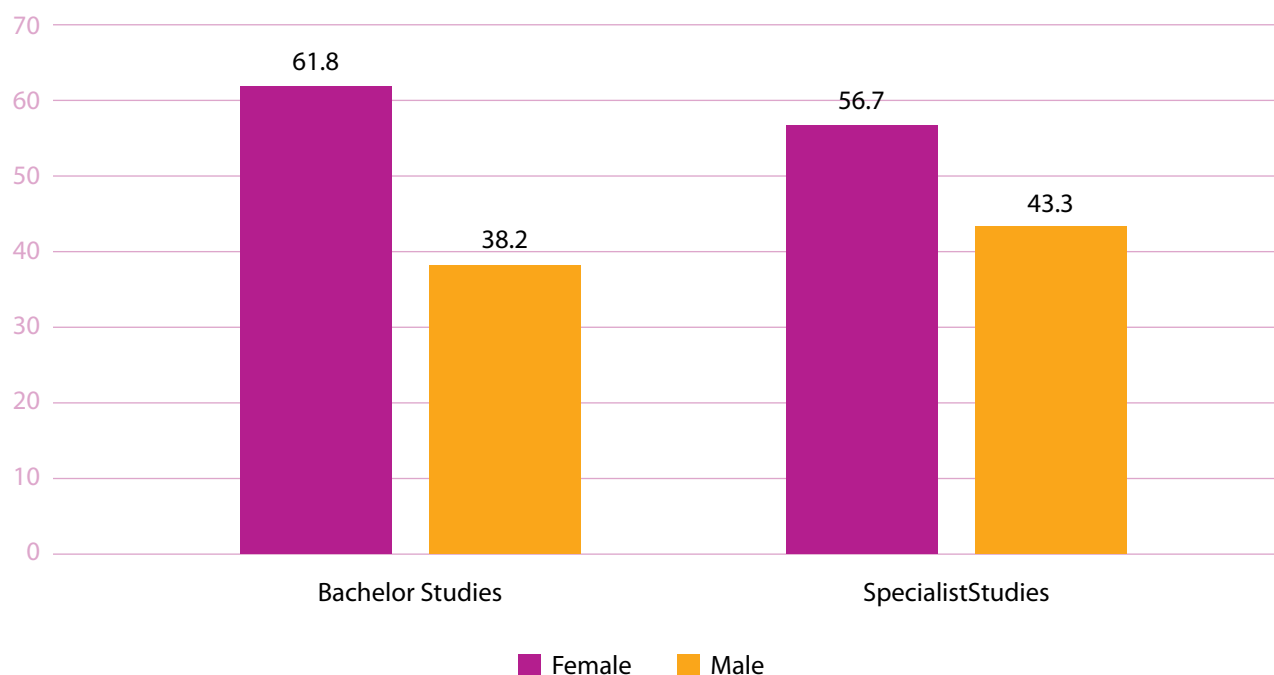
Graph 6: Proportion of students enrolled in higher education by gender, 2023/2024 academic year



From the total number of students who completed **bachelor studies, 61.8% (1906) are women and 38.2% (1178) are men.** From the total number of students who completed specialist studies, 378 or 50.6% were in public higher education institutions, while 368 or 49.4% completed their studies in private higher education institutions. In 2023, the specialist studies were completed by **56.7% (423) of female students and 43.3% (323) of male students.**

¹⁶² Statistical Office of Montenegro, <https://monstat.org/uploads/files/publikacije/godisnjak2024/21.pdf>

Graph 7: Proportion of students who completed bachelor and specialist studies by gender 2023



From the total number of students who completed master studies, **469 or 70.2% were female and 199 or 29.8% are male**. When compared to 2020, **there is an increase by 5.5% among women with master's degree and a decrease by 5.7% among male graduates**. A PhD degree in 2023 was obtained by 15 persons. Of this number, **60% (9) are women while 40% (6) are men**.

Graph 8: Students who finished master and PhD studies by gender, 2020 and 2023



When it comes to ICT skills, available data¹⁶³ shows almost even level of ICT skills among women and men:

Table 12: ICT skills among women and men (2022)

ICT skills	Male	Female
Copying or moving a file or folder, transferring files	95.4%	97.5%
Using Word	68.9%	71.5%
Installing software or other applications	61.8%	57.2%
Creating presentations or documents	40.6%	43.6%
Using Excel	40.9%	39.5%
Using software to edit photos, video or audio files	29.2%	21.4%
Writing code in a programming language	10.6%	6%

Some differences are observed in writing code in a programming language, where men claim to be more equipped with these skills than women. This might be related to the general gender disbalance in STEM professions.¹⁶⁴ As the landscape shifts with increasing job opportunities in STEM, there is a pressing need to provide robust educational and training support for women and girls interested in pursuing STEM careers. The World Economic Forum's Jobs of the Future Report underscored the growing demand for STEM skills, particularly in fields such as cloud computing, big data, and e-commerce.¹⁶⁵ In 2023, the UNDP organized a significant capacity-building event for Women in STEM across the Western Balkans to address gender disparities within the field¹⁶⁶. The initiative aimed to empower members of the Women in STEM network to understand the importance of gender equality, pinpoint existing gaps, and enhance their knowledge and skills capacity. It is also important to have systemic answer to the lack of women in STEM professions, especially since STEM jobs are among the highest paid ones.

It is evident from the previous data that the representation of women at almost all levels of education is higher. The lower percentage at the pre-primary and primary levels could be ascribed to the fact that more boys than girls are born in the last decade due to the harmful practice of prenatal selection of sex.

According to the latest Gender Equality Index (2023)¹⁶⁷, Montenegro scored 53.4 points in the domain of Knowledge, which is by 1.7 lower than in 2019. This result is also well below EU average of 62.5 points. The domain of Knowledge measures gender inequality in education attainment, share in life-long education and training.¹⁶⁸ As the data presented above has shown, women make the majority of those who graduate. Women also receive scholarships for best students and pupils more often than men.¹⁶⁹ However, previous data¹⁷⁰ indicates that women form a substantial majority in the group of individuals without any education.

163 MONSTAT, Women and Men in Montenegro, <http://monstat.org/uploads/files/publikacije/Zene%20i%20muskarci%20u%20CG%20web%2026.12%20FIN.pdf>, accessed on November 2024.

164 ICT Industry Statistics, <https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Pages/facts/default.aspx>, accessed on November 2024.

165 UNDP – STEM in Western Balkans, <https://www.undp.org/montenegro/news/advancing-women-stem-western-balkans>, accessed on November 2024.

166 Ibid

167 Gender Equality Index Montenegro, <https://eige.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/Montenegro%20Gender%20Equality%20Index.pdf>, accessed on November 2024.

168 Ibid

169 MONSTAT, Women and Men in Montenegro, <http://monstat.org/uploads/files/publikacije/Zene%20i%20muskarci%20u%20CG%20web%2026.12%20FIN.pdf>, accessed on November 2024.

170 https://eige.europa.eu/sites/default/files/gender_equality_index_2019_report_final.pdf



Likewise, among those with incomplete primary education, women accounted for 73%.¹⁷¹ This notable disparity is likely attributed to historical trends when women had limited access to formal education, especially in older generations. In addition, despite making most of the educated population, there is no evidence that higher education leads to better jobs and payments for women in Montenegro.

When it comes to the content of school curriculums, there is no analysis from a gender equality perspective. It is unknown to what degree materials used contain stereotypical views. According to the information provided by the Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation, an analysis of specific curriculum and textbooks is currently underway and the report on this topic is expected by the end of 2024.

Montenegro has one public institution for higher education – University of Montenegro, which is the largest university with 19 faculties, 1 academy, 3 institutes and 18000 students.¹⁷² In addition to the public university, there are three private universities, two independent private faculties and one independent state faculty.¹⁷³ Regarding management positions at the University of Montenegro, the latest data shows that the ratio of male to female managers is 13:09.¹⁷⁴

The University of Montenegro is launching the new master's program Gender Studies that should enroll its first 30 students in October 2024. It is argued that the "program will enable students to become familiar with the concept of gender equality, gender theories, gender stereotypes, which should influence the development of critical thinking and the improvement of awareness in this area".¹⁷⁵ Studies are envisioned as two-year program with 15 courses related to various areas relevant to the study of gender and gender relations and inequalities, such as history, culture, literature, law, political science, education, media, and

¹⁷¹ Ibid

¹⁷² Strategy for the Development of Higher Education 2024-2027, <https://www.gov.me/clanak/strategija-visokog-obrazovanja>, accessed on November 2024.

¹⁷³ University Mediterranean, University of Donja Gorica, University Adriatic, Faculty for Business Management, Faculty for State and European Studies, and Faculty for Montenegrin Language and Literature

¹⁷⁴ Ibid

¹⁷⁵ University of Montenegro, Gender Studies, <https://www.ucg.ac.me/objava/blog/10/objava/179445-univerzitet-crne-gore-pokrece-novi-master-program-studije-roda>, accessed on November 2024.

similar fields.¹⁷⁶ Regarding the gender structure of the teaching staff, 82.4% are women and 17.6% are men. In elaboration presented to the Senate of the University of Montenegro, it is stated that “in Montenegro, there is a lack of a systematically structured formal educational framework aimed at the consistent development of gender-aware employees in the private and public sectors. The key reason identified for this deficiency is the lack of a coherent policy and strategy on education about gender and gender equality.”¹⁷⁷

University of Montenegro has also adopted Gender Equality Plan 2022 - 2026¹⁷⁸, which has four systemic areas: institutional culture of gender equality; gender equality in scientific and artistic research; gender equality in learning and teaching; harmonizing private life and work responsibilities. In the context of gender structure of the academic staff at the University of Montenegro, there are more men as full professors and more women in other academic positions (associate professors, lecturers, and teaching assistants)¹⁷⁹.

When it comes to the prevention mechanisms in school education, there are no specific school protocols regarding gender-based violence, but there are protocols on mediation, as a supported and desirable model of work in school, which is recognized by the General Law on Education and Upbringing, its Article 9b and by the protocol titled “Division of responsibilities and actions to prevent and in cases of violence and vandalism.” Bureau for Education Services has published a research in 2023¹⁸⁰, which demonstrates that during the 2022/23 school year, 17% of pupils were exposed to some form of violence in their schools. 56% of pupils are convinced that teachers will not react promptly and appropriately if they are subjected to violence.

Regarding the content of school curriculums, there is no analysis from a gender equality perspective. It is unknown to what degree materials used in education contain stereotypical views.

There is no gender statistics in this research. According to the information provided by the Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation (MEIS), the Ministry has established SOS phone for reporting cases of violence in schools, which are further recorded in the MEIS database.

Some of the recommendations for further development of gender-sensitive education are:

- ❖ Further improvement of the legal framework to establish gender-responsive education sector planning, analysis, and implementation of policies.
- ❖ Comprehensive assessment of curricula and textbooks with the aim to improve existing and create new content.
- ❖ Awareness-raising campaign for students and teachers.
- ❖ Training and education program for teachers.
- ❖ Intersectoral cooperation with national institutions that implement education policies.
- ❖ Development of systemic measures that should encourage women to study in the field of STEM professions.

176 University of Montenegro, <https://senat.ucg.ac.me/data/1713529471-Zahtjev%20za%20akreditaciju%20master%20studijskog%20programa%20Studije%20roda%20u%20okviru%20Centra%20za%20interdisciplinarne%20i%20multidisciplinarne%20studije.pdf>, accessed on November 2024.

177 Ibid

178 University of Montenegro, Gender Equality Plan, [https://www.ucg.ac.me/skladiste/blog_1023/objava_152210/fajlovi/PLAN%20RODNE%20RAVNOPRAVNOSTI%20UCG%202022-2026\(2\).pdf](https://www.ucg.ac.me/skladiste/blog_1023/objava_152210/fajlovi/PLAN%20RODNE%20RAVNOPRAVNOSTI%20UCG%202022-2026(2).pdf), accessed on November 2024.

179 Ibid

180 Bureau for Education Services 2023, <https://www.gov.me/zs/istrazivanje-u-obrazovanju/mjere-za-upravljanje-problemom-nasilja-u-skoli-prevencija-i-intervencija>, accessed on November 2024.

- ❖ Partnership with CSOs.
- ❖ Developing protocol for preventing and addressing school-related gender-based violence (SRGBV).
- ❖ Promotion of comprehensive sexuality education.



4.3 EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

The main legal framework when it comes to labor rights in Montenegro is Labor law. The new law was passed in 2019 and amended in 2020 and 2024. The latest changes to the Law introduced the provision of tenure contracts after 24 months of work, instead of the previous 36 months. However, the existing legislation does not include provisions for paternity leave. In 2024, there were several revisions proposed in that context but they were not adopted. This is significant stagnation in gender equality policies, especially given the Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on work-life balance for parents and carers.¹⁸¹ The Work-life Balance Initiative was introduced to address the challenges faced by working parents and caregivers in balancing their professional and personal lives. In the current version of the Labor law, there are several gender-responsive provisions regarding specific protection of women's labor rights.

Article 7 of this Law prescribes the prohibition of direct and indirect discrimination of persons seeking employment and employees regarding gender. Article 8 defines the meaning of the terms direct and indirect discrimination more precisely.

Article 10 deals with the prohibition of harassment and sexual harassment at work. Sexual harassment is defined as any unwanted verbal, non-verbal, or physical behavior of a sexual nature, which aims at or violates the dignity of the job seeker and the employed person, especially when such behavior causes fear or creates hostile, degrading intimidating, or offensive environment.

¹⁸¹ Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on work-life balance for parents and carers, <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1311&langId=en>, accessed on November 2024.

Article 14 prescribes the prohibition of any form of harassment in the workplace (mobbing), i.e., any behavior towards an employee or group of employees by the employer that is repeated and aims at or violates the dignity, reputation, personal and professional integrity, position of the employee causes fear or creates a hostile, degrading or offensive environment, worsens working conditions or leads to the employee being isolated or forced to terminate the employment contract on its own initiative.

Article 15 defines special measures. In this regard, it is stated that the provisions of the law, collective agreement, and employment contract related to special protection and assistance to certain categories of employees, especially those on the protection of the rights of persons with disabilities, women during pregnancy and maternity, parental and leave for the purpose of child care, i.e., special child care, as well as provisions related to the special rights of parents, adoptive parents, guardians, and custodians, shall not be considered discrimination.

Article 17 regulates the right of an employed woman to special protection during pregnancy and childbirth.

Article 99 regulates equal pay for the same work or work of the same value. It is further specified that work of the same value means work for which the same level of education is required, i.e., qualification of the level of education or professional qualification, responsibility, skills, working conditions, and work results. It is also defined that in case of violation of the rights from this article, the employee has the right to compensation in the amount of unpaid part of the salary and that the employer's decision or agreement with the employee that is not in accordance with this article is null and void.

Article 121 stipulates that an employer may not refuse to conclude an employment contract with a woman due to pregnancy, nor may it offer her an amendment to the employment contract under unfavorable conditions due to pregnancy, birth, or breastfeeding. It is also prescribed that the employer cannot condition the establishment of employment, i.e., concluding an employment contract with proof of pregnancy, unless it is a job where there is a significant risk to the health of women and children determined by the competent health authority. The employer may not request any information about the pregnancy, nor may it instruct another person to request it unless the employee personally requests a specific right provided by law or other regulation.

Despite legal solutions, women still remain underrepresented and underpaid in labor market compared to men.

Article 122 defines that a pregnant employee has the right to one day of absence from work during the month for the purpose of performing prenatal examinations unless otherwise determined by a special regulation.

Article 123 stipulates that an employer may not terminate an employment contract with a pregnant employee during the exercise of the right to maternity and parental leave. The same article defines that the employer cannot terminate the employment contract with the parent, adoptive parent, and foster parent due to the use of the right to parental, adoptive, and foster leave; the right to work part-time for the care of a child with disabilities; a single parent who has a child up to seven years of age or a child with developmental disabilities, if he fulfils the obligations in accordance with the law, the collective agreement, and the employment contract. During the absence from work due to child care, temporary incapacity for work based on pregnancy maintenance, use of maternity, parental, adoptive, foster leave, the employer may not declare the employee a person whose work is no longer needed. Also, for an employee whose fixed-term employment contract expires during pregnancy, the use of temporary incapacity for work on the basis of pregnancy, maternity, or parental leave, the period for which the employment contract established a fixed-term employment relationship is extended until the expiration of the right on that absence.

Article 124 defines that based on the findings and recommendation of the competent medical doctor, a woman during pregnancy and while breastfeeding may be temporarily assigned to other jobs if it is in the interest of preserving her health or the health of her child. If the employer is not able to provide her with a schedule for another job, the employee has the right to leave from work, with salary compensation in accordance with the collective agreement, which cannot be less than what she would have achieved if she had been at her workplace.

According to research, 1 in 2 respondents support the belief that men should work while women take care for the family.

Article 126 defines the right of an employed woman to use compulsory maternity leave of 98 days, of which 28 days are before the expected date of birth and 70 days from the birth of the child. Notwithstanding this paragraph, maternity leave of 70 days from the birth of a child may be used by both parents at the same time if two or more children have been born. Also, exceptionally from paragraph 1 of this article, the father of the child has the right to use the leave from the day of the child's birth, in case the mother died in childbirth, seriously ill, abandoned the child, if deprived of parental rights or serving a prison sentence.

Article 127 treats parental leave as the right of each parent to use leave from work for the purpose of caring for and caring for a child. Parental leave may be used after the expiration of the period referred to in Article 126, paragraph 1 of this Law, for a period of up to 365 days from the day of the child's birth. Both parents have the right to parental leave in equal parts. Notwithstanding paragraph 3 of this Article, parental leave started by one parent may be transferred to the other parent after the expiration of a period of 30 days from the beginning of use. If one of the parents is unemployed and the other is employed, the employed parent has the right to use the parental leave referred to in paragraph 1 of this Article.

Article 128 regulates the transfer of rights. If one of the parents dies or is prevented from exercising the right to parental leave referred to in Article 127, paragraph 3 of this Law for another justified reason, the right to his part of the parental leave shall be transferred to the other parent. The justified reason referred to in paragraph 1 of this Article means if one of the parents is: deprived of parental rights; deprived of legal capacity; declared missing, unknown and of unknown residence or domicile; when one of the child's parents, for the protection of the child, is prohibited or restricted from contact with the child on the basis of a court decision; when one of the child's parents is seriously ill or is dependent on the help of another person, due to which he is prevented for a long time or significantly limited in performing his parental care, according to the findings of the competent specialist doctor; if one of the parents is engaged as a military person in a military mission outside Montenegro, provided that they have waived the right to use parental leave in favor of the other parent in a written statement; when one of the parents is serving a prison sentence.

Article 129 defines that if an employed woman starts working, in terms of Article 127 paragraph 3 of this law, she is entitled to a break for breastfeeding for two hours a day, until the child reaches one year of age, regardless of whether the child's father uses at the same time and for the same child one of the rights provided by this law. The right referred to in paragraph 1 of this Article may be used once or twice during the day, for a period of one hour.

Article 131 stipulates that if an employed woman gives birth to a dead child or if the child dies before the expiration of maternity or parental leave, she has the right to extend maternity or parental leave for at least 45 days, and according to the findings of an authorized specialist doctor she needs to recover from childbirth and the mental state caused by the loss of the child, during which time she has all the rights based on maternity or parental leave.

Articles 132 and 133 define the right to work part-time for the purpose of enhanced childcare as well as for the care of a child with disabilities. An employed adoptive parent, guardian, or foster parent has the right to work part-time.

Article 135 stipulates that one of the adoptive parents of a child under the age of eight has the right to be absent from work for a year continuously for the purpose of child care with the salary compensation referred to in Article 130 of this Law. The same is prescribed for breadwinners by Article 136.

The Law includes favorable provisions concerning maternity and maternity leave, along with regulations that prevent employers from rejecting job contracts with women on account of pregnancy. Furthermore, 2020 changes of the Law introduced the possibility of absence for prenatal tests and provided the opportunity of working from home.

Despite legal solutions, women still remain underrepresented and underpaid in labor market compared to men. The major part of such disparity stems from gender stereotypes that portray women solely through their private roles. The findings of the UNDP *Research on Gender Equality in Montenegro and Assessment of Gender Mainstreaming in Public Authorities*¹⁸² showed the lack of knowledge about basic labor rights among citizens as well as perceptions that are in line with traditional gender roles.

Women on average earned 78.4 cents for every euro earned by men.

Namely, **every second citizen believes that the employer has the legal right to request from female job candidates a certificate that they are not pregnant.** About **60% of citizens believe that it is preferable for a man to work and for a woman to dedicate herself to the family for the benefit of children**, and this attitude is even more common among men. Every second citizen believes that **successful women professionals inevitably neglect their families.** The perception still lingers that **women entering the public sphere is only deemed acceptable if it doesn't interfere with their "primary" role related to motherhood and family responsibilities.**¹⁸³ The majority of young people in Montenegro believe that **men and women shouldn't share household tasks, arguing that gender roles should be distinct as women are primarily devoted to managing the home.**¹⁸⁴ **Every tenth men in Montenegro actively participates in household duties** on a daily basis.¹⁸⁵

The UNDP research in 2021 shows that **women employed in state institutions will earn 16% less than men.**¹⁸⁶ The **unemployment rate for women (aged 15 to 64 years) continued to decline at a faster rate than the unemployment rate for men in 2022.**¹⁸⁷ Official statistics on income and living conditions (EU-SILC)¹⁸⁸ demonstrate that the highest risk of poverty was found in single adult households with at least one dependent child (47.4%) and for children under 18 years (30.5%). These data must be viewed in conjunction

182 UNDP Research on Gender Equality in Montenegro and Assessment of Gender Mainstreaming in Public Authorities, <https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/migration/me/2158c2eefcf784b135c772c8bd24ca8bbd522d72c5ffe8666bc5f6a4128c45bdd.pdf>, accessed on November 2024.

183 UNDP Political History of Women in Montenegro, https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2024-01/undp_-_80_godina_politicke_istorije_zena_crne_gore.pdf, accessed on November 2024.

184 Westminster Democracy Foundation, <https://www.wfd.org/sites/default/files/2022-04/Youth%20perceptions%20and%20attitudes%20towards%20politics%20in%20MNE.pdf>, accessed on November 2024.

185 Gender Equality Index Montenegro, [https://www.monstat.org/uploads/files/demografija/rodnaavopravnost/Indeks%20rodne%20ravnopravnosti%20MNE%20\(2\)_25.7.pdf](https://www.monstat.org/uploads/files/demografija/rodnaavopravnost/Indeks%20rodne%20ravnopravnosti%20MNE%20(2)_25.7.pdf), accessed on November 2024.

186 UNDP Gender Equality Profile 2021, <https://tacso.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/MONTENEGRO.pdf>, accessed on November 2024.

187 <https://master-mne.me/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Analiza-Mi-odlucujemo-HQ.pdf>

188 EUROSTAT, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Key_figures_for_candidate_countries_and_potential_candidates#Unemployment_gender_gap, accessed on November 2024.

with the official annual divorce percentage data, where children have been entrusted to mothers (75.1%), fathers (10.7%), or both parents (11.9%).¹⁸⁹

Latest Gender Equality Index (2023)¹⁹⁰ in Montenegro has shown the value of 70.7 (on a scale from 1 to 100) in the domain of Work, which measures the equal access to employment, and working conditions of women and men. The average **gender pay gap in Montenegro was equal to 21.6 per cent in 2021**.¹⁹¹ This means that **women earned 78.4 cents for every euro earned by men**.¹⁹² **Directive (2023/970) of the European Parliament and of the council of 10 May 2023 to strengthen the application of the principle of equal pay** for equal work or work of equal value between men and women through pay transparency and enforcement mechanisms, states that binding measures are needed to enhance pay transparency, ensure equal pay for equal work, and help victims of discrimination claim their rights.¹⁹³

Although the unemployment rate has declined significantly—from 24.3% in 2021 to 13.95% in 2023—women still represent the majority of the unemployed population.

The gender pay gap (GPG) is notably pronounced among specific categories of employees, including highly educated individuals, workers in their prime working years, foreign workers, and those on temporary employment contracts.¹⁹⁴ Analyses reveal that GPG is “related to the presence of a motherhood pay gap, horizontal segregation within occupations, and wage penalties for feminized occupations.”¹⁹⁵

The biggest disparity between Montenegro and EU is in the domain of Money, where **Montenegrin value measuring gender inequality in accessing financial resources and economic situation of women and men amounts to 61.9, while the EU average is 82.6**.¹⁹⁶

The latest EC Progress Report¹⁹⁷ noted institutional and technical deficiencies in the work of the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare. A working group for Chapter 19 has been reestablished, but after the inaugural meeting, it did not convene again. Even though conditions in the labor market have improved, structural issues persist, including significant regional disparities, gender gaps, high youth unemployment, and long-term unemployment.¹⁹⁸ The newest reconstruction of Montenegrin Government foresees the establishment of the Ministry of Work, Employment and Social Dialogue and the Ministry of Social Welfare, Family, and Demography. It is crucially important to gender mainstream policies in both ministries, especially given the challenges that might arise with strategies related to demography, such as encouraging natality with popular measures that will reduce women to private roles and extract them from labor market. In that context, the newest **Guidance for the Economic Reform Programmes 2024-2026**¹⁹⁹ advises candidate countries to adopt public policies to “promote quality employment, equal opportunities and access to the

189 <https://www.eu.me/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Rodna-analiza-izvještaja-EK-o-Crnoj-Gori-2023.pdf>

190 Gender Equality Index 2023, http://monstat.org/uploads/files/demografija/rodnaavnopravnost/Gender%20equality%20index%20ENG_25.7.pdf, accessed on November 2024.

191 <https://www.ilo.org/publications/gender-pay-gap-montenegro-statistical-update-and-policy-implications>

192 Ibid

193 Directive of the European Parliament on Equal Pay, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2023/970/oj/eng>, accessed on 8th of May, 2025.

194 Ibid

195 Ibid

196 http://monstat.org/uploads/files/demografija/rodnaavnopravnost/Gender%20equality%20index%20ENG_25.7.pdf

197 EC Progress Report, https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/montenegro-report-2023_en, accessed on 1st of December 2024.

198 Ibid

199 Guidance for the Economic Reform Programmes 2024-2026, <https://www.gov.me/dokumenta/412e23aa-1e77-4ea6-a186-78345bdeb7be>, accessed on 1st of December, 2024.



labor market and fair working conditions”²⁰⁰, with a specific focus to “young people, women, long-term unemployed and those most vulnerable in the labor market.”²⁰¹

The **National Employment Strategy of Montenegro 2021-2025**²⁰², defines stable and sustainable employment growth as one of its operational goals, based on equal opportunities for labor market access, decent work, knowledge and skills development, and greater social inclusion. Specific aim of the Strategy is **to reduce gender employment gap indicator from 12.9% in 2021 to 8% in 2025**.

According to the Employment Agency of Montenegro, the current unemployment rate is 13,95%, compared to 24,3% in 2021. Even when the unemployment rate is decreasing, **women consistently make the majority of the unemployed**. Out of the total number of unemployed, women make 58,2%.

Table 13: Unemployment by gender

Date	Total Unemployed	Men	Women
31 Dec 2020	47,509	19,56 (41,2%)	27,944 (58,8%)
31 Dec 2023	39,942	16,679 (41,7%)	23,263 (58,2%)

200 Ibid

201 Ibid

202 National Employment Strategy of Montenegro 2021-2025, <https://www.zzzcg.me/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/predlog-nacionalne-strategije-zaposljavanja-2021-2025-s-predlogom-akcionog-plana-zaposljavanja-za-2021-godinu.pdf>, accessed on 1st of December 2024.

Data from the Statistical Office of Montenegro²⁰³ shows a higher inactivity rate among women. **Out of the total number of active population, 54.2% are men, and 45.8% are women.** The **total number of individuals outside the workforce comprises of 59.6% women and 40.4% men.** Individuals in the age group of 25 to 49 years make up 60% of the active population, while surveys²⁰⁴ show that women who are not actively seeking a job as a most common reason cite the domestic and care work in a family.

The **highest activity rates in the age group from 25 to 49 years amount to 81% for men and 69% for women.**

Table 14: Population activity rates by age group and sex, Montenegro LFS 2021²⁰⁵

Age	Total			Women			Men		
	Activity rate	Employment rate	Unemployment rate	Activity rate	Employment rate	Unemployment rate	Activity rate	Employment rate	Unemployment rate
15+	50,9	42,4	16,6	44,4	37,3	15,9	57,7	47,8	17,1
15-24	29,7	18,7	37,1	24,5	16,4	32,7	34,6	20,7	40,0
25-49	75,0	62,0	17,3	69,0	57,1	17,2	81,0	67,0	17,3
50-64	52,0	48,2	7,2	43,9	40,8	7,0	60,5	56,0	7,4
65+	6,0	5,7	.	4,5	4,5	.	8,1	7,5	.
15-64	59,2	49,3	16,8	52,9	44,4	16,1	65,5	54,2	17,3
55-64	43,5	41,1	5,7	35,4	33,3	5,9	52,2	49,3	5,6

When data are disaggregated by sector, it is noted that **the biggest share of women is in Wholesale and Retail, Education and Health, and Social Work.** Although **women are the majority of employees in these areas, only a fraction of them reaches decision-making positions.**

The data provided by the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare demonstrates that **45.8% of women are members of the Social Council of Montenegro, compared to 54.2% of men.** Furthermore, **women consist only 35.9% of legislators, senior officials and managers compared to 64.1% of men**²⁰⁶. This example illustrates both the horizontal and vertical workplace segregation in Montenegro.

203 Statistical Office of Montenegro, https://www.monstat.org/uploads/files/ARS/2023/ARS%20saopstenje_2023.pdf, accessed on 1st of December 2024.

204 See page

205 Women and Men in Montenegro, <http://monstat.org/uploads/files/publikacije/Zene%20i%20muskarci%20u%20CG%20web%2026.12%20FIN.pdf>, accessed on: 1st of December, 2024.

206 Ibid

Table 15: Persons in employment by sectors of activity and sex, Montenegro LFS 2021²⁰⁷

	(In 1 000)			Men %	Women %
	Total	Men	Women		
Total	212,6	116,8	95,8	54.94%	45.06%
1. Agriculture	13,6	8,3	5,2	61.03%	38.24%
2. Mining	1,5	((1,2))	.	80.00%	0.00%
3. Manufacturing	12,7	9,4	3,3	74.02%	25.98%
4. Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning	2,6	2,2	.	84.62%	0.00%
5. Water supply, wastewater management	5,0	4,1	.	82.00%	0.00%
6. Construction	14,3	13,1	(1,2)	91.61%	8.39%
7. Wholesale, retail; certain repair	41,1	17,7	23,4	43.07%	56.93%
8. Transport, storage and communication	13,1	10,7	(2,4)	81.68%	18.32%
9. Accommodation and food services	17,7	9,6	8,1	54.24%	45.76%
10. Information and communications	5,5	3,2	2,3	58.18%	41.82%
11. Financial and insurance activities	3,8	(2,1)	(1,6)	55.26%	42.11%
12. Real estate, leasing and business activities	.	.	.		
13. Professional, scientific and technical activities	11,1	5,2	5,9	46.85%	53.15%
14. Administrative and support service activities	6,5	(4,6)	1,9	70.77%	29.23%
15. Public administ. and defence	20,8	12,2	8,6	58.65%	41.35%
16. Education	14,6	3,2	11,4	21.92%	78.08%
17. Health and social work	12,8	(3,2)	9,6	25.00%	75.00%
18. Arts, entertainment and recreation	5,8	2,9	2,9	50.00%	50.00%
19. Other social and personal services	8,3	3,0	5,3	36.14%	63.86%

207 Women and Men in Montenegro, <http://monstat.org/uploads/files/publikacije/Zene%20i%20muskarci%20u%20CG%20web%2026.12%20FIN.pdf>, accessed on: 1st of December, 2024.

The possible courses of action in order to improve women's position in the labor market are:

- ❖ Strengthening the implementation of the legal framework, with the special emphasis on the work of the Inspection directorate.
- ❖ Introduce domestic and care work in the legal framework.
- ❖ Develop legal and institutional mechanisms that will contribute to better division of unpaid domestic work between women and men.
- ❖ Increase women's participation in social dialogue.
- ❖ Using macroeconomic policies to increase the number of decent jobs available to women.
- ❖ All future measures of the Guidance for the Economic Reform Programmes should clearly demonstrate their impact on gender.
- ❖ Develop fiscal incentive measures for increasing the participation of women in the labor market.

4.4 HEALTH CARE

The general legal framework on health care in Montenegro is based on **The Law on Health Care**, **The Law on Patients' Rights** and **The Law on Mandatory Health Insurance**.

Under **The Law on Health Care** policy implementation and priority healthcare measures are defined, focusing on preserving and improving public health. Key measures include promoting citizens' health through activities like public health education, monitoring food and water safety, environmental health protection, prevention and control of infectious and chronic non-communicable diseases, vaccinations, and targeted healthcare services for children, youth, women, the elderly, veterans, military invalids, and mental health protection.

In Montenegro, every citizen is entitled to healthcare that meets the highest standards and incorporates the latest advancements in medical science and practice. This right is universal and applies equally to all individuals, without discrimination based on nationality, race, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, disability, language, religion, education, social background, economic status, or any other personal attribute, as protected by law.

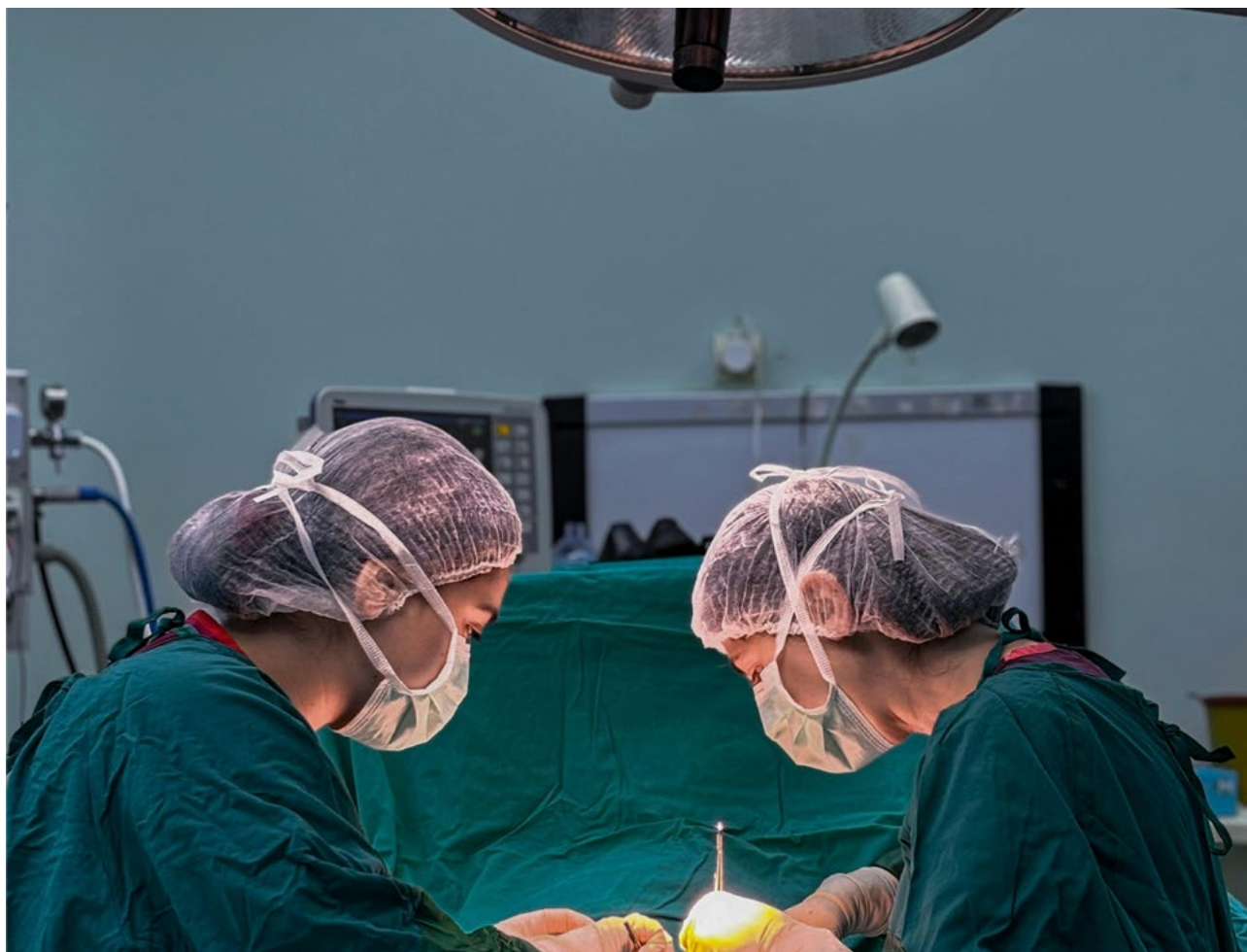
Depressive disorders are the fifth leading cause in overall mortality for women and 12th for men.

The Law on Patients' Rights grants patients rights in line with professional and ethical standards, including access to pain relief, freedom to choose a doctor, informed decision-making, access to medical records, refusal of research participation, privacy, timely care, compensation, complaints, and voluntary discharge.

The Law on Mandatory Health Insurance (Official Gazette no. 145/2021) outlines rights under mandatory health insurance, access to healthcare services, funding, and other relevant aspects, ensuring equal protection for all citizens by the Health Insurance Fund of Montenegro.

When it comes to **gender-responsive health care**, the **Action Plan for Achieving Gender Equality 2023-2024**, recognizes addressing and mitigating the negative impact of climate change and natural disasters on the health of women, men, individuals of diverse sexual and gender identities, as well as marginalized and particularly vulnerable people and groups, as one of the core priorities.

In 2022, **UNDP Montenegro**, through the project "Enhancing Montenegro's Capacity to Integrate Climate Change Risks into Planning – National Adaptation Plan (NAP)", conducted extensive analyses, including a



Gender Action Plan and a Gender Communication Plan, both featuring gender mainstreaming elements in the design and implementation of the NAP in Montenegro. Additionally, a report on gender-sensitive climate risk assessments was completed, focusing on addressing information gaps and priority actions related to climate-driven vulnerabilities and gender-specific impacts in the health sector. These analyses aim to strengthen institutional capacities to respond effectively to the impacts of climate change.

In January 2024, the European Commission signed an agreement that officially associates Montenegro with the **EU4Health programme**,²⁰⁸ granting the country access to EU funding in the health sector. Initially dedicated to Covid-19 recovery, this programme is now fully focused on improving health and health systems across EU and associated non-EU countries. The primary goal of the agreement with Montenegro is to strengthen national health system, both in meeting urgent needs and supporting its long-term development and resilience. Through this association, Montenegrin public and private entities will be eligible to apply for EU health funding via both competitive (open calls) and non-competitive (direct grants and joint actions) mechanisms.

Sex-selective abortion has skewed the natural sex ratio at birth, leading to projections of 8,000 fewer women than men within 20 years.

²⁰⁸ EU4Health programme , https://health.ec.europa.eu/funding/eu4health-programme-2021-2027-vision-healthier-european-union/association-agreement-montenegro_en, accessed on 8th of May 2025.



When it comes to national strategic documents, the newest **Healthcare Development Strategy for the Period 2023-2027 with an Action Plan for the Period 2023-2024**²⁰⁹, contains important data that should lead gender-responsive health policies in future.

Recent data from the Statistical Office of Montenegro (MONSTAT) indicates that **women make up the majority of Montenegro's population at 50.8%, while men represent 49.2%**. On average, **women in Montenegro are older than men**, with an average age of 40 compared to 38 for men.

Although women constitute the majority of Montenegro's population, they face a **reduced likelihood of being born due to the practice of sex-selective abortion**, specifically the targeting of female foetuses. The Healthcare Development Strategy for the Period 2023-2027 reports that in **2009 alone, for every 100 girls born, there were 113 boys, while the typical ratio is 100 girls to 103-104 boys**. Currently, projections indicate that within the next 20 years, there will be **8,000 fewer women than men in Montenegro, due to the practice of sex-selective abortion**.

Life expectancy for women has decreased by 8.4 months, while for **men**, it has **dropped by 9.6 months**, resulting in an overall decline in life expectancy from 76.7 to 75.9 years.²¹⁰ In terms of healthcare access, Healthcare Strategy reports that Montenegro shows the smallest disparity when compared to the EU-28 average. Ischemic heart disease is the leading cause of overall mortality among men, while stroke is the leading cause among women. In terms of **depressive disorders, they ranked 12th for men** (3% of total years lived with disability) and **the fifth leading cause for women** (4% of total years lived with disability) in 2017.²¹¹

209 Healthcare Development Strategy for the Period 2023-2027 with an Action Plan for the Period 2023-2024, <https://www.gov.me/dokumenta/2414cd07-7fce-41bd-9df1-11eeaba307e7>, accessed on: 1st of December, 2024.

210 Source: Healthcare Development Strategy for the Period 2023-2027 with an Action Plan for the Period 2023-2024

211 Ibid

However, as highlighted by EU-level findings, the situation in Montenegro reflects a broader trend: “Women live longer but in poorer health.”²¹² Women also tend to perceive their health as worse than men do; in the EU Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (SILC)²¹³, 65.3% of women rated their health as good or very good, compared to 73.2% of men.

Another important strategic document that should influence health policy from gender perspective, is the **National Strategy for Digital Health Development 2024-2028**²¹⁴, which represents a continuation of the *Strategy for the Development of an Integrated Health Information System and e-Health (2018–2023)* and is the second national strategic document in this field. The field of digital health encompasses knowledge and practices related to the development and use of digital technologies to improve health.

This **National Strategy for Digital Health Development 2024-2028** contains several recommendations for improving gender equality in the digital healthcare system:

- ❖ The digital infrastructure must be improved to address access to digital technologies for women. This includes expanding physical access to remote or rural areas, which are often isolated from network access.
- ❖ More data needs to be collected regarding women’s access to e-health services to clearly identify services where greater inclusion of women is needed, addressing issues of the digital gender gap in the use of digital health technologies.
- ❖ Measures should be developed to enhance women’s accessibility to digital health technologies, regardless of their socioeconomic status.
- ❖ Equality objectives should be predetermined, with a focus on strengthening the digital security system and data protection.
- ❖ Emphasis should be placed on strengthening digital literacy among women, especially those from rural areas of Montenegro.

An important outcome of the Strategy is the collection and disaggregation of gender-specific data in Montenegro’s healthcare information system. However, there is insufficient clarity on how this process will be implemented. It is recommended that three types of data should be highlighted:

- a) gender-specific data (for example, the frequency of incidents in which healthcare providers display disrespect, neglect, and/or violent behavior towards female patients);
- b) data disaggregated by gender (for example, the percentage of women and men with access to primary healthcare);
- c) data related to gender relations and structures (for example, the percentage of healthcare institutions led by women versus men).

With 73% of health sector employees being women, it is also essential to gather updated data on their distribution across professional roles, ensuring equal opportunities for advancement and leadership in the sector.

212 Ibid

213 EU Statistics on Income and Living Conditions, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Health_variables_in_SILC_-_methodology&oldid=619619, accessed on: 1st of December, 2024.

214 National Strategy for Digital Health Development, <https://www.gov.me/clanak/nacionalna-strategija-razvoja-digitalnog-zdravlja-2024-2028>, accessed on: 1st of December, 2024.

In developing digital solutions, the following should be considered:

- a) ensuring equal involvement of women and men in the development of digital content;
- b) clearly outlining how proposed digital solutions will benefit both women and men;
- c) taking into account gender dynamics in Montenegro and the balance between professional and personal life;
- d) including gender indicators as part of the evaluation of the digital solution's effectiveness;
- e) ensuring that the proposed digital solution adheres to best practices regarding quality, safety, and personal data protection, while considering how privacy and security challenges may differently impact women and men.

Strategy for Preservation and Improvement of Reproductive and Sexual Health in Montenegro 2013–2020 was adopted in 2013 and it is the latest strategic document on this topic. It is based on priorities in the field of sexual and reproductive health, which are:

- ❖ Protection of maternal and newborn health
- ❖ Malignant diseases of the reproductive organs
- ❖ Family planning, including infertility treatment
- ❖ Preventing the spread of sexually transmitted infections, including HIV
- ❖ Promoting sexual health and reproductive rights
- ❖ Continuing education in the field of reproductive health
- ❖ Partnership with the non-governmental sector.

Regarding gender balance, **73% of workers in the health sector are women**.²¹⁵ However, we need updated and detailed information on this topic – whether women make up the majority of doctors or medical staff.

Montenegro has been implementing several health-specific programs such as **breast cancer screening and HPV vaccination as prevention of cervical cancer**.

According to 2022 GLOBOCAN²¹⁶ estimates published by the Institute for Public Health of Montenegro²¹⁷, the **number of new cases of breast cancer among women in Montenegro was 416** (out of a total of 2,739 new cancer cases in both sexes). Breast cancer accounts for 15.2% of all cancer cases across both sexes (**nearly every seventh person diagnosed with cancer has breast cancer**). Among women, **nearly every third woman diagnosed with cancer has breast cancer**.

The age-standardized incidence rate of breast cancer was 76.5 per 100,000 women, **ranking Montenegro 20th in Europe**. The highest number of affected women was registered in the age group between 55 and 74 years, accounting for more than half of the new breast cancer cases among women (54.1%). According to the same source, the number of women who died from breast cancer in 2022 was 154, representing 10.0% of all cancer-related deaths in Montenegro. **Every tenth person who died from cancer died from breast cancer, while every fifth woman who died from cancer died from breast cancer**.

Data shows that breast and cervical cancer result in high mortality rates among women in Montenegro. Breast cancer, the leading cause of cancer-related death among women, is mostly diagnosed at advanced stages, when palliative care is the only option.

215 Source: Healthcare Development Strategy for the Period 2023-2027 with an Action Plan for the Period 2023-2024

216 Global Cancer Observatory, see more: <https://www.ijzcg.me/me/novosti/ruzicasti-oktobar>, accessed on: 1st of December, 2024.

217 Pink October, <https://www.ijzcg.me/me/novosti/ruzicasti-oktobar>, accessed on: 1st of December, 2024.

The Breast Cancer Early Detection Program began in 2015 in four municipalities – Cetinje, Danilovgrad, Kolašin, and Podgorica. The program focuses on women aged 50 to 69 and operates on a two-year screening cycle. The primary screening tool is a digital mammogram conducted at the Mammography Screening Center located at the Clinical Center of Montenegro. Women who receive a negative result are scheduled to return for another screening two years later.²¹⁸

One of the specific programs related to women's health is the early detection of cervical cancer, which was launched for the first time in Podgorica in 2016. Since 2018, this program has been implemented nationwide in all health centers in Montenegro. In 2020, the target group for the National Cervical Cancer Screening Program consisted of women aged 30 to 49, a broader age range compared to the previous year, which was 30–42 years.²¹⁹

Montenegro has the highest age-standardized incidence rate and mortality rate for cervical cancer in Europe.

According to World Health Organization estimates based on the latest data from the National Cancer Registry, **Montenegro has the highest age-standardized incidence rate** (26.2 per 100,000 women) **and mortality rate** (10.5 per 100,000 women) **for cervical cancer in Europe**. In Montenegro, cervical cancer ranks **fourth** among women for both the number of new cases and cancer-related deaths.²²⁰

HPV vaccination in Montenegro began in 2022²²¹. As of 2024, both girls and boys are being vaccinated, and the recommendations for vaccination have been significantly expanded. The primary target group is girls and boys aged 9-14, the secondary target group is those aged 15-18, and vaccination is also available for those aged 19-26 who have not engaged in sexual activity.²²² The latest data from the Institute of Public Health shows that in 17 months, 7,391 girls have been vaccinated against the HPV virus.²²³

Some of the recommendations for further improvement in health care may include:

- ❖ Improving the legal framework to establish guidelines for gender analysis and gender integration in health policies and strategies.
- ❖ Enhancing the system for collecting and utilizing sex-disaggregated and other gender-sensitive data.
- ❖ Updating data on the representation of women and men in the health sector.
- ❖ Updating data on cancer incidence rates disaggregated by sex.
- ❖ A gender-responsive approach to the digitalization of the healthcare system.
- ❖ Developing gender-sensitive indicators for health sector programs and operations.

218 Screening Results, <https://www.ijzcg.me/me/odjeljenje-za-skrininge>, accessed on: 1st of December, 2024.

219 Source: Healthcare Development Strategy for the Period 2023-2027 with an Action Plan for the Period 2023-2024.

220 WHO Report, <https://www.who.int/about/accountability/results/who-results-report-2020-mtr/country-story/2022/introducing-hpv-vaccines-for-a-cervical-cancer-free-generation-in-montenegro#:~:text=According%20to%20WHO's%20estimates%2C%20Montenegro,in%20the%20country%20%5B1%5D.>, accessed on 1st of December, 2024.

221 HPV Vaccination in Montenegro, <https://www.ijzcg.me/me/hpv-vakcinacija-u-crnoj-gori>, accessed on 1st of December, 2024.

222 Ibid

223 HPV Vaccination in Montenegro, <https://www.ijzcg.me/me/hpv-vakcinacija-u-crnoj-gori>, accessed on 1st of December, 2024.

4.5 MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION

The media sector in Montenegro is regulated by the **Law on Media**²²⁴, the **Law on the National Public Broadcaster**,²²⁵ and the **Law on Audiovisual Media Services**.²²⁶ Strategically, the most important document is the **Media Strategy of Montenegro**²²⁷, adopted for the first time in 2023. In the context of media self-regulation in Montenegro, the most important source is the **Code of Ethics for Journalists**.²²⁸

At this pace, it would take an estimated 67 years to close the gender gap in media representation.

In terms of gender equality in the media sector, the **Law on Media** specifies in **Article 6** that media are required to use gender-sensitive language in their work, in accordance with the law. **Article 48** defines priority areas funded by the Fund for Encouraging Media Pluralism and Diversity, including the promotion of women's rights, gender equality, and combating sexism. Additionally, **Article 49** prohibits the media from spreading, inciting, or justifying violence, hatred, or discrimination based on gender or sex.

The **Law on the National Public Broadcaster**, in **Article 3**, states that the primary activity of the Public Media Service includes producing and broadcasting linear audiovisual media services (AVM services), AVM services on demand, and publishing media content through internet publications. These services must meet the "democratic, social, cultural, educational, and other public interest needs of all segments of Montenegrin society, ensuring the rights and interests of citizens regardless of their political, religious, cultural, racial, national, and ethnic background, language, skin color, **sex, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, intersex characteristics**, economic status, disability, or other personal characteristics."²²⁹

Article 12 mandates the Public Broadcaster to produce and broadcast programs that "promote and advance gender equality, eliminate gender-based stereotypes, hate speech, sexism, and misogyny, while ensuring balanced representation of both genders and adhering to high professional and ethical standards."²³⁰ Furthermore, **Article 42**, establishes the Ombudsman's role in monitoring gender equality within the Public Broadcaster's programs, offering recommendations and guidelines to combat sexist stereotypes and ensure balanced representation of men and women in content.

The **Law on Audiovisual Media Services**, in **Article 15**, prohibits AVM services that incite violence, hatred, intolerance, or discrimination based on gender or sex. **Article 44** defines public service as promoting and fostering the principles of gender equality, while **Article 68** prohibits the promotion of hatred, intolerance, or discrimination based on gender or sex in commercial audiovisual communication.

This Law had to be adjusted with revised **Audiovisual Media Services Directive 2018/1808**²³¹, which emphasizes measures related to gender equality in audiovisual content. The European Commission continues to fund gender equality initiatives through Creative Europe, and as part of the upcoming MEDIA

224 Law on Media, <https://me.propisi.net/zakon-o-medijima/>, accessed on 1st of December, 2024.

225 Law on National Public Broadcaster, <https://me.propisi.net/zakon-o-nacionalnom-javnom-emiteru-javnom-medijskom-servisu-crne-gore/>, accessed on 1st of December, 2024.

226 Law on Audiovisual Media Services, <https://me.propisi.net/zakon-o-audiovizuelnim-medijskim-uslugama/>, accessed on 1st of December, 2024.

227 Media Strategy of Montenegro, <https://www.gov.me/dokumenta/3d29965b-5536-41d7-875f-02316d5524ed>, accessed on 1st of December, 2024.

228 Code of Ethics of Journalists, <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/2/f/255576.pdf>, accessed on 1st of December, 2024.

229 Law on National Public Broadcaster 2024.

230 Ibid

231 Audiovisual Media Services Directive 2018/1808, <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/revision-avmsd>, accessed on 8th of May, 2025.



sub-programme, it plans to introduce a gender equality strategy for the audiovisual sector, offering financial support, structured dialogue, and mentoring and training opportunities for women filmmakers, producers, and screenwriters.²³²

Media Strategy of Montenegro (2023–2027) is the first strategic document for the media sector. It incorporates various activities related to gender equality in media, including the use of gender-sensitive language and guidelines for gender-responsive reporting based on relevant data. This strategy aligns with the **National Gender Equality Strategy** (2021–2025) through measures such as Measure 2.3, which focuses on media literacy and recognizing gender stereotypes. This is complemented by the Strategy's Operational Goal 1.5, which includes educational activities for primary and secondary school students to identify disinformation, hate speech, and gender stereotypes. Additionally, Operational Goals 1.2 and 1.4 of the Media Strategy provide support for media reporting on public interest topics, creating content for vulnerable groups, and promoting gender-responsive programming and gender-sensitive language. The Media Strategy aligns with Measure 2.5 of the National Gender Equality Strategy to ensure compatibility with gender-sensitive reporting practices. The strategy emphasizes several key activities, including encouraging media to adopt gender-responsive programming and use gender-sensitive language, requiring local public broadcasters and the national public broadcaster RTCG to report annually on gender equality programs and the use of gender-sensitive language, promoting gender-sensitive content and language in private/commercial media, and regularly monitoring programs for potential discrimination based on gender or sex.

The key indicators defined by the strategy include the number of gender-responsive programs and the use of gender-sensitive language by local public broadcasters and RTCG, which was **0% in 2022** but is expected to reach **2 programs and 50% of content by 2025, and 3 programs and 80% of content by 2027**. Another indicator is the percentage compliance of the Journalists' Code of Montenegro on reporting violence against women with international standards, which was **0% in 2022**, with targets of **50% by 2025 and 100% by 2027**. Additionally, the percentage of prohibited misogynistic content was **0% in 2022** and is expected to be **100% by 2025 and beyond**.

²³² EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020 – 2025, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0152>, accessed on 8th of May, 2025.

Planned activities include organizing training sessions for journalists on gender equality issues, conducting analyses, and creating policies for the full implementation of gender equality in media, as well as enforcing norms on gender sensitivity and the prohibition of discrimination.

Women produce 60% of published information and only in 20% of cases are cited as sources in news.

When it comes to the **Code of Ethics of Journalists in Montenegro**, Principle 9 and its associated guidelines state that “when reporting on actual or threatened violence, the media should carefully balance the public interest in the information with the interests of victims and other individuals involved.” At the same time, Principle 4 specifies that “race, religion, nationality, sexual orientation, gender identity, marital status, physical or mental condition, illness, or political affiliation should only be mentioned by a journalist if it is essential for complete information in the public interest.”

Despite evident improvements in the legal and strategic framework, Montenegro still lacks sufficient data on the gender composition of the media workforce and the implementation of gender equality in media content. The **Media Strategy of Montenegro**²³³ cites research by the **Agency for Audiovisual Media Services** (previously Agency for Electronic Media), which shows that women predominantly work in the journalistic profession, producing **nearly 60% of published information**. Women also hold significant roles in editorial positions and are more frequently recognized as the faces of central news programs compared to men. However, a major disparity appears in the representation of **women as sources in central news programs, where only 20% of statements are taken from women**.

Data also highlights that in the observed television content, **81% of references to women’s occupations and titles** were in the feminine form. In **15% of reports, women’s names were mentioned without titles**, often only by referring to the institutions they represent. **No selective approach was recorded where men were titled appropriately while women were not.**²³⁴

In 15% of news reports, women’s names were mentioned without titles, often only by referring to the institutions they represent. No selective approach was recorded with men.

The same analysis²³⁵ of **28 central news programs**, shows that women served as editors in **25 programs (89%)**, while men edited only **3 programs (11%)**. This represents an increase in the number of women editors from **75% in 2019 to 89%** within a seven-day observation period. Women also hosted **26 programs (93%)**, while men hosted just **2 programs**.

During the observed week, **72% of published information** was produced by women, further demonstrating their dominance in the journalistic field. Despite this, **out of 613 statements analysed across four television channels, only 23% were made by women**.

Similar trends were noted in **UNDP** research titled **Gender Mirror of Montenegrin Media**²³⁶, which reveals that **over six years, the visibility of women in Montenegrin media has increased by just 0.5%**. Women constitute only **21% of those who speak, are written about, or appear in newspapers, on television,**

233 Media Strategy of Montenegro, <https://www.gov.me/dokumenta/3d29965b-5536-41d7-875f-02316d5524ed>, see also: <https://amu.me/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Analiza-vidljivosti-zena-i-muskaraca-mart-2021.pdf>, accessed on 1st of December, 2024.

234 Ibid

235 Ibid

236 Gender Mirror of the Montenegrin Media, <https://www.undp.org/cnr/montenegro/press-releases/rodno-ogledalo-crnogorskih-medija-muski-svijet-i-nedovoljno-zena-u-medijima>, accessed on 1st of December, 2024.

and online portals. At this pace, it would take an estimated **67 years** to close the gender gap in media representation. Women are even less visible in economic reporting, accounting for only **14.8% of coverage**, which is **9% below the global average**.

Furthermore, when discussing gender-related topics in the media, violence dominates, with women representing **60% of victims mentioned in the news**. Women's representation on front pages is also minimal, with women politicians appearing there in only **10% of cases**. In media content overall, only **21% of women are featured as speakers, subjects, or figures in the news**. **Women are most present in "soft news" sections, discussing topics such as health, education, and entertainment. Men dominate public discourse, speaking in 74% of cases, compared to only 26% for women, and less than a third of women appear in media as experts or specialists in their fields.**

Given the overview of the state of gender equality in the media sector, the following recommendations are formulated:

- ❖ Develop detailed, gender-disaggregated data on the representation of women and men in the media sector, covering roles, career progression, and workplace dynamics to identify gaps and inform policies promoting gender balance.
- ❖ Further revise the Montenegrin Code of Ethics for Journalists with gender equality principles to explicitly include standards and policies that ensure fair, non-discriminatory, and stereotype-free reporting on gender-related topics.
- ❖ Support media outlets and editorial offices in drafting and implementing practical tools to guide journalists toward fair and accurate representation of both women and men in media content.
- ❖ Actively challenge traditional gender roles by featuring diverse portrayals, such as women in leadership and technical roles or men in caregiving positions, to foster inclusivity.
- ❖ Strengthen the role of ombudspersons and self-regulatory bodies in combating sexism and ensure that these entities take consistent and effective actions to identify, sanction, and prevent sexist content in the media, thereby upholding ethical standards and promoting equity.



4.6 AGRICULTURE

Agricultural policies and development of rural areas are defined by **The Law on Agriculture and Rural Development** from 2009. In this legal act, there are not any specific norms regarding the gender-responsive approach.

Another important framework is the **Strategy for Development of Agriculture and Rural Areas 2023-2028**,²³⁷ which contains several measures to further empower women in agriculture. Namely, it has been recognized that there is a low percentage of female entrepreneurs and owners of small and medium-sized enterprises in this sector. As a result, measures have been introduced, including providing an additional percentage of support for investments in farms where women are the primary owners, as well as creating dedicated funding lines to encourage women's entrepreneurship.

Encouraging entrepreneurship contains certain measures aimed at women in rural areas, particularly when it comes to the improvement of essential services mainly related to infrastructure and diversification of the activities. Employment opportunity measures are another objective aiming both men and women.

Additional significant mechanism is the **Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance in Rural Development (IPARD)**, which is a European Union (EU) programme designed to support the sustainable development of agriculture and rural areas in countries aspiring to join the EU. In Montenegro, the **IPARD III programme, covering the period from 2021 to 2027, allocates approximately €63 million** to enhance the competitiveness of the agri-food sector, align it with EU standards, and improve the quality of life in rural communities.²³⁸



237 Strategy of Rural Development, <https://www.gov.me/clanak/usvojena-strategija-razvoja-poljoprivrede-i-ruralnih-podrucja-2023-2028-godine>, accessed on 5th of December, 2024.

238 IPARD Programme Montenegro, https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/montenegro/european-commission-adopted-ipard-iii-programme-montenegro-additional-€63mil-montenegrin-farmers_en?s=225&utm_source=chatgpt.com, accessed on 10th of December, 2024.

The **IPARD III Programme** states that it adheres to the principles of equality between men and women, as well as non-discrimination. It ensures that the preparation, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation phases are accessible to all, regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, disability, age, or sexual orientation. The programme aims to encourage women in rural areas to participate and it aims to provide financial assistance to improve production conditions on their farms. Among the applicants, 11.47% were women, and 10.93% of the approved projects were led by women.²³⁹ The programme lists measures that should consider the specific challenges faced by men and women in the supported sectors.

Key Measures Supporting Women and Rural Development in IPARD III:

- 1) Investments in Physical Assets of Agricultural Holdings:** This measure helps farmers acquire modern equipment, construct or renovate buildings, and adopt sustainable practices to boost productivity and competitiveness.
- 2) Farm Diversification and Business Development:** Encouraging non-agricultural activities, this measure supports initiatives like rural tourism, crafts, and other services, creating diversified income streams and new employment opportunities in rural areas.
- 3) Investments in Physical Assets for Processing and Marketing Agricultural and Fishery Products:** Focused on food processing companies, this measure ensures that projects meet EU safety and environmental standards, enhancing market access and increasing the value of agricultural products.²⁴⁰

By prioritizing projects led by women and addressing their specific needs, the **IPARD III Programme** aims to foster gender equality and empower women in rural areas while contributing to the sustainable development of agriculture and rural communities.

When it comes to the participation of women in decision-making bodies related to agricultural policies and development, **out of 13 members of the Parliamentary Committee on Tourism, Agriculture, Ecology and Spatial Planning, there are four women (30,7%), which is an improvement compared to 2021 (23,1%).**²⁴¹

However, in-depth analysis of data paints a different picture. Since 2020, research conducted by **UNDP**, the **Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Water Management**, **OSCE**, and **De Facto**, along with insights from the publication *Invisible Women* and the recent **Country Gender Assessment (CGA)**, has provided deeper understanding of the challenges faced by women in rural Montenegro.²⁴²

According to preliminary data from the Agriculture Census 2024, **only 12,9% of women are primary holders of agricultural households**, with the same percentage of women who are **managers on agricultural households**. Managers are understood as those responsible for daily decisions on the agricultural households.²⁴³ In the national register of farmers, **women make up only 24% of insured individuals.**²⁴⁴ **This is an improvement compared to 14% of women in Register of Agricultural Holdings in 2021,**

Only 12.9% of women are listed as primary holders or managers of agricultural households in Montenegro.

²³⁹ IPARD and Rural Development Montenegro, <https://www.gov.me/clanak/program-razvoja-poljoprivrede-i-ruralnih-podrucja-crne-gore-u-okviru-ipardiii-2021-2027>, accessed on 10th of December, 2024.

²⁴⁰ Ibid

²⁴¹ Parliamentary Working Body, <https://www.skupstina.me/me/radna-tijela/odbor-za-turizam-poljoprivredu-ekologiju-i-prostorno-planiranje>, accessed on 10th of December 2024.

²⁴² UNDP on Women in Rural Areas, <https://www.undp.org/montenegro/press-releases/empowering-rural-women-key-sustainable-development-montenegro>, accessed on 11th of December, 2024.

²⁴³ Agricultural Census 2024, <https://www.monstat.org/cg/page.php?id=2264&pageid=2264>, accessed on 1st of April 2025

²⁴⁴ Strategy of Rural Development, <https://www.gov.me/clanak/usvojena-strategija-razvoja-poljoprivrede-i-ruralnih-podrucja-2023-2028-godine>, accessed on 11th of December 2024.



but systemic challenges persist. Most women in rural areas inherit nothing from their families. Statistics show that women in northern Montenegro are **seven times less likely to find employment** compared to women in the south, and **more than half of unemployed women never even attempt to enter the workforce.** Women predominantly perform unpaid domestic work, **spending an average of ten years of their lives on these activities.**²⁴⁵

There are various systemic issues that disproportionately affect women in rural areas, including limited access to resources, economic opportunities, and decision-making roles. Traditional gender roles also persist and restrict women's participation in agricultural leadership and entrepreneurship.

The newest European Commission Progress Report on Montenegro²⁴⁶, states that Montenegro remains moderately prepared in the field of agriculture and rural development and has made significant progress. Notable progress has been achieved particularly in the implementation of the IPARD II and IPARD III programs. The European Commission (EC) also highlights that last year's recommendations have been largely implemented, although there has been little progress in aligning national legislation with EU acquis. For the upcoming period, the EC emphasizes **the need to ensure the absorption of funds from the IPARD II program and to intensify the implementation of the IPARD III program.**

Simultaneously, the **lack of gender-disaggregated data in agriculture** remains a significant challenge for Montenegro. In this regard, it is worth highlighting that MONSTAT (Statistical Office of Montenegro) is organizing abovementioned **Agricultural Census**, as one of the most extensive and complex statistical surveys conducted in Montenegro. It takes place every ten years, adhering to the unified standards of the UN, FAO, and the European Commission. The 2024 Agricultural Census is based on the Law on the Agricultural Census for 2024, and it aims to gather internationally comparable data on the structure of

245 UNDP on Women in Rural Areas, <https://www.undp.org/montenegro/press-releases/empowering-rural-women-key-sustainable-development-montenegro>, accessed on 11th of December, 2024.

246 European Commission Progress Report on Montenegro, <https://www.gov.me/dokumenta/33f17d51-f184-4940-951f-b52b86de5649>, accessed on 11th of December, 2024.

agricultural holdings in Montenegro. While some preliminary data is available, a more in-depth figures are still to be published. This information should provide an accurate representation of the agricultural sector and support effective planning and decision-making for its development.²⁴⁷

The census includes information on:

- ❖ The total number of agricultural holdings,
- ❖ The size and categorization of agricultural land,
- ❖ Livestock numbers by type and category,
- ❖ Gender breakdown of individuals involved in agricultural production,
- ❖ Livestock housing facilities,
- ❖ Agricultural machinery, equipment, and related resources.²⁴⁸

This initiative should fill critical gaps in gender-disaggregated statistics, enabling more informed policies and fostering the growth of a more inclusive and equitable agricultural sector in Montenegro.

In this context, UNDP is implementing project “Empower Her”, which aims to empower women in rural areas by providing them with essential skills, tools, and resources to enhance their livelihoods and socio-economic status. UNDP will focus on advancing existing support systems in **Berane** and **Bijelo Polje**, as well as establishing a foundational support system in **Plav**, which currently lacks the necessary infrastructure. Through these efforts, the project aims to create a comprehensive support framework that fosters sustainable development while addressing gender disparities in rural areas.

Most women in rural areas inherit nothing from their families.

Based on the analysis of challenges and opportunities highlighted in recent research and policy frameworks, the following specific recommendations are proposed to promote gender equality in Montenegro’s agriculture and rural development sectors:

- ❖ Strengthen gender-disaggregated data collection and utilization;
- ❖ Targeted insights: Analyse data to understand the specific challenges faced by women in access to land, resources, and credit, and use these insights to inform policy development;
- ❖ Increase women’s access to financial support;
- ❖ Reduce bureaucratic barriers for women applying for financial support by providing technical assistance and guidance;
- ❖ Develop training initiatives targeting women farmers and entrepreneurs to improve their skills in modern farming techniques, financial management, and sustainable practices;
- ❖ Align national agricultural and rural development policies with EU gender equality standards, ensuring that all strategies explicitly address women’s needs;
- ❖ Create mentorship networks that connect aspiring female entrepreneurs with successful women leaders in the sector;
- ❖ Ensure that women are actively involved in local decision-making bodies and planning processes for rural development.

247 Agricultural Census, <https://www.monstat.org/cg/page.php?id=2264&pageid=2264>, accessed on 11th of December 2024.

248 Ibid

4.7 COMPETITIVENESS AND INNOVATION

This chapter delves into the ongoing efforts and challenges surrounding gender equality in Montenegro, particularly focusing on women's economic empowerment, labor market participation, and entrepreneurship. Despite significant progress, disparities persist in various sectors, including employment, entrepreneurship, and cultural representation.

The Reform Agenda of Montenegro²⁴⁹ highlights ongoing disparities in women's participation in the labor market compared to men. **As of the third quarter of 2023, the activity rate of women aged 15 and older was 61.2%, significantly lower than the 72.1% activity rate of men.** The Reform Agenda emphasizes that the primary challenge in formulating measures and programs lies in identifying socio-economic barriers through analysing structural characteristics of unemployed women and developing methodologies targeting gender equality. To address these issues, the Employment Agency of Montenegro plans to implement redesigned and newly developed active employment measures focused on improving women's position in the labor market. These measures aim to address specific socio-economic obstacles faced by unemployed women, with an emphasis on tailoring programs to their individual needs and potentials.²⁵⁰

The **Directive (EU) 2022/2381 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 November 2022**²⁵¹ aims to uphold the principle of equal opportunities between women and men and to achieve gender-balanced representation in top management positions. It introduces procedural requirements for the selection of candidates for director roles, ensuring that appointments or elections are based on transparency and merit. This Directive, which entered into application at the end of 2024, will also be binding for Montenegro. Consequently, the national Company Law²⁵² will need to be aligned with its provisions.

To further advance gender equality and support women's participation in decision-making processes, as stated in previous chapters, **Directive (EU) 2019/1158 of the European Parliament and of the Council**²⁵³ **promotes a work-life balance for parents and carers.** It requires Member States to adopt measures that encourage the equal sharing of caregiving responsibilities between women and men through parental, paternity, and carers' leave, in addition to existing maternity leave.

The Directive also establishes the right to request flexible working arrangements. Along with these two directives, the **Gender Balance on Corporate Boards Directive**²⁵⁴ came into effect at the end of 2024, with the goal of achieving more balanced gender representation on the boards of listed companies throughout the EU. It establishes targets of 40% for the underrepresented gender among non-executive directors and 33% across all board members in large listed companies. As the country aspiring to become the EU member, Montenegro must prepare its national framework in alignment with the EU standards.

Women are significantly underrepresented in the highest paid STEM fields, holding only 14% of STEM-related jobs in the Western Balkans.

²⁴⁹ Reform Agenda of Montenegro, <https://www.gov.me/dokumenta/2cc3baa0-65d6-4d97-a25c-fa171aa559b3>, accessed on: 14th of December, 2024.

²⁵⁰ Ibid

²⁵¹ The Directive (EU) 2022/2381 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 November 2022, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2022/2381/oj/eng>, accessed on: 8th of May, 2025.

²⁵² Company Law Montenegro, <https://www.paragraf.me/propisi-crnegore/zakon-o-privrednim-drustvima.html>, accessed on: 8th of May, 2025.

²⁵³ Directive (EU) 2019/1158 of the European Parliament and of the Council, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2019/1158/oj/eng>, accessed on 8th of May, 2025.

²⁵⁴ Gender Balance on Corporate Boards Directive, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_25_22, accessed on 8th of May, 2025.



When it comes to national strategic documents, the **Women's Entrepreneurship Strategy 2021-2024**²⁵⁵, outlined in the Action Plan for 2023-2024²⁵⁶, sets forth several strategic goals:

- ❖ The first goal is to create an environment conducive to the sustainable development of women's entrepreneurship. This involves establishing effective frameworks for creating and implementing policies, enhancing the business environment, and providing women with the knowledge and skills to unlock their potential and develop their businesses effectively.
- ❖ The second goal focuses on strengthening the competitiveness of women's businesses.
- ❖ The third goal emphasizes advocating for the interests and visibility of women entrepreneurs. This includes promoting successful practices and increasing organizational capacity to enhance competitiveness, access new markets, reduce unemployment among women, and increase the rate of women's employment and ownership of businesses.

This strategy advocates for the economic empowerment of women entrepreneurs through partnerships among public, private, and civil sectors. It emphasizes coordinated efforts and the allocation of available resources, including human, institutional, administrative, and financial, to foster women's entrepreneurship. Improved coordination among public sector institutions and strong leadership from the ministry responsible for entrepreneurship development are pivotal to achieving these objectives.

255 Women's Entrepreneurship Strategy 2021-2024, https://www.gov.me/biblioteka?page=1&sort=published_at&q=Strategija%20za%20razvoj%20zenskog%20preduzetnistva%202021-2024, accessed on: 14th of December, 2024.

256 Women's Entrepreneurship Strategy 2021-2024 Action Plan, <https://www.gov.me/dokumenta/3b83c593-1f00-41e2-844a-763714181dac>, accessed on: 14th of December, 2024.

Simultaneously, the cultural sector in Montenegro represents a critical area where gender equality efforts are both necessary and impactful. The **National Culture Development Program 2023-2027**²⁵⁷ mentions several initiatives to address gender inequalities in cultural policies through gender-responsive budgeting and specific measures. For example, in 2023, funding amounting to 137,000 euros was allocated to 21 projects led by women entrepreneurs in the creative industries.²⁵⁸

In Montenegro's public cultural sector, women hold 55.4% of positions at the state level and 50.2% at the local level. In the NGO sector, women constitute 60.4% of members across 71 organizations. In contrast, women's representation in the private cultural sector is lower, at 35.9%. Interestingly, women are more frequent attendees of cultural events, making up **57.5% of the regular audience**, and they are more active in artistic hobbies than men.²⁵⁹

However, entrenched disparities persist, particularly in labor market participation, leadership roles, and access to high-paying STEM fields. These gaps underscore the need for targeted, actionable strategies to achieve meaningful progress. Women are significantly underrepresented in the highest paid STEM fields, holding only **14% of STEM-related jobs in the Western Balkans**.²⁶⁰

Women represent 43% of the employed population but occupy only 20% of managerial positions.

Meanwhile, Montenegro is at a critical juncture in its economic development. **Women represent 43% of the employed population but occupy only 20% of managerial positions.**²⁶¹ **Women's contribution to GDP is estimated at 44%, limited by their lower employment rates and concentration in lower-paying sectors.**²⁶² Despite these challenges, the number of women-owned businesses has increased by **over 15% in the past five years**. Currently, **one in four micro, small, and medium enterprises in Montenegro is owned by a woman, though this is below the global and European averages of over 30%.**²⁶³

One in four micro, small, and medium enterprises in Montenegro is owned by a woman.

Economic empowerment of women contributes to societal gender equality and economic growth. **Studies estimate that closing the gender economic gap could add \$7 trillion to the global economy.** Companies with three or more women in leadership roles tend to outperform in various organizational dimensions. Recognizing this, the **UNDP and the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) established the Western Balkans Regional Network for Women in STEM in 2021**. This network aims to encourage women's participation in lucrative and high-demand STEM professions and foster collaboration across the region.

257 National Culture Development Program 2023-2027, <https://www.gov.me/dokumenta/d663190d-8da7-463c-acdd-cfe010332cb1>, accessed on: 14th of December 2024.

258 Ibid

259 Ibid

260 UNDP STEM, <https://www.undp.org/montenegro/news/advancing-women-stem-western-balkans>, accessed on: 14th of December 2024.

261 UNDP analysis, <https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/migration/me/undp-mne-women-contribution-economy-presentation-mne.pdf>, accessed on 14th of December 2024.

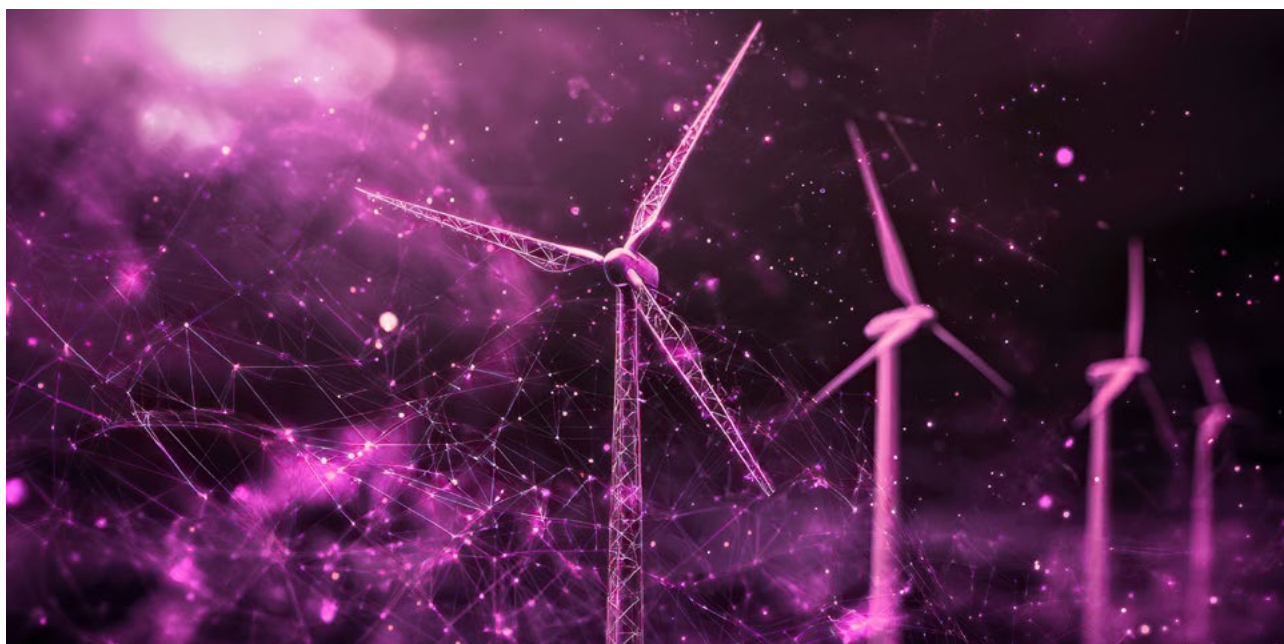
262 Ibid

263 UNDP Women in Business, <https://www.undp.org/cnr/montenegro/press-releases/undp-kreirao-sajt-namijenjen-zenama-u-biznisu>, accessed on 14th of December 2024.

Women in Montenegro face several societal and structural barriers. It is worth reminding that, for example, **they earn only 80 cents for every euro earned by men and disproportionately perform unpaid household work, which hinders their career progression.** Public perceptions further reinforce these challenges, with **half the population believing that successful women must neglect their families** and that employers have the right to inquire about a candidate's pregnancy status. Additionally, **two-thirds of women employed in public administration feel that men have more rights than women.** Conversely, **many institutional employees perceive that gender equality efforts are being excessively promoted without substantively improving women's status.**

To bridge existing gender gaps and promote gender equality in innovation and competitiveness, the following recommendations are proposed:

- ❖ Increase access to funding, training, and mentorship programs specifically designed for women entrepreneurs, particularly in rural areas.
- ❖ Enhance the implementation of the Women's Entrepreneurship Strategy 2021-2024 by ensuring consistent monitoring and evaluation of strategic goals.
- ❖ Promote platforms and networks to improve women entrepreneurs' access to local, regional, and international markets.
- ❖ Establish programs that prepare and mentor women for managerial and leadership roles across all sectors.
- ❖ Increase funding and initiatives supporting women-led projects in the creative and cultural sectors, building on the programs like the National Culture Development Program.
- ❖ Expand the use of gender-responsive budgeting across cultural policies and programs to ensure equitable resource distribution.
- ❖ Promote STEM careers among young women by enhancing access to scholarships, internships, and mentorship programs in STEM fields.
- ❖ Leverage initiatives like the Western Balkans Regional Network for Women in STEM to create cross-border opportunities and partnerships.



4.8 ENERGY, TRANSPORT, ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE

The sectors of **Energy, Transport, and Environment and Climate Change** in Montenegro remain among the least gender-informed, reflecting a global trend where these fields are often analysed less thoroughly from a gender perspective. While significant progress has been made globally in recent decades, these sectors still exhibit profound gaps in recognizing and addressing gender disparities.

Montenegro's energy, transport, and environmental policies have far-reaching impacts on daily life, national development, and climate resilience. Yet these sectors remain among the least gender-aware, both globally and in Montenegro.

Globally, women are disproportionately affected by climate change due to their heightened vulnerability stemming from poverty. Women living on marginal lands or in overcrowded urban areas often bear the brunt of erratic weather patterns, such as droughts and floods. Despite this, women play a pivotal role as agents of change, particularly within local communities, where they contribute to mitigating the effects of climate change.

However, **Montenegro's Transport Development Strategy 2019–2035** lacks any mention of measures to address women's mobility needs, access to transportation, or broader gender-responsive policies. Similarly, the **National Strategy in the Field of Climate Change until 2030** and the **Energy Development Strategy until 2030** fail to incorporate gender-specific considerations.

Globally, the lack of gender mainstreaming in these sectors is evident. For example, only 24% of countries included national gender equality institutions in their climate governance, and just 27% recognized the importance of women's participation in climate decision-making processes (UNDP, 2021).²⁶⁴ Women are severely underrepresented in STEM-related roles crucial for these sectors. They account for under 30% of global employment in scientific research and development (UNESCO, 2019) and hold only 17% of high-level decision-making positions in energy within the EU (EIGE, 2012).²⁶⁵ At the ministerial level, women's representation in energy, natural resources, and mining globally stood at just 11% in 2023 (UN Women and IPU, 2023).²⁶⁶

EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020 – 2025²⁶⁷ emphasizes that upcoming policies under the EU Strategy on Climate Adaptation, may have different impacts on women and men. In the context of climate change, young women have played a particularly prominent role in advocating for action. However, the effects of green policies are not experienced equally across genders. As stated in the Strategy, women are less likely to be recognized as climate refugees and more likely to live in energy poverty. Integrating a gender perspective is therefore essential to elevating the full potential of these policies.

In the transport sector, global data shows that only 16% of employees in transport, storage, and communication are women.²⁶⁸ Despite women's higher reliance on public transport and walking—often driven by care responsibilities, limited car access, and lower income—transport systems frequently fail to consider their needs. This disparity excludes women's perspectives from transport planning, perpetuating

264 United Nations study on Gender Equality in the Sustainable Energy Transition, <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2023-05/Gender-equality-in-the-sustainable-energy-transition-en.pdf>, accessed on: 17th of December, 2024.

265 Ibid

266 Ibid

267 EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020 – 2025, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0152>, accessed on 8th of May, 2025.

268 World Bank Policy Series, Closing Gender Gaps in Transport, <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099512412082314620/pdf/IDU0a9d235b00e11b040f00ad80077fcc4d1ef74.pdf>, accessed on: 17th of December, 2024.

barriers that limit their access to employment, education, and healthcare. Similarly, limited transport options reduce women's workforce participation by as much as 16.5% in developing countries (ILO, 2017), hindering their economic potential and diminishing broader macroeconomic gains.²⁶⁹

Research highlights the economic and societal benefits of gender-responsive transport systems, which can close poverty gaps, enhance women's mobility, and improve access to vital opportunities. Conversely, the lack of safe, affordable, and reliable transportation options contributes to absenteeism, decreased productivity, and psychological distress among women, particularly due to concerns about harassment.²⁷⁰

The 2024 study by the **European Institute on Gender Equality**²⁷¹ reveals that while gender mainstreaming is present in some areas of the European Green Deal (EGD), it remains inconsistently applied and insufficiently institutionalized. To strengthen gender mainstreaming in the EGD, the study recommends basing green policies on robust, sex-disaggregated data and combining quantitative and qualitative gender analysis to uncover and address structural inequalities. It is noted that stakeholder engagement, especially the inclusion of gender equality organizations and women in environmental decision-making, is vital for building consensus and ensuring that gender-transformative practices are scaled and sustained across the EU.

In Montenegro, the absence of gender-responsive policies in these sectors is compounded by a lack of sex-disaggregated data, making it difficult to assess the state of gender equality. **Just Transition Roadmap of Montenegro 2023** argues that the green transition presents a unique opportunity to reduce the gender gap in key economic sectors, many of which are currently dominated by men, such as coal mining and production of electrical energy in Pljevlja. This imbalance is also present across other industries, underscoring the need for a transition that is deliberately planned to enable women to benefit equally from emerging and restructured economic opportunities. The dialogues for just transition in Montenegro emphasized that policies related to employment in Montenegro must be revised to support women's full participation in the climate-neutral economy and green jobs.

Women in Pljevlja face high **unemployment rates**—up to **60%**—and are often confined to informal or low-paying sectors. The gender-responsive approach to Just Transition in Montenegro aims to use the process of just transition to create an environment that will enable women to participate in and benefit from **new, green jobs** in renewable energy, energy efficiency, and other sustainable sectors, while also ensuring that targeted investments support their inclusion. In 2022 and 2023, a pilot energy efficiency program in Pljevlja demonstrated how gender equality principles can be integrated into practical projects. The program provided subsidies for thermal insulation and energy-efficient windows, prioritizing women-headed households, especially those in rural areas. Over 60% of the beneficiaries were women, highlighting the program's success in addressing energy poverty and raising awareness of issues related to women's ownership and inheritance rights. In the new Reform Agenda developed by Montenegro within the Western Balkans Growth Plan a set of reforms is dedicated for re-skilling and up-skilling to create labour force for green jobs. This reforms also specifically target that women are equally benefiting from these investments.²⁷²

Key strategic documents in Montenegro related to energy, transport and climate change do not mention gender.

²⁶⁹ Ibid

²⁷⁰ Ibid

²⁷¹ EGD, Towards More Green and Equal Europe, <https://eige.europa.eu/publications-resources/publications/good-practices-gender-mainstreaming-european-green-deal-towards-more-gender-equal-and-greener-europe>, accessed on 8th of May, 2025.

²⁷² Diagnostics of socio-economic situation of coal region Pljevlja

In the recently developed Reform Agenda for Montenegro, part of the EU's Western Balkans Growth Plan, specific reforms have been introduced to support re-skilling and up-skilling for green jobs. Gender equality has been mainstreamed in energy transition reforms, ensuring that gender considerations are adequately addressed. This approach ensures that investments in the energy transition not only reduce gender inequalities but also enable women to benefit from green development and green jobs.

Gender equality and disaster risk reduction (DRR) must be closely integrated in the planning and implementation of public policies, especially in the context of Montenegro, which still lacks a system for tracking disaster-related deaths by gender, age, cause, or other factors. Global data shows that women are 14 times more likely to die during natural disasters²⁷³, as evidenced by the cases of Bangladesh in 1991 and Haiti in 2010, where women accounted for 91% of earthquake victims²⁷⁴. At the same time, men more often die while attempting rescue and protection efforts—in Europe, they make up 70% of flood-related fatalities for this reason²⁷⁵. Older women are particularly vulnerable to heatwaves, as confirmed in a ruling by the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) in favour of a group of Swiss women claiming their rights to climate protection²⁷⁶. In Montenegro, women face additional challenges—recovering more slowly after disasters and having limited access to resources, as only 30% are (co)owners of land and just 24% are among insured agricultural workers²⁷⁷. Although the national DRR strategy foresees €76 million in investments, only €27,000 is earmarked for activities that directly target gender equality²⁷⁸ (mostly focused on guidelines and training for GBV in DRR), clearly highlighting the need for more substantial investment in inclusive and gender-sensitive DRR policies. This approach aligns with the **Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030**, which emphasizes the need for inclusive DRR that considers the specific vulnerabilities and capacities of different groups, including women, children, the elderly, and persons with disabilities²⁷⁹. In March 2024, the **Sendai Gender Action Plan (Sendai GAP)** was launched to accelerate progress toward gender equality and more effective disaster risk reduction.

Gender-responsive energy and transport systems can reduce poverty, improve access to services, boost productivity, and unlock economic growth.

The **Gender-sensitive Climate Risk Assessment of Kotor Bay**²⁸⁰ states that equality is meaningfully addressed in only two sectoral policies in Montenegro - agriculture and entrepreneurship, while other key sectors such as water, health, and tourism largely overlook gender considerations. The Assessment argues that it is essential to integrate gender perspectives into the work of bodies dealing with climate change. National gender equality policies should be revised to include climate change considerations, and sectoral policies must be designed in accordance with the Gender Equality Law, particularly Article 3, which mandates gender mainstreaming.

The 2024 UNDP National Adaptation Plan (NAP) emphasizes the disproportion between the “share of women educated for professions that are relevant for NAP, and the adequate labor sectors. For example, there is a high rate of women among graduated students in Bio-technical Institute, Faculty for Civil Engineering

273 UNDP, Gender and Disaster Risk Reduction, 2010

274 Neumayer, E., & Plümpner, T. (2007). The gendered nature of natural disasters: The impact of catastrophic events on the gender gap in life expectancy

275 European Environment Agency (EEA), Flood Risk and Gender Vulnerability, 2018

276 European Court of Human Rights ruling in the case of KlimaSeniorinnen v. Switzerland, 2024

277 National statistics of Montenegro – land ownership and agricultural insurance by gender

278 Disaster Risk Reduction Strategy of Montenegro 2023–2029

279 United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030

280 Petar Raičević, Gordana Djurović, Mirjana Ivanov and Biljana Gligorić. 2022. Gender-sensitive Climate Risk Assessment of Kotor Bay, Montenegro. GEF MedProgramme – Enhancing Environmental Security SCCF Project.



and Faculty of Metallurgy, and the low percentage of women in the labor sectors that usually absorb this type of professionals - Manufacturing, Transportation and Storage (...).²⁸¹ Women are underrepresented in key positions within energy, transport, and environmental fields, particularly in STEM-related roles essential to these sectors. The highest female representation is found in regulatory bodies, which rely more on legal expertise than specific sector knowledge.²⁸² Women are also present in middle management roles within electric companies, but their participation in higher-level decision-making remains limited. Currently, a woman serves as a minister of transport in Montenegro for the second time in history, after Vukosava Vukica Mićunović, the first woman elected to this position.

To address these issues, Montenegro must undertake a comprehensive approach to integrate gender considerations into these sectors, including:

- ❖ Improving the collection of **sex-disaggregated data** is essential to better understand and address disparities.
- ❖ Strengthening the **legal framework** to mandate gender-informed policy creation in energy, transport, and climate change is equally critical. Additionally, there is a pressing need to implement **education and capacity-building programs** to enhance understanding and application of gender mainstreaming in these fields.
- ❖ Collaborations with sector experts, gender specialists, academia, and civil society organizations can foster more inclusive and effective policy development. Such partnerships can bridge the knowledge gap and ensure that gender considerations are systematically incorporated into planning and decision-making processes.

By prioritizing these actions, Montenegro can align its policies with global standards, fostering inclusivity and ensuring that women's voices are adequately represented in the energy, transport, and environmental sectors. These efforts are not just about achieving gender equality but also about unlocking the full economic and societal potential that comes with empowering all members of society.

²⁸¹ 2024 UNDP National Adaptation Plan (NAP), pp. 16.

²⁸² Gender Profile of Montenegro, <https://tacso.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/MONTENEGRO.pdf>, accessed on: 17th of December, 2024.

4.9 SECURITY AND DEFENSE

The United Nations Security Council adopted **Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325)**²⁸³ in October 2000, with the principal goal of increasing women's participation in all decisions related to peace and conflict. The resolution is considered the most important document addressing the role of women in achieving peace and security, as well as incorporating a gender perspective concerning the position of girls and women in conflict and post-conflict areas.

Since 2000, the Security Council has adopted ten related resolutions, collectively forming the **Agenda for Women, Peace, and Security**.

Among professional military personnel, women represent just over 12%, with the highest concentration in lower officer ranks.

Four Key Pillars of UNSCR 1325:

- ❖ **Participation:** Ensuring women's participation in all issues related to peace, security, and conflict.
- ❖ **Prevention:** Involving women and gender perspectives in conflict prevention and addressing gender-based violence.
- ❖ **Protection:** Safeguarding the rights of women and girls during peacetime and conflict.
- ❖ **Help and Recovery:** Incorporating women and gender perspectives in aid and recovery efforts.

The **2023 Statistical Brief of the European Institute for Gender Equality**,²⁸⁴ underlines that women remain significantly underrepresented in leadership roles within EU security agencies, making up less than one-fifth of senior executives. Although some progress has been made, stronger action is needed for meaningful results. Reliable and sex-disaggregated data are still lacking across the security sector, which poses a serious barrier to monitoring progress. Without this data, achieving gender-balanced representation and implementing inclusive strategies remains a challenge.

In national frameworks, the Government of Montenegro adopted its first **National Action Plan (NAP)** for implementing UNSCR 1325 in February 2017, covering the period 2017–2018. The **second and current NAP**, covering the period 2019–2022, was adopted in August 2019.

Two key obligations for member states ratifying the Resolution are:

- ❖ Increasing the involvement of women in peace negotiations and peacekeeping missions.
- ❖ Protecting women and girls from sexual and gender-based violence during armed conflicts.

In today's context, the Resolution has a broader interpretation, emphasizing **human security** as a critical component of the modern security concept.

The **Ministry of Defence** is the principal institutional mechanism responsible for implementing the Resolution in Montenegro. It proposes national action plans for adoption by the Government and monitors and reports on implementation activities. Other institutions involved in implementing activities from the National Action Plan include the Ministry of Interior, Police Directorate, Ministry of Justice, Ministry for Human and Minority Rights, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Education, Science, Culture, and Sport, National Security Agency, Institute for Execution of Criminal Sanctions, Revenue and Customs

283 Landmark Resolution on Women, Peace and Security, <https://www.google.com/search?client=safari&rls=en&q=resolution+1325&ie=UTF-8&oe=UTF-8>, accessed on: 17th of December, 2024.

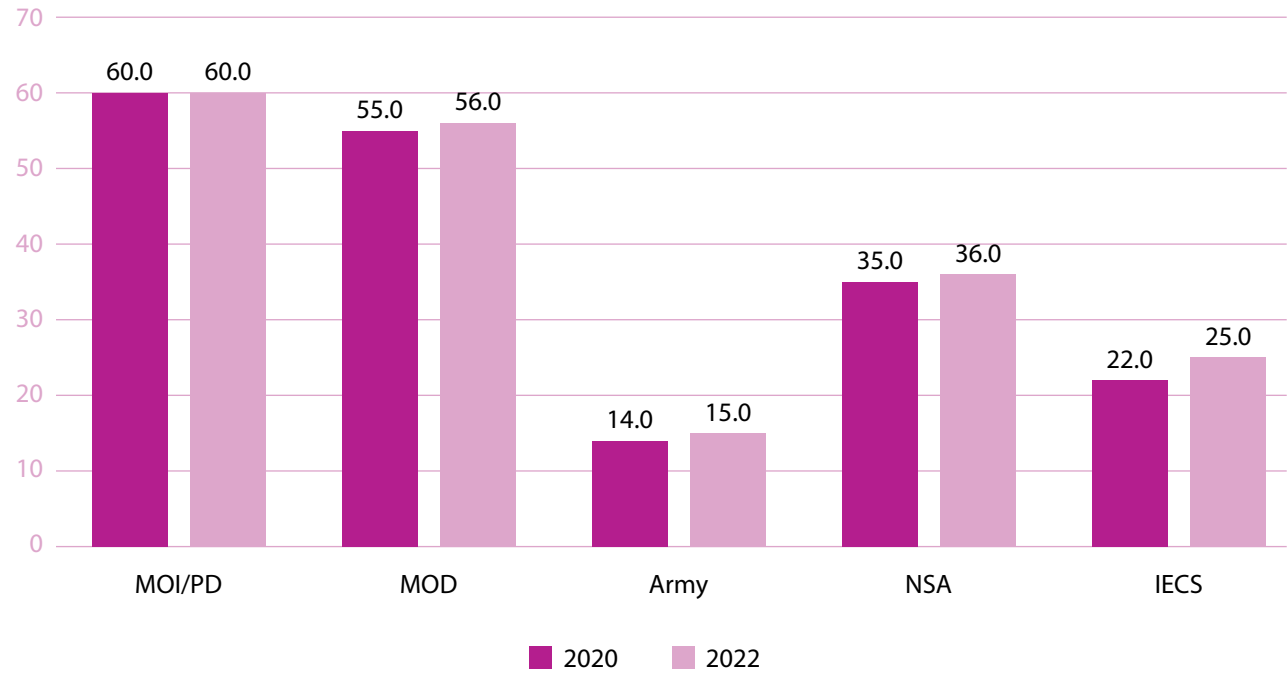
284 2023 Statistical Brief of the European Institute for Gender Equality, https://eige.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/Gender%20balance%20in%20the%20security%20sector_0.pdf, accessed on 8th of May, 2025.

Administration, Committee for Security and Defence in the Parliament of Montenegro, Ministry of Finance and Social Welfare, Ministry of Health, and the Supreme State Prosecutor’s Office. An **Inter-Agency Working Group** monitored the NAP’s implementation. It comprises representatives of all responsible institutions, the Community of Municipalities, and relevant NGOs.

Montenegrin Government adopted new **Strategy for the implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 – Women, Peace, and Security**²⁸⁵, and its related resolutions for the period 2024–2027, with an action plan for 2024–2025. In analysing the structure of this document, it becomes evident that approaches to integrating the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda vary from country to country. Most nations, however, define their national policies and priorities based on the four “pillars” of UNSCR 1325: **participation, protection, prevention, and relief and recovery**. On the other hand, Montenegro’s national plans have not historically included all four pillars. Specifically, the relief and recovery pillar has been absent in Montenegro’s two previous National Action Plans (NAPs) for the implementation of UNSCR 1325. This gap became particularly apparent during the COVID-19 pandemic, which underscored the necessity of including relief and recovery measures within national frameworks. Consequently, the new strategic document incorporates relief and recovery goals into its operational and strategic objectives for implementing UNSCR 1325.²⁸⁶

In another context, as illustrated in the subsequent table, **women represent more than half of the workforce in Montenegro’s Ministry of Defence (MoD)**.²⁸⁷ While this indicates significant representation, it may also reflect that women predominantly occupy administrative roles. Meanwhile, in the Armed Forces of Montenegro (AFM), women make up 16.5%²⁸⁸ of the total personnel, showcasing a much lower level of representation in operational roles.

Graph 9: Percentage of men and women in security and defence institutions 2020 - 2022



285 Strategy for the implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 – Women, Peace, and Security, <https://www.gov.me/clanak/strategija-implementacije-rezolucije-savjeta-bezbjednosti-ujedinjenih-nacija-1325-zene-mir-i-bezbjednost>, accessed on: 15th of November, 2024.

286 Ibid

287 Ibid

288 Ibid

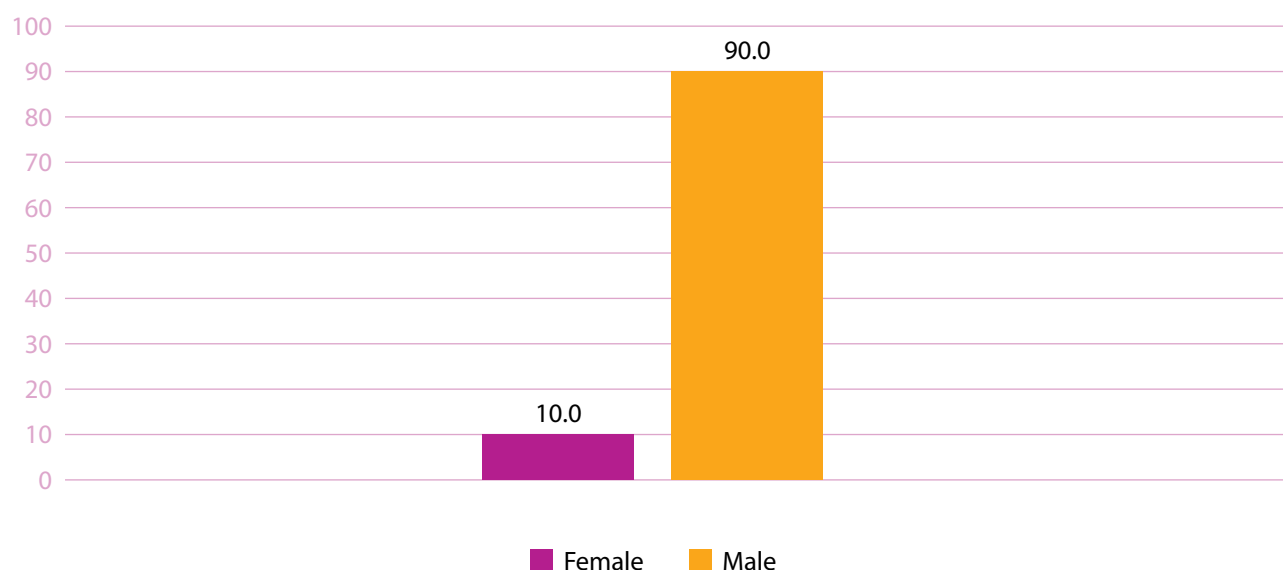
Simultaneously, when observing the chronological representation of women in the security and defence sectors, it is evident that the percentage of women has been steadily increasing across nearly all sectors, with one notable exception: the National Security Agency. This agency has recorded the lowest percentage of women since 2013.

Table 16: Percentage women in in the security and defence sectors 2013 - 2022

Institution	2013	2019	2022
Ministry of Interior and Police Directorate	57%	58.10%	60%
Armed Forces of Montenegro	8.68%	10.69%	15%
Ministry of Defense	35.30%	49.26%	56%
National Security Agency	37.14%	38.50%	36%

In the Armed Forces of Montenegro (AFM), as previously mentioned, women make up **16.5% of the total personnel**.²⁸⁹ While the overall share of women in the AFM exceeds 16%, **the proportion of professional military personnel who are women is slightly over 12%**.²⁹⁰ Analysing the gender distribution within each personnel category reveals notable differences. **Women are most represented among civilian staff serving in the AFM, where they account for 47.1% of that group. Among professional military personnel, women are most represented in the officer corps, where they constitute 16.97% of officers**.²⁹¹

Graph 10: Percentage of men and women among professional army personnel 2020 - 2022



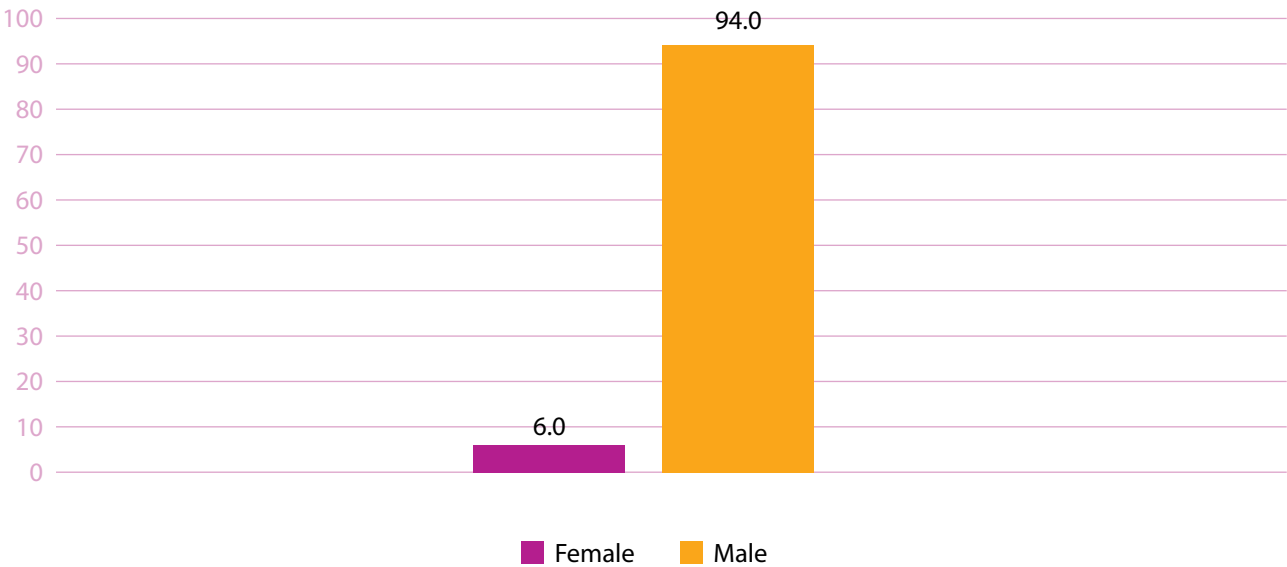
289 Ibid

290 Ibid

291 Ibid

Currently, **there are no women in the Armed Forces of Montenegro (AFM) holding ranks higher than that of Major**, which means that in the coming years, based on career advancement criteria, some women among the professional military personnel may achieve the ranks of Lieutenant Colonel/Commander or Colonel/Captain (Navy).²⁹² When examining the representation of women within the enlisted and non-commissioned officer (NCO) ranks, it is evident that their presence is also concentrated at the lower levels of these structures.

Graph 11: Leadership and command positions in Montenegrin Army by gender 2024



This trend underscores the challenges women face in advancing to higher positions within the military hierarchy, whether due to systemic barriers, limited opportunities, or a slower career progression pathway. Efforts to address this imbalance could include introducing mentorship and leadership development programs specifically designed for women, ensuring equal access to training and assignments that qualify them for promotion, and fostering an institutional culture that actively supports gender equality at all levels of the military. These steps would help pave the way for a more balanced and inclusive representation of women in higher ranks within the AFM.

The latest UN research on **Equal Opportunity for Women in the Defense Sector**²⁹³ reveals significant trends and persistent challenges in achieving gender equality within military institutions worldwide. **Between 2016 and 2022**, the percentage of women in the armed forces increased by **27% globally**, marking notable progress. However, disparities in representation remain pronounced across different branches and ranks.

Currently, no woman holds a rank higher than Major.

Currently, women constitute **12% of personnel in the army, 15% in the air force, and 14% in the navy**.²⁹⁴ Despite this growth, gender imbalance is stark at the senior levels, with **97% of senior officers in the army being men**.²⁹⁵ Women’s representation in senior positions across all branches of the military continues to be significantly low.

²⁹² Ibid
²⁹³ UN study on position of women in defence sector, https://www.un.org/ssr/sites/www.un.org/ssr/files/general/dpo_women_in_defence_web.pdf, accessed on: 15th of November, 2024.
²⁹⁴ Ibid
²⁹⁵ Ibid



Within the armed forces, women are predominantly assigned to roles in **logistics, administration, and legal positions**.²⁹⁶ Participation in combat units remains limited, with only around **10% of women** involved in these capacities. Furthermore, women's participation in **education and training programs** is alarmingly low. High-level educational opportunities are particularly restricted; in all surveyed countries, only **3% of air force personnel** engaged in advanced defence studies in 2022 were women.²⁹⁷

These findings highlight the ongoing need for targeted policies and initiatives to enhance gender equality in the defence sector, particularly in leadership development, combat roles, and access to high-ranking educational programs.

The United Nations has outlined a set of **seven pillars** and specific **recommendations** to improve the participation and representation of women in the defence sector, aiming to address systemic barriers and promote gender equality.²⁹⁸ These pillars and recommendations serve as a roadmap for member states to implement meaningful change.

²⁹⁶ Ibid

²⁹⁷ Ibid

²⁹⁸ Ibid

Seven Pillars for Advancing Women's Roles in Defence²⁹⁹:

- 1) **Assessing Barriers to Women's Participation:** Conducting thorough evaluations to identify and understand obstacles hindering women's entry and progression in the defence sector.
- 2) **Enhancing Recruitment Strategies:** Developing targeted strategies to attract more women into the military and defence roles.
- 3) **Improving Retention Rates:** Implementing measures to ensure women remain in service by addressing workplace challenges and fostering supportive environments.
- 4) **Building a Culture of Diversity and Inclusion:** Creating organizational frameworks and policies that prioritize inclusivity and celebrate diversity at all levels.
- 5) **Combating Sexual Discrimination, Harassment, and Abuse:** Establishing strong safeguards and accountability mechanisms to prevent and address these issues effectively.
- 6) **Providing Career Development Programs for Women:** Offering mentorship, training, and leadership development opportunities tailored to support women's professional growth.
- 7) **Ensuring Fair Promotion Processes:** Establishing transparent and equitable systems for career advancement to eliminate gender bias.

In the case of Montenegro, previous UNDP research³⁰⁰ highlights significant challenges in societal perceptions and institutional awareness regarding gender equality in the defence sector and the implementation of **UN Security Council Resolution 1325**. According to the findings, **the prevailing opinion among citizens is that women are not as capable as men for professional military service**. This view is shared by **51% of respondents**, with men (58%) more likely to hold this belief compared to women (44%).³⁰¹

When it comes to knowledge of Resolution 1325, awareness within key institutions remains alarmingly low. **Only one in five employees in the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Internal Affairs is well-informed about the Resolution**. Just **16% of respondents** claim they understand its content and can explain its significance to others, while only **7%** report participating in or currently contributing to its implementation within their institution.³⁰²

The primary obstacle to implementing Resolution 1325, cited by more than half of those familiar with it, is the **lack of awareness among employees** across institutions. Additionally, **one in four respondents** identifies insufficient engagement by certain institutions in implementing the resolution's activities, as well as a shortage of qualified personnel to oversee its application and provide training for other employees.³⁰³

As a result, **staff training** emerges as the most frequently mentioned solution to improve the resolution's implementation. Enhancing knowledge and awareness across institutions is seen as a crucial step toward fostering meaningful progress.

These findings underscore the deep-seated cultural and institutional barriers to achieving gender equality in Montenegro's defence sector. The belief that women are less capable than men for military service reveals entrenched stereotypes that hinder progress. Addressing these misconceptions requires not only education campaigns but also visible examples of women excelling in defense roles to challenge biases.

299 Ibid

300 UNDP Gender Equality Profile Montenegro, <https://tacso.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/MONTENEGRO.pdf>, accessed on: 20th November, 2024.

301 Ibid

302 Ibid

303 Ibid

Moreover, the lack of institutional knowledge about Resolution 1325 highlights a systemic gap in awareness and commitment. Comprehensive training programs and stronger institutional accountability are essential to bridge this gap. Without these efforts, Montenegro risks missing the opportunity to fully implement this important resolution and benefit from the diverse contributions women can make to national security and peacekeeping efforts.

To address the identified challenges in implementing **UN Security Council Resolution 1325** in Montenegro, the following recommendations are proposed:

- ❖ Develop and implement targeted information campaigns to raise awareness about the importance of Resolution 1325 among both the general public and employees of relevant institutions. This could include workshops, media campaigns, and educational programs.
- ❖ Establish mechanisms to improve collaboration among institutions responsible for implementing the resolution. This could involve forming inter-agency working groups or committees to streamline efforts and ensure cohesive action.
- ❖ Invest in training programs to develop a pool of experts in gender equality who can guide the implementation of the resolution. Additionally, ensure that institutions involved in this process have access to gender specialists to inform their activities and policies.
- ❖ Revise the indicators used to monitor progress on operational objectives to include qualitative measures that capture real-world impacts. For instance, instead of focusing solely on the number of trainings conducted, assess changes in attitudes and behaviors among participants. This could be aligned with the UN General Assembly's list of indicators for monitoring and evaluating national action plans.
- ❖ Develop a comprehensive communication strategy to accompany the implementation of Resolution 1325. This strategy should outline how information will be disseminated, how public support will be garnered, and how progress will be communicated to stakeholders and the public.
- ❖ Provide the body responsible for overseeing the implementation of the National Action Plan (NAP) with the necessary resources, including skilled personnel, adequate funding, and training opportunities. This will ensure effective monitoring, evaluation, and coordination of activities.

4.10 ONGOING PROJECTS ON GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

Based on the overall assessment of gender equality across various sectors presented in the previous chapters, it is clear that despite significant progress, especially in the legislative domain, true gender equality remains out of reach in almost every sphere. A key challenge lies in the insufficient institutional capacities and the limited financial resources allocated to advancing the gender equality agenda within governmental structures. This gap has been acknowledged by leading international organizations operating in Montenegro, which over the past decade have provided consistent support in the form of expertise and financial backing to help close these gaps and accelerate progress toward gender equality.

The European Union stands out as the primary financial supporter of gender equality initiatives in Montenegro. Gender equality is a fundamental right and a core value of the EU, and its advancement is closely monitored throughout the accession process for all candidate countries. Consequently, EU funding and strategic guidance have played a pivotal role in driving gender-related reforms.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has been at the forefront of these efforts, serving as the key implementing partner in Montenegro. The UNDP leads strategic initiatives to strengthen gender equality in line with international commitments under both the United Nations and the European Union frameworks.



Some of the most tangible advancements in gender equality have been achieved through activities under the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) Program, funded by the EU and implemented by the UNDP Country Office in Montenegro in cooperation with the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights. These efforts have contributed to strengthening institutional frameworks, improving policy coherence, and enhancing the overall capacity to address gender disparities.

Over two cycles of the IPA program, key results include the introduction of quotas for the less represented sex through changes to the Election Law, achieved through close collaboration between and joint advocacy of women politicians, activists, UNDP, and the EU Delegation. Another significant outcome is the certification of 34 trainers for gender equality within political parties, strengthening the foundation for greater women's political participation and leadership.

The EU-funded program "Ending Violence Against Women in the Western Balkans and Turkey: Implementing Norms, Changing Minds" advanced efforts to end gender-based discrimination and violence against women and girls (VAWG), particularly for the most disadvantaged groups. It established and strengthened a network of 21 women's NGOs in Montenegro, including 12 grant recipients, to monitor and report on the implementation of CEDAW and the Istanbul Convention.

The program played a crucial role during the COVID-19 pandemic, adapting to the crisis caused by the pandemic and the surge in VAWG. It provided targeted support to CSO service providers and survivors, promoted the Crisis Action Plan for specialist GBV services, and supported the implementation of the Code of Conduct on GBV cases.



In 2022, UNDP, through the UN Women Regional EAW Programme, successfully advocated for sustainable funding for specialized service providers. This led to a landmark decision by the government to allocate €140,000 from direct budget resources to support the SOS Helpline and shelters, shifting from project-based to stable, long-term funding in line with Article 8 of the Istanbul Convention.

Additionally, UNDP's advocacy efforts contributed to the establishment of the Directorate for Gender-Based Violence within the Ministry for Labor and Social Welfare in August 2022. Establishment of this institutional mechanism represents one of the most important milestones in development of proper institutional infrastructure that will enable adequate implementation of the Istanbul Convention in daily practice and apply due attention to monitoring and advancement of the protection and preventions systems in place when it comes to GBV.

The EU funded project "Communicating Gender Equality" aimed to increase effectiveness of the institutions to promote and protect human rights in line with the best EU practices - by improving capacities of the key stakeholders in the area of communications and gender mainstreaming.

A key achievement is the successful completion of five in-depth research studies, including an analysis of media legal regulations from a gender perspective, a gender profile of Montenegro, and a study on gender aspects of cultural and media content. These studies have provided a solid evidence base for improving policies and shaping strategic actions.

The project also developed inputs for National Communication Strategy and strengthened the institutional framework gender-mainstreaming accredited program, "Communication with the Public in the Public Sector." Furthermore, two comprehensive toolkits — one for gender-responsive journalism and another for communication in public administration — have been developed to provide practical guidance for embedding gender equality into day-to-day communication practices.

Public engagement and awareness-raising have been central to the project's success. The "G-SPOT" podcast series, featuring 39 prominent voices and reaching over 40,000 households, sparked meaningful conversations on gender equality. The project also produced the monograph "**Women of Montenegro**" to highlight the historical and contemporary contributions of women to Montenegrin society. A particularly innovative achievement was the creation of six digitalized steel sculptures, installed at high-traffic locations in Podgorica. These sculptures, equipped with QR codes linking to video stories about influential women, effectively merged art and technology to engage the public in gender equality narratives. The project also influenced national media practices by gender-mainstreaming the Code of Conduct for the National Broadcaster and initiating dialogue on amending the Journalists' Code of Conduct. Through strategic capacity-building, public engagement, and policy influence, the project has created a sustainable foundation for promoting gender equality in Montenegro.

The "United in Gender Equality" project that has been currently implemented enhances Montenegro's capacity to promote gender equality and integrate gender mainstreaming across strategic, legislative, and policy frameworks. Supported by the European Union, the project is strategically aligned with Montenegro's reform agenda, Government and EU accession priorities. It reflects the goals outlined in the EU Gender Action Plan III (GAP III) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), ensuring that gender equality becomes a core element of policy development and institutional practices.

The project focuses on increasing knowledge on gender equality, ensuring that gender dimensions are integrated into strategic government priorities, and strengthening the normative framework for gender machinery and gender mainstreaming. Through targeted interventions and the development of knowledge-sharing tools, the project channels systemic approach into concrete actions. This includes capacity development, strategic policy adjustments, and the creation of sustainable mechanisms for integrating gender equality across government operations.

The project has successfully established strong partnerships with key institutions, including the Prime Minister's Office, the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights, Ministry of Public Administration, Ministry of European Affairs, Ministry of Finance, Secretariat General of the Government and other key governmental bodies.

The strategic focus on systemic reforms and capacity development ensures that the impact of the project will be sustainable beyond its duration. By embedding gender equality into Montenegro's broader reform agenda and aligning with EU priorities, the project lays the foundation for a more inclusive and gender-equal society.



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