



HAITI'S UNTAPPED POTENTIAL:

An assessment of the barriers to gender equality



WORLD BANK GROUP

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to gender equality**



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Acronyms and Abbreviations

COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
DHS	Demographic and Health Survey
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HOPE	Opportunity through Production Encouragement Act
ILO	International Labour Organization
IPU	Inter-Parliamentary Union
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UN	United Nations
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WBG	World Bank Group
WDR	World Development Report
WHO	World Health Organization

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1. Introduction

While the world over has suffered from the economic, structural, and human costs of the COVID-19 pandemic in recent years, Haiti has been additionally rocked by earthquakes, hurricanes, and political upheaval. These shocks have come on top of existing fragilities, putting marginalized and vulnerable populations even more at risk, and exacerbating inequities. Haiti has long lagged behind its peer countries with respect to gender equality and recent events have only served to make alleviating this problem more difficult for both governmental and nongovernmental entities. As such, this is a key juncture at which to examine the landscape of gender in Haiti, describing and defining inequalities where they are seen throughout Haitian society, and to have a critical discussion about the potential role the diminution of those inequalities could play in leveling the field for all.

The World Bank Group (WBG) sees the closing of key gaps between men and women and expanding women's and girls' voice and agency as critical to its goals of eliminating poverty and boosting shared prosperity. Gender inequality imposes large economic and psychic costs and reducing it can spur growth and opportunity. Although significant improvements have been achieved worldwide over the past 20 years, additional efforts are needed to further narrow gender inequalities in human development, ensure access to good jobs and control over productive assets, and provide services that meet the needs of both women and men, especially the poorest, together with a focus on areas that could have transformational impacts. This Gender Assessment serves to identify inequalities and potential points of entry for policy and programmatic action in Haiti. It builds on a 2002 gender note (World Bank 2002) that considered Haiti, the Dominican Republic, and Jamaica, taking advantage of more-recent data, including surveys designed to understand the impact of COVID-19, and a wealth of literature that has grown around understanding the constraints and limitations, but also the opportunities, associated with gender.

This report engages in a primarily quantitative review of the most recently available data for Haiti pertaining to gender. The assessment takes a broad and deep look at Haiti through a limited data landscape, relying on multiple data sources. This report primarily relies on the Demographic Health Survey (DHS 2010, 2017) conducted by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), but also includes

insights from the World Values Survey (2016)¹; the World Bank's Women, Business and the Law reports; and the World Bank's High-Frequency Phone Surveys conducted in 2020 and 2021 for more-recent evidence. By analyzing these data, we identify gender gaps and inequalities that can serve as opportunities and points of entry for future policy. Where appropriate, the report also compares Haiti to regional neighbors and other countries with similar economic profiles. It should be noted here that most of these data are more than five years old and there may have been substantial changes since their release. This assessment will not attempt to directly identify the effects of recent crises on gender inequality due to a lack of more-recent data, which we acknowledge is needed to present a fuller picture of Haiti today. We supplement these quantitative data with information gathered in consultations with stakeholders in Haiti, focus groups, and key informant interviews on key topics (namely, disasters), and the literature.

This assessment fills a gap in the literature by presenting a comprehensive picture of the data on gender equality in Haiti. The literature on gender equality in Haiti, while limited, has been growing rapidly in recent years. Much of this literature, particularly recently, describes the effects of natural disasters on gender equality (e.g., True 2013; Horton 2012; Llorente-Marrón et al. 2020). Other studies use textual analysis, participatory data collection, and other methods to provide in-depth analysis of how gender inequality came to be in Haiti and the challenges to changing the status quo (e.g., Charles 1995; Padgett and Warnecke 2011). For instance, Tøraasen (2022) suggests that women were able to mobilize for better representation as a result of past institutional disruptions and adopt more gender-friendly legislation, but that continued state fragility limits follow-through on this legislation. A few scholars have focused on the contributions of women to the labor market, specifically the *madan saras* (Gandini, Monje Silva, and Guerrero 2021; Hossein 2015), and on how gender-based violence stems from societal insecurity (Maclin et al. 2022). This paper adds to the literature through its wide-ranging assessment of the data and existing studies.

The report is intended for all audiences with an interest in gender and key barriers to gender equality in Haiti, but is particularly aimed at policy makers and donors who have the potential to push for real change in the design, implementation, funding, and enforcement of policies and programs. The report starts with an overview of gender gaps in endowments, economic opportunities, and voice and agency, following the conceptual framework of the 2012 World Development Report on Gender (WDR) (World Bank 2012) and the World Bank Group's Gender Strategy (World Bank 2016). The report subsequently looks at four key areas where gender gaps are pronounced. The first of these deep dives looks at labor market inequalities, including constraints and opportunities for women; the second at gender gaps in the legal and regulatory

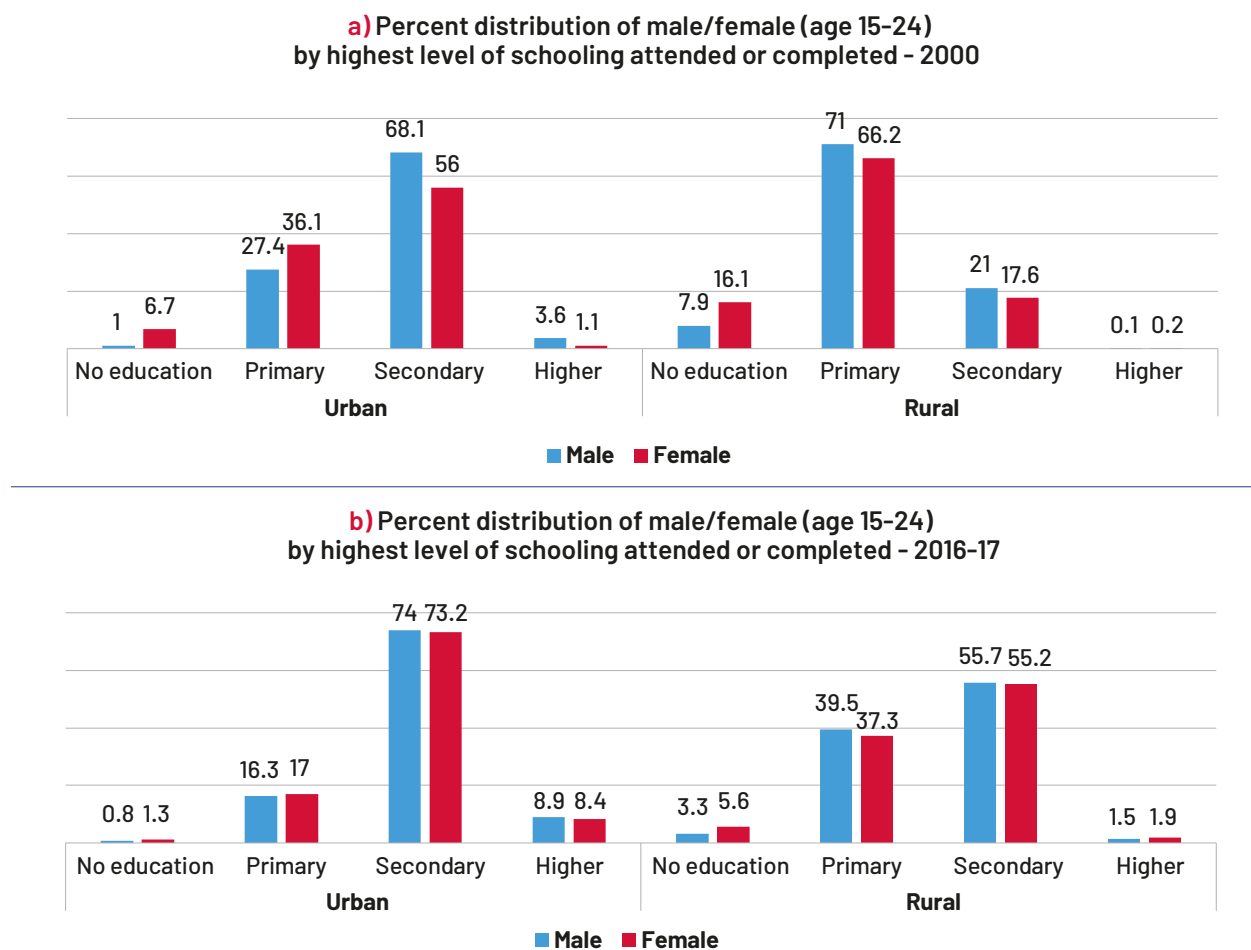
1 Data available in: <https://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSDocumentationWV6.jsp>

environment; and the third at risky behaviors and the disproportionate gendered effects of these. The fourth, written in concert with the World Bank's Disaster and Risk Management team, examines the gendered vulnerabilities that have arisen or become more apparent as a result of recent natural disasters. What follows is an abridged version of the full gender assessment.

2. Stocktaking

In the area of human endowment in education, girls in Haiti have made significant strides in increasing attendance, though adult educational attainment remains low overall. The country has traditionally lagged behind its peers in the Caribbean with respect to educational attainment, but has made gains in recent years. While gender gaps in enrollment persist at lower levels, they have closed or even reversed at the secondary and tertiary levels. Among the small proportion of Haitians ages 15–24 who attend higher education, more girls than boys in rural areas ([figure 1](#)) do so. Boys still have higher net attendance rates than girls for primary school in rural areas and boys in urban areas have higher rates of completion for tertiary education. The closing of gender gaps in education has been noted throughout the Caribbean and Central America (Demombynes, Holland, and León 2010). Taken together, these facts underscore the increasing dropout rates experienced by boys beyond the primary level, suggesting a new gender vulnerability that merits attention. Interventions that seek to improve the quality of and access to education for all children have been shown to have strong effects on enrollment and educational outcomes for both boys and girls. These include cash transfers, pedagogy programs for teachers, and, in some cases, infrastructure improvements (Evans and Yuan 2022). Notably, these authors suggest that where girls have unique needs for assistance, such as with menstruation and the negotiating of schooling with chores and housework, programs targeted at girls are necessary to improve their educational outcomes. Extrapolating that finding to boys, we suggest that identifying the reasons boys are leaving school is key to determining policy solutions. The deep dive on risky behaviors examines some risks of school dropout that disproportionately affect boys.

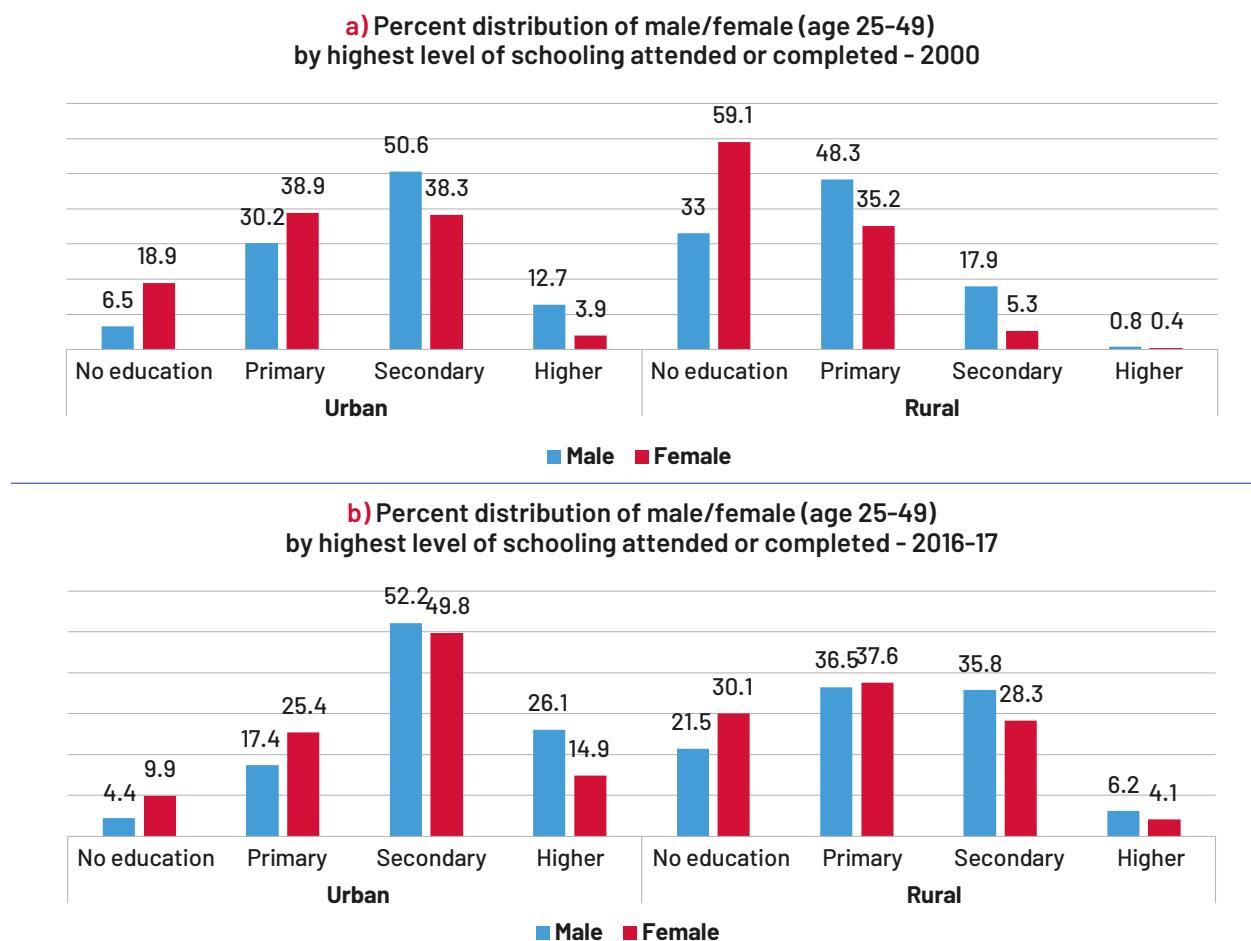
Figure 1 Highest Educational Level of Males and Females (ages 15–24), 2000 and 2016–17



Sources: DHS (2000; 2016–17).

Although gender gaps in educational attainment among the population ages 25–49 years narrowed between 2000 and 2017, adult men remain significantly more likely to have attended or completed secondary and tertiary education. These findings come from the latest household data, which reflect women’s historic disadvantage in educational attainment (figure 2). Although enrollment rates for lower levels of schooling suggest these gaps will also close if things stay the same in coming years, older women and their offspring are likely to be vulnerable now as predicted by their levels of education. Education is strongly associated with delayed age of marriage and pregnancy in Haiti and mother’s education is strongly associated with nutritional outcomes of children. Women who marry later in life and attain more years of education are also less likely to report intimate partner violence.

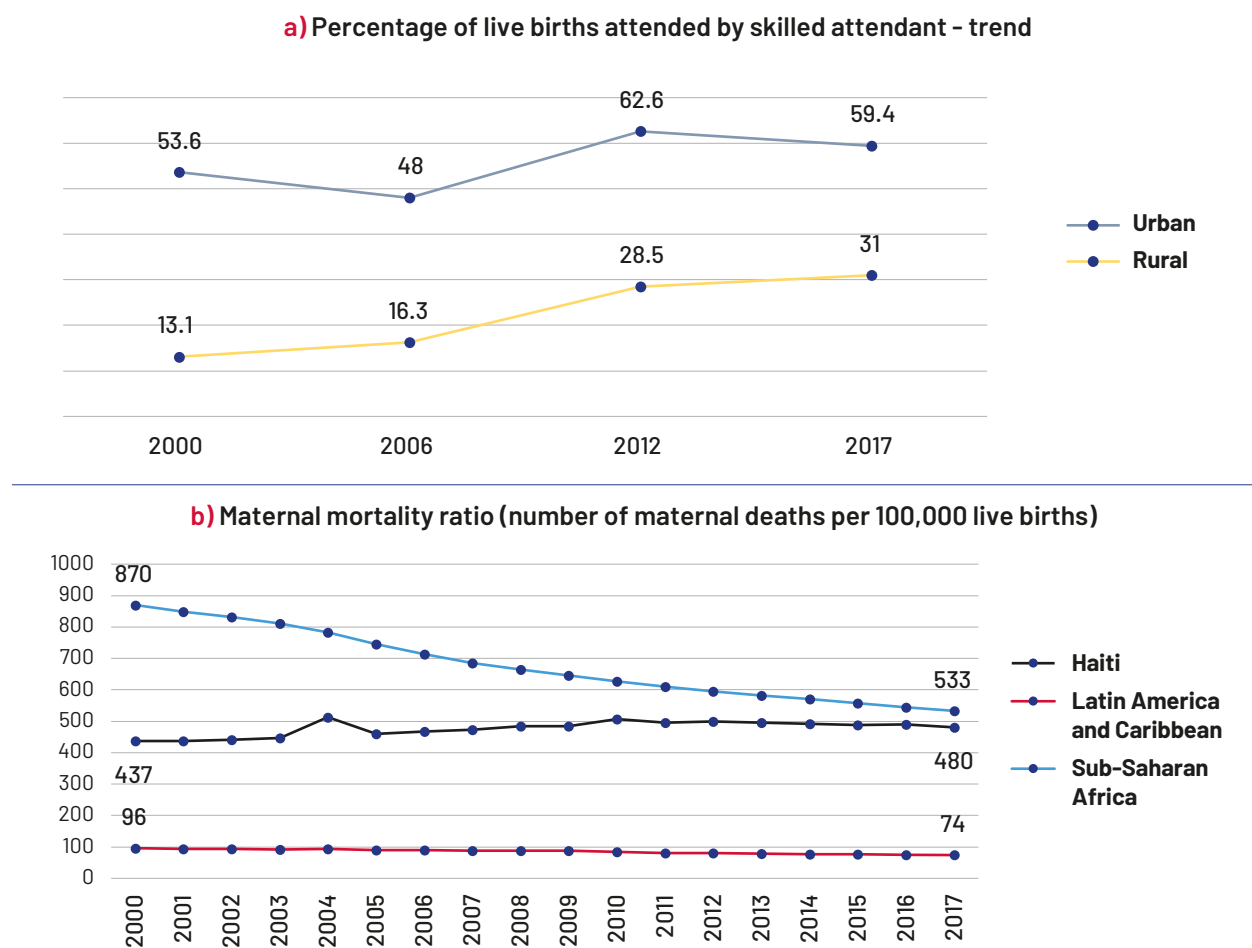
Figure 2 Highest Educational Level of Males and Females (ages 25–49), 2000 and 2016–17



Sources: DHS (2000; 2016–17).

Women in Haiti suffer from poor access to maternal health and subsequently have poor maternal health outcomes. Women have limited access to reproductive health services, such as skilled birth attendants and birthing facilities, and limited control over and agency regarding decisions about their health care. Facility and attended births increased between 2000 and 2017 according to analysis of the DHS (figure 3, panel a), but currently more than a third of health care centers lack consistent electricity (Shastry and Morse 2021). With a lifetime risk of maternal death of 1 in 67 (in 2017), women in Haiti have the second-highest maternal mortality rate in countries of the world outside of Sub-Saharan Africa (only women in Afghanistan experience a higher rate) and this rate has been on the rise (figure 3, panel b). Infant mortality, another potential consequence of inadequate maternal care, is high and has been shown to have spiked following the earthquake in 2010. Though we lack later data, these rates are also expected to have increased following recent disasters.

Figure 3 Live Births Attended by Type of Place of Residence and Education, 2000–17 (Selected Years)



Sources: DHS (2000; 2005–06; 2012; 2016–17); UNICEF².

Note: The indicator refers to the proportion of women (ages 15–49 years) attended at least once during pregnancy by skilled health personnel (doctors, nurses, and midwives) within two years of the survey. Maternal death is defined as the death of a woman while pregnant or within 42 days of termination of pregnancy, irrespective of the duration and site of the pregnancy, from any cause related to or aggravated by the pregnancy or its management but not from accidental or incidental causes.

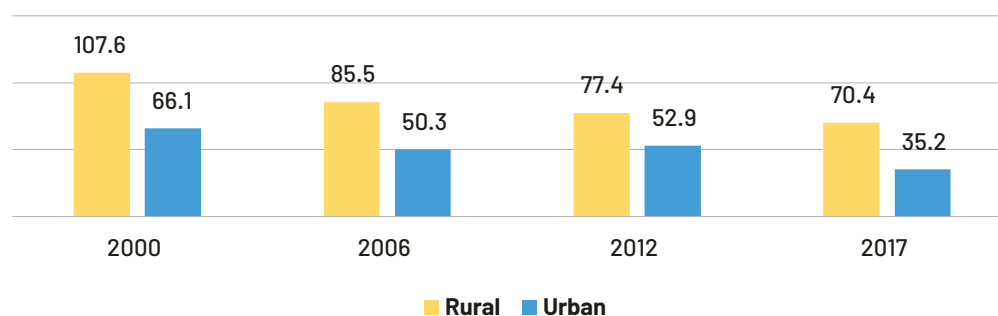
Early marriage is not particularly common in Haiti, but early pregnancy is widespread. Adolescent pregnancy rates are also of concern and disproportionately affect women. Haiti has lower rates of child marriage, to which girls tend to be more vulnerable, than countries in Sub-Saharan Africa with similar income and poverty profiles. However, early pregnancy is quite common and dangerous for adolescent girls. Early pregnancy is associated with poverty, poor health outcomes, and obstetric fistula and other health concerns. Though Haiti's adolescent fertility rates as of 2017 (35

2 Data available in: <https://data.unicef.org/topic/maternal-health/maternal-mortality/>

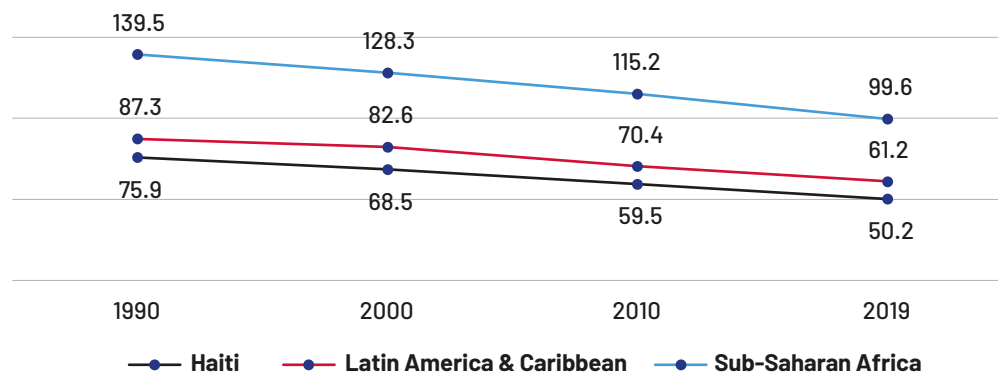
percent in urban and more than 70 percent in rural areas; **figure 4**) were slightly lower than the average for Latin America, they remain alarmingly high and serve to further entrench gender inequalities, especially as social norms dictate the predominant role of women as caretakers and in the home.

Figure 4 Adolescent Fertility Rate in Haiti, 2006–17 (Selected Years)

a) Adolescent fertility rate (number of live births per 1,000 women), by residence



b) Adolescent fertility rate - Haiti and Comparator Regions



Sources: DHS (2000; 2005–06; 2012; 2016–17). World Development Indicators³.

Note: Rates are expressed as number of live births per 1,000 women ages 15–19.

Gender-based violence comes in many forms in Haiti and prevents the full participation of women in society. Women are more likely to be victims of gender-based violence than men, facing security risks both at home and in their communities. Women traders who move goods around the country and provide for markets must

³ Data available in: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.ADO.TFRT?locations=HT>

contend with security concerns on the road and in marketplaces. According to the latest available data (from 2017), one in four women ages 15 to 49 years has experienced emotional violence by an intimate partner. Gangs have been shown to target women in Port-au-Prince where social norms justify the harassment of women, sometimes forcing women into coercive survival romantic relationships and perpetuating cycles of abuse (Maclin et al. 2022).

Box 1 Madan Saras – An Enduring Symbol of Haitian Women’s Strengths and Vulnerabilities

Women who lack educational qualifications and access to formal labor markets in Haiti are often found working in the business of moving goods around the country and are called *madan saras*. Loosely translated as “women traders” or “petty traders,” *madan saras* are almost all women and are instrumental in the movement of agricultural and other goods from hard-to-reach rural areas to cities and towns. By linking markets, *madan saras* fill a critical gap in Haiti’s transportation and internal trade infrastructure, ensuring their own livelihoods and those of many rural families (Gandini, Monje Silva, and Guerrero 2021). These workers represent 80 percent of Haiti’s informal labor market (UNDP 2015). However, theirs is a profession that poses significant risks to those who engage in it.

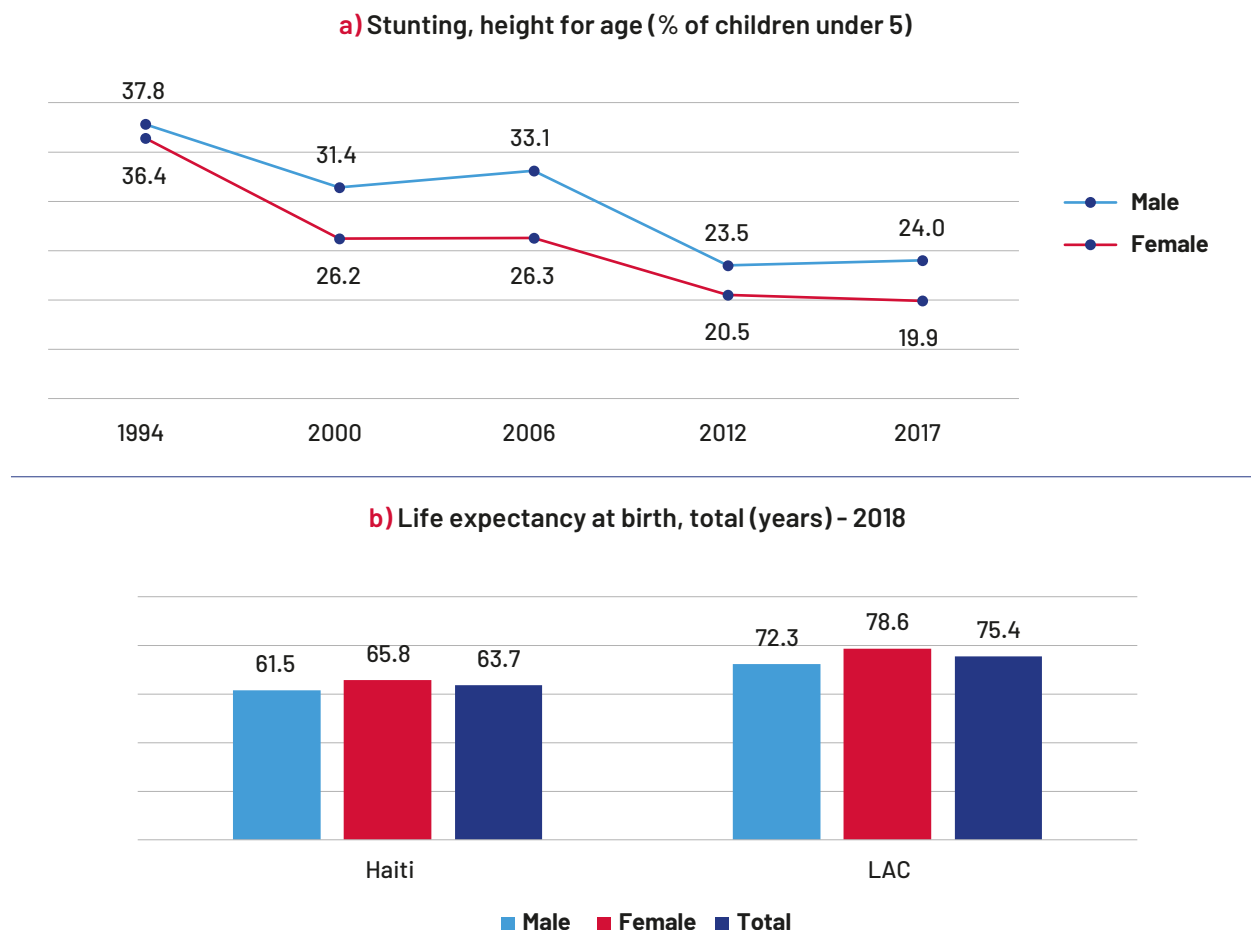
Madan saras tend to have low educational attainment and often come from long lines of women who engaged in similar work. They may work in small geographic areas on foot or with pushcarts, transporting goods between rural marketplaces or transport larger loads on “mototaxis” or vans between rural areas and cities. Some *madan saras* even work internationally, crossing into the Dominican Republic and to nearby islands to trade goods (Hossein 2015). This extensive and frequent travel is at odds with women’s traditional gendered roles as caretakers. *Madan saras* often struggle to find childcare for their children and, like many women, may be forced to choose between work and children (Gandini, Monje Silva, and Guerrero. 2021).

As solo entrepreneurs who travel outside of their home regions, *madan saras* face dangers on the road and in public marketplaces. Beatings, rapes, and targeted violence against women traders in public marketplaces has been documented by scholars since at least the 1950s, and likely well predates any documentation, given that the profession has existed for more than 200 years (Hossein 2015). According to anecdotal reports, gender-based violence *targeting madan saras* has increased in recent years, endangering livelihoods for this vulnerable group and their families as well as disrupting the fragile institution of trade that these women support in Haiti.

As noted above, women in Haiti face numerous health challenges; men and boys in the country are also at risk when it comes to their health, with the trends reflecting global realities. Male children are slightly more likely to die than female children, reflecting a worldwide pattern whereby boys have a slightly higher probability of dying before age 5 than girls (UNICEF, WHO, and WBG 2020; Costa, Da Silva, and Cesar Gomes 2017). Girls have better nutritional outcomes than boys in Haiti (**figure 5**),

a fact that has been observed in many countries. According to the 2017 DHS, in Haiti 24 percent of boys were stunted compared to 20 percent of girls. Men have shorter lifespans than women (62 vs. 66 years), are more likely to commit suicide, and are more likely to engage in risky behaviors such as alcohol and tobacco use and gang activity.

Figure 5 Undernutrition and Life Expectancy at Birth of Males and Females, 1994–2018 (Selected Years)



Source: World Bank Health Statistics⁴.

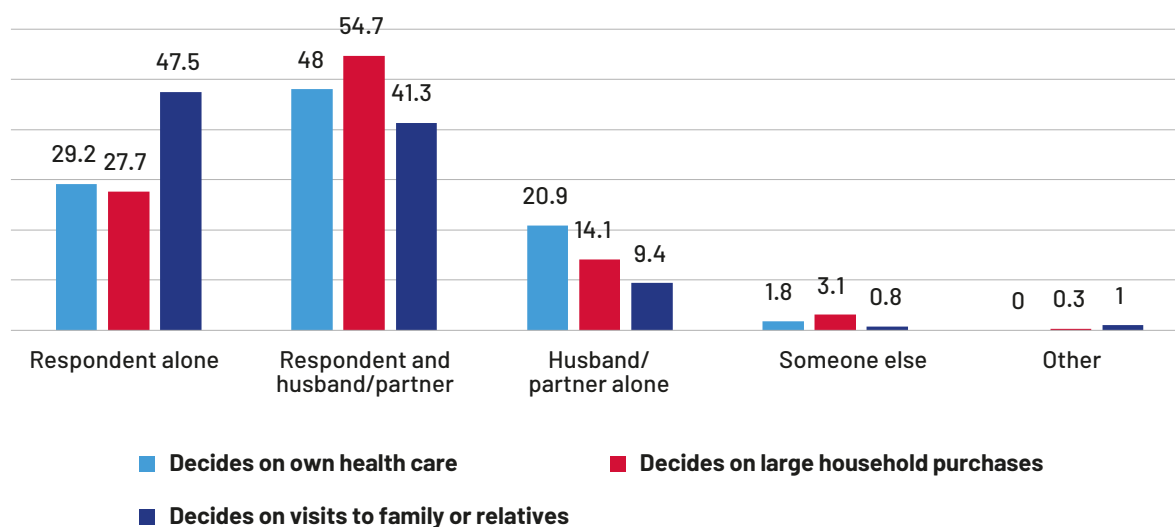
Gender inequality is highly visible in the lack of voice and agency held by women and the entrenched gender roles of women as caretakers. Women have low levels of decision-making power regarding their own health care, spending on household purchases, and visiting friends and family in Haiti, though it should be noted that these figures are similar to neighboring countries. Analysis of the 2017 DHS reveals that 22.7 percent of women report not making their own health care decisions (figure 6, panel

4 Data available in: <https://data.worldbank.org/country/haiti>

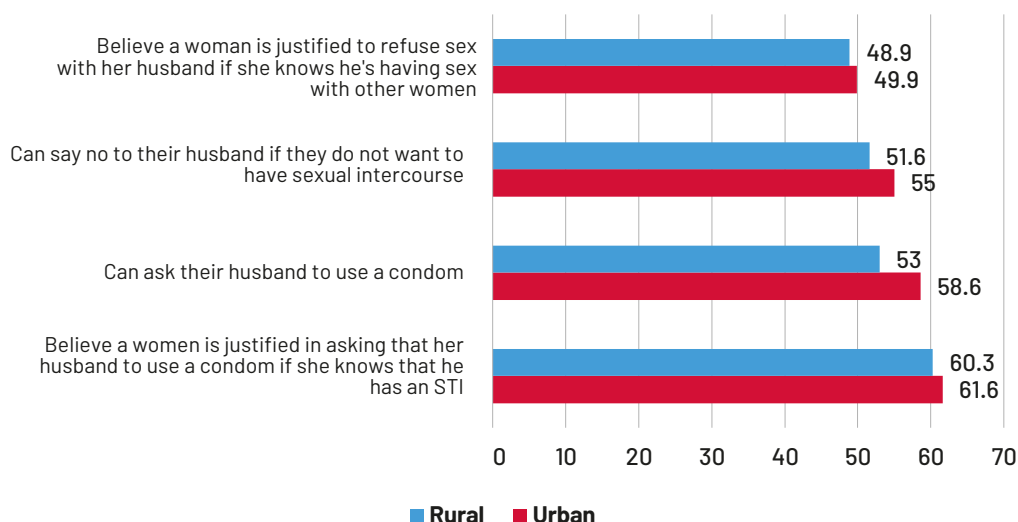
a). Moreover, many women are unable to assert control over their sexual health, with 38 percent of women reporting they are unable to ask their partners to use condoms (figure 6, panel b). Higher levels of education are generally correlated with increased decision-making, autonomy, child nutritional status, access to health services, and other aspect of well-being in Haiti. Evidence from other countries shows that increased education is necessary—but not sufficient—to increase women's decision-making power (Samarakoon and Parinduri 2015).

Figure 6 Decision-Making Power of Females in their Relationships in Haiti, 2017

a) Percentage distribution of currently married women by person who usually makes decisions about: Own health care, Large household purchases, Visits to family or relatives - 2017



b) Percentage of females (age 15-49) by their beliefs - 2017



Source: DHS (2016-17).

3. Thematic Deep Dives

The following four thematic deep dives were chosen in consultation with World Bank staff and organizations in Haiti. They represent four areas with key gender gaps in Haiti and sufficient data to enable reporting on these deeply. The areas are labor force and markets, laws and social norms, risky behaviors, and disaster and risk management.

3.1. Gender inequality in the labor market

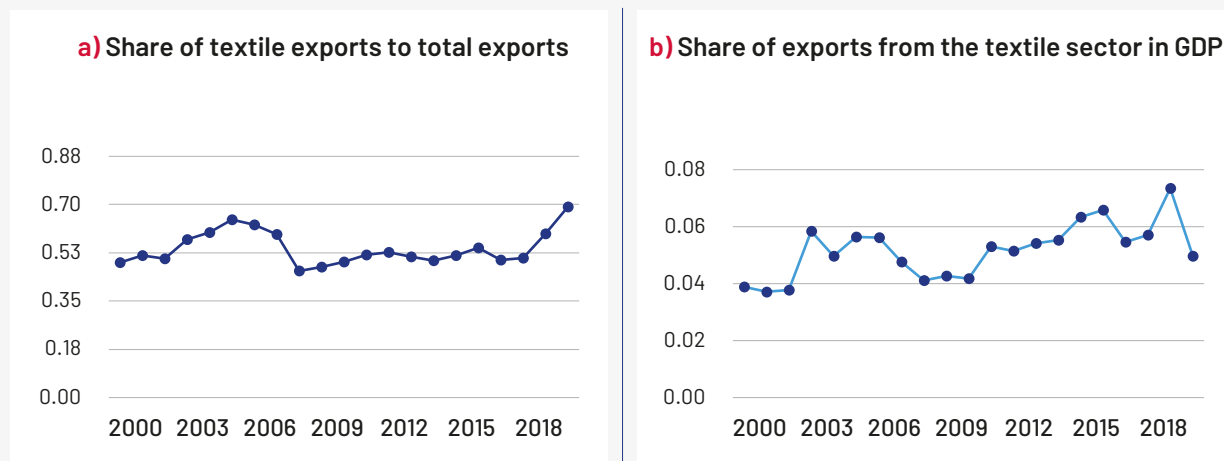
Gendered sectoral segregation is high in the labor market and women face higher unemployment rates and lower labor market attachment than men, facts which may be driven by structural phenomena and cultural and social norms. Women are found more commonly in services, retail, trade, and textile manufacturing jobs, with men dominating fields such as construction. Women make up the majority of Haiti's street vendors and actively support agricultural value chains (USAID/Haiti 2020). Labor market segregation is notable and though there are not explicit bars on women's working particular shifts or types of work, women are limited by cultural and social norms and expectations concerning women's role in society.

Box 2 Economic Potential in the Textile Sector for Women in Haiti

Haiti's textile sector is low wage, highly feminized, and growing rapidly, presenting a significant opportunity to increase the quality of jobs and wages for a large population of women. Given women's high representation in the sector, retail reforms have the potential to increase the ability of women to provide for themselves and their families and materially improve the lives of many Haitians.

Textile exports represent the majority of Haitian exports and almost all production is designated for the external market. As a share of exports, textiles have been relatively stable since the year 2000 and are a key sector for focus by the government and its trading partners (figure B2, panel a). In an attempt to bolster the sector and employment and to diminish corruption, the United States' Haitian Hemispheric Opportunity through Production Encouragement Act (HOPE) was passed in 2006 and extended in 2016. HOPE gives special trade benefits to Haiti including flexible and duty-free access to the U.S. market for apparel exports and use of third-country materials and inputs. Alongside, the share of exports from the textile sector in GDP almost doubled over the past two decades. It grew from 3.9 percent of GDP in 2000 to 7.3 percent in 2019 (the decline in textile exports in 2020 and the increase in share of GDP in 2020 are likely explained by the COVID-19 pandemic and overall GDP contraction)(figure B2, panel b).

Figure B2 Textile Exports in Total Exports and GDP



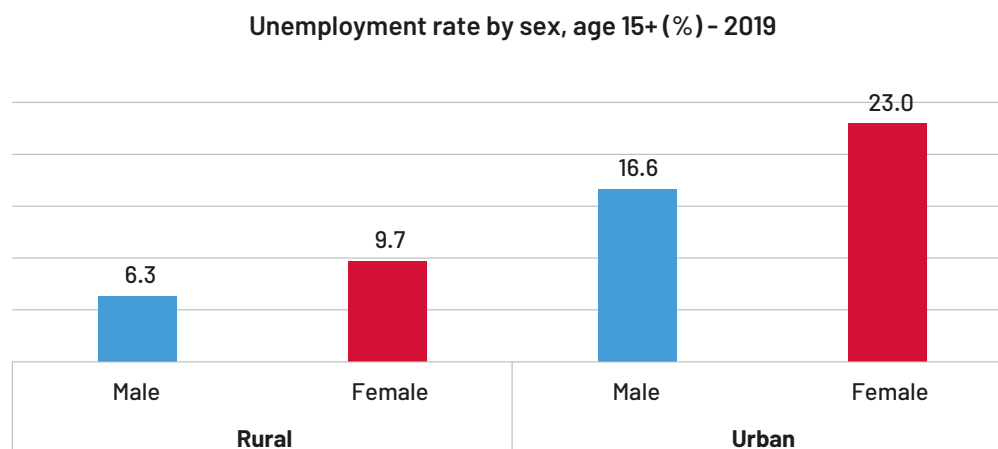
Source: An original graph using data from the Ministère de l'Économie et des Finances, Haiti, and WB database.

The textile industry is one of Haiti's largest employers and approximately two-thirds of the employees in the sector are women (Shamsie 2017). However, as shown in the literature (International Finance Corporation 2019), very few women are managers or at the senior level. Entry-level jobs in textiles are generally open to women with low educational attainment, which is common in Haiti. As we show in section 2.1, despite improvements in educational attainment, women ages 25–49 continue to have lower levels of schooling than men.

Jobs for women in textiles are marked by low wages, keeping women entrenched in poverty. Entry-level jobs in textiles are required by law to pay the minimum wage for sector F (Radio Metronome 2022), which was raised to 685 gourdes per 8-hour work day in February 2022. Textile workers began agitating for higher wages, with their protests peaking in early 2022 and culminating in an agreement to increase the minimum wage for many sectors, including textiles (Jamaica Gleaner 2022). Despite this recent increase, the minimum wage is low compared to regional comparators and disproportionately disadvantages women. The textile sector holds great importance for the national economy of Haiti and great potential to lift many women out of poverty, but low wages and few opportunities for advancement hold women back.

Women are more likely to be unemployed and were more likely to leave the workforce during the pandemic, exacerbating this gap. Before the pandemic, women faced higher unemployment rates; about 23 percent of women in urban areas were unemployed compared to 17 percent of men ([figure 7](#)). During the COVID-19 pandemic women were much more likely to leave the workforce than men, while men were more likely to enter informal work, reflecting a pattern of low labor market attachment among women that was already present and that expanded during the pandemic. As shown in other countries, women's disproportionate decline in employment during the pandemic may be related to the unequal division of unpaid domestic work between men and women. Women are expected to bear more home and family duties, which increased during the pandemic.

Figure 7 Unemployment Rates for Males and Females, 2019

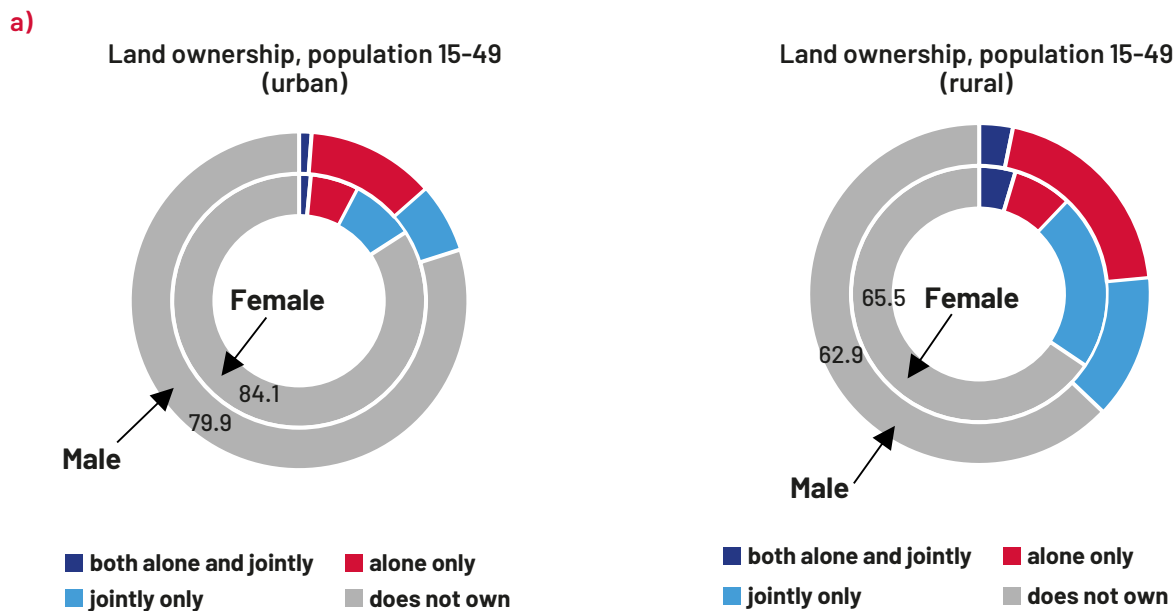


Source: International Labour Organization⁵.

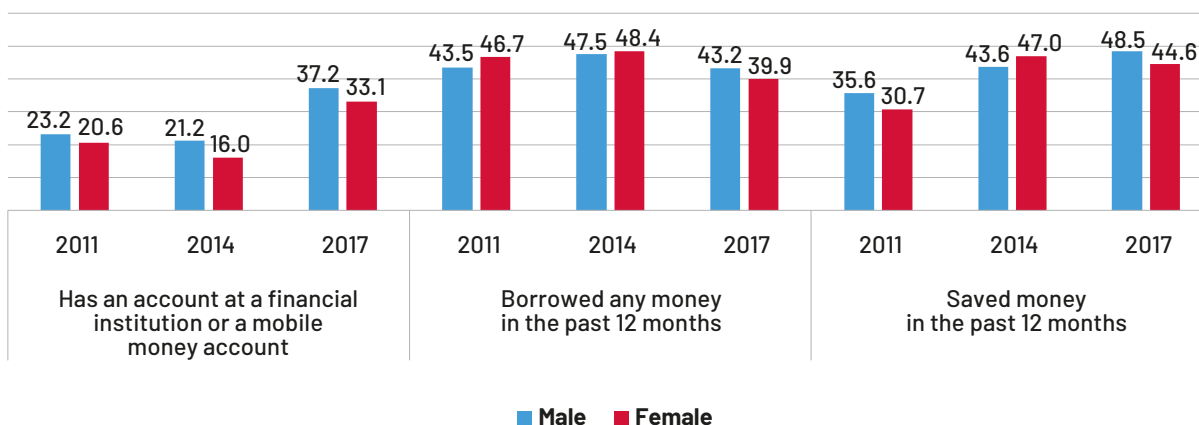
Women's access to productive resources in Haiti, including land and financial instruments, is statistically significantly lower than men's access. Only 8 percent of women in rural areas, where agriculture is the dominant sector, own land, compared to 20 percent of men (**figure 8, panel a**). Overall rates of financial inclusion in Haiti are extremely low—only about one-third of Haitians have access to a bank account—and the gender gap is around 5 percentage points (**figure 8, panel b**). So, while gender gaps are noticeable, with women being less likely than men to have a bank account, savings, or have taken out a loan, for example, these statistics should be considered in light of the low availability and access to financial instruments overall. That said, the gender gap in access to resources is slightly lower in Haiti than in regional comparators. Wage information is lacking in the data and consequently we were unable to assess gender wage gaps, highlighting the need for further study.

5 Data available in: https://www.ilo.org/shinyapps/bulkexplorer12/?lang=en&segment=ref_area&id=HTI_A

Figure 8 Ownership of Property and Use of Financial Services by Males and Females (2011–17, Selected Years)



b) Account ownership, borrowed and saved money (% of population ages 15–49)



Sources: DHS (2016–17); Global Findex Database⁶ (2011, 2014, 2017).

6 Data available in: 2011, <https://microdata.worldbank.org/index.php/catalog/1179>; 2014, <https://microdata.worldbank.org/index.php/catalog/2430>; 2017, <https://microdata.worldbank.org/index.php/catalog/3359/get-microdata>.

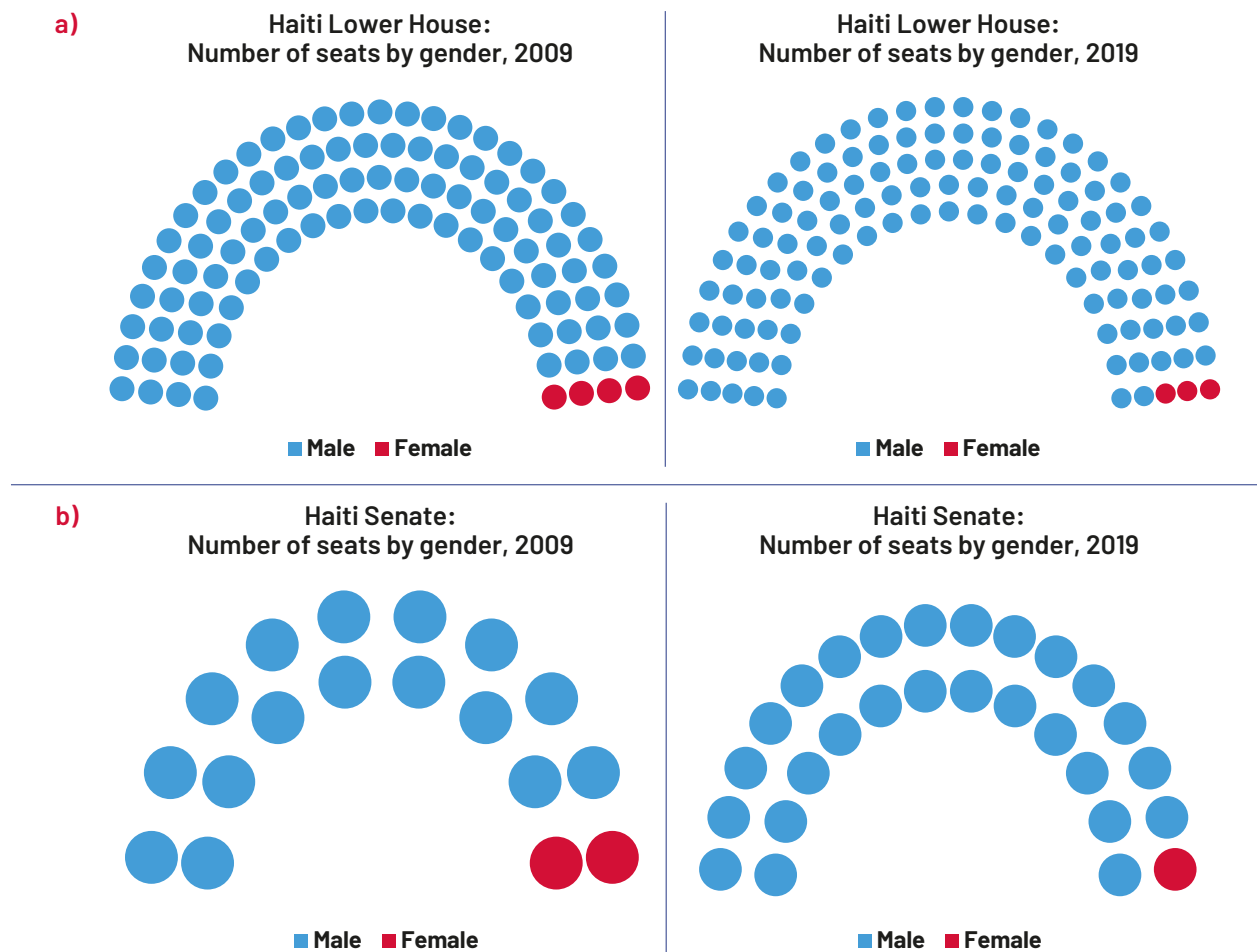
3.2. Laws and social norms

In the legal and regulatory sphere, women in Haiti face significant challenges and explicit discrimination in some areas. Haiti has more-restrictive laws and fewer legal provisions promoting gender equality and promoting equal opportunity for employment than its regional comparators. Female workers in the formal sector have access to 12 weeks of maternity leave (which does not quite meet the ILO standard of 14 weeks), but men cannot take paternity leave. Even where laws are in place, implementation and enforcement are lacking. Despite extant legislation on sexual harassment, women report high levels of harassment in schools and the workplace and further report that it limits their ability to progress academically and professionally.

Gender equality is enshrined in the law regarding some key areas, but it is unclear to what extent the specific laws translate to gender equality in practice. For instance, although equal ownership and access to assets and property ownership are guaranteed in the 2020 marital status decree, Haiti's codified laws as identified in the World Bank's Women Business and the Law Index suggest that these are not enforceable and thus more research is needed into how and whether this and other gender equitable legislation are applied in practice. Haiti has a law mandating equal pay for equal work, in that the legal framework does not explicitly bar women from working shifts at night, jobs deemed dangerous, or jobs in the industrial sector, all of which tend to pay more. While the lack of explicit bars does not mean that women have full access to these jobs in practice, the legal framework is at least conducive to access.

Despite a quota for female representation in lawmaking bodies and public administration, women remain underrepresented in the government. In both the lower and upper houses of Parliament, women represent far less than the constitutional requirement (Article 17.1) of 30 percent of posts in public administration ([figure 9](#)). As the data show, it has become the case that senior and influential positions are less likely to be held by women, who had four lower house seats (4.1 percent of the total) in 2009 and three (2.5 percent) in 2019 and two senate seats (11 percent of the total) in 2009 and only one in 2019 (3.6 percent). One reason for the country's poor performance in terms of legal rights and protections for women and mothers could be that women are strikingly underrepresented in parliament, as well as in all other levels of government, as research shows that having more women in government leads to more gender-equitable laws.

Figure 9 Participation of Males and Females in the Haiti Lower House and Senate, 2009 and 2019

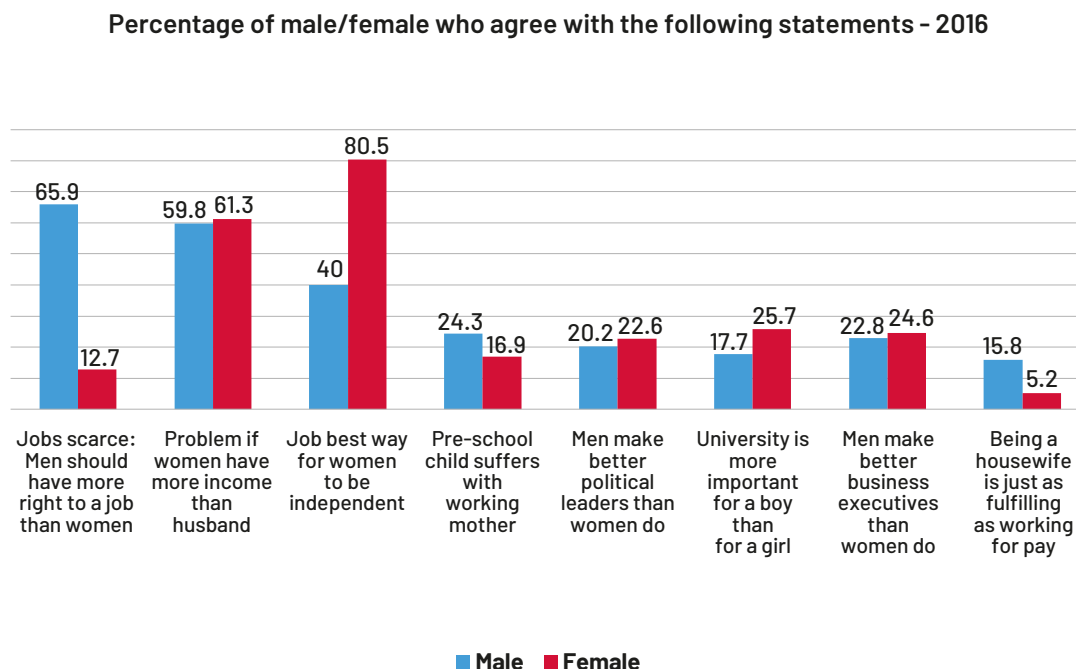


Source: Data (revised as of December 18, 2020) from Inter-Parliamentary Union – Women in parliaments; <http://archive.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif-arc.htm>. Tool for graphics: <https://app.flourish.studio/@flourish/parliament-chart>.

Women's roles as caregivers and homemakers present substantial barriers to their equal participation in the labor market and society at large. Although we lack direct descriptors of social norms, several findings discussed herein point to gender-unequal attitudes and norms around women's roles. In the multivariate descriptive analysis, women are shown to be less likely to be in the labor force with each additional child in their household, a finding that does not hold for men. That women were more likely to leave the labor force during the pandemic is consistent with a global trend of women taking on more caregiving responsibilities. A 2016 survey of attitudes regarding women's role in the labor market showed that more than two out of three men agreed with the statement that when jobs are scarce, men should have more right to a job than women (figure 10). Likewise, 60 percent of men and women agreed

that it is a problem if a woman has more income than her husband. Overall, restrictive social norms and inequitable legislation disadvantage women in the labor market. Islam et al. (2019) show that unequal laws not only discourage women's participation in the private sector workforce, but also decrease women's likelihood of becoming top managers and owners of firms.

Figure 10 Global Views on Gender Roles in Society by Gender, 2016



Source: World Values Survey 2016⁷.

3.3. Risky behaviors

This section analyzes risky behaviors through a gender lens, with a focus on the interconnections between school dropout, substance abuse, and violence.

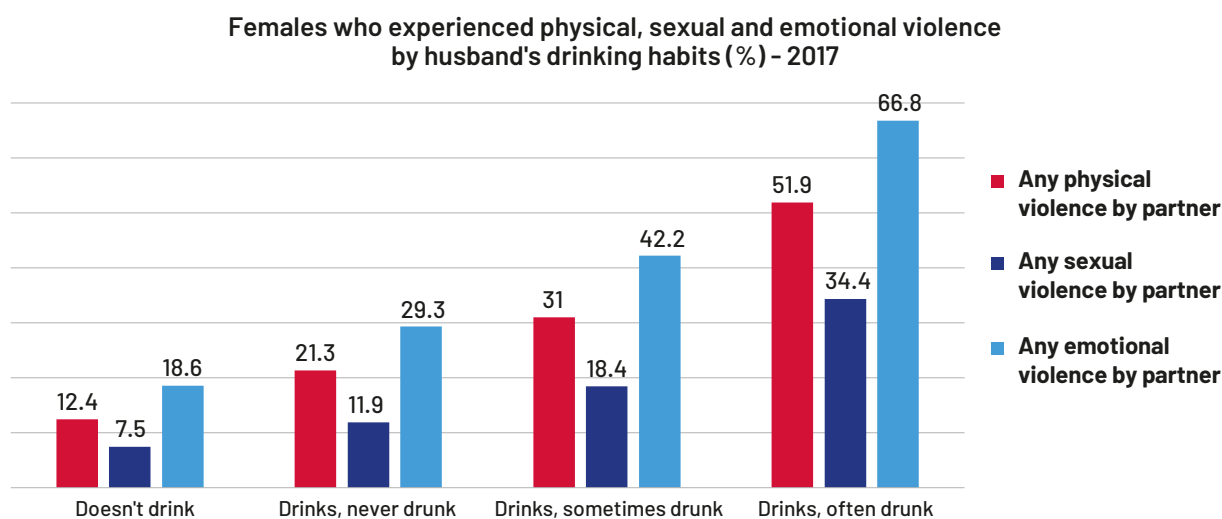
School dropout and nonattendance is a pervasive problem in Haiti, compounded by poor-quality schooling and low-quality, often violent alternatives to education. Poverty is the one of the most significant predictors of low enrollment rates, but when controlling for it in Haiti, a more nuanced and gendered story begins to appear. Those with disabilities are far less likely to be in school, suggesting that schools are ill-equipped to meet the needs of all. Girls residing outside of the capital are less likely to be attending school than in Port-au-Prince and rates are particularly low in

7 Data available in: <https://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSDocumentationWV6.jsp>

the Nord-Ouest, Grand'anse, and Sud regions. The particularly concerning story is that of boys. Gender gaps in enrollment have largely reversed and so boys have lower attendance rates than girls. Low enrollments clearly limit continued progress in school—evidenced by lower enrollment ratios in higher levels of education—and also provide opportunities for boys to engage in risky behaviors.

Men and boys in Haiti engage in risky and violent behavior at higher rates than women and girls. Boys are more likely to join gangs, though girls do as well. Men are more likely to use tobacco and alcohol. Male alcohol consumption (as reported by a partner) is one of the single strongest predictors that a woman has experienced domestic violence (**figure 11**). Engagement in such behaviors is not conducive to returning to school and likely represents part of a vicious dropout/risky behavior cycle.

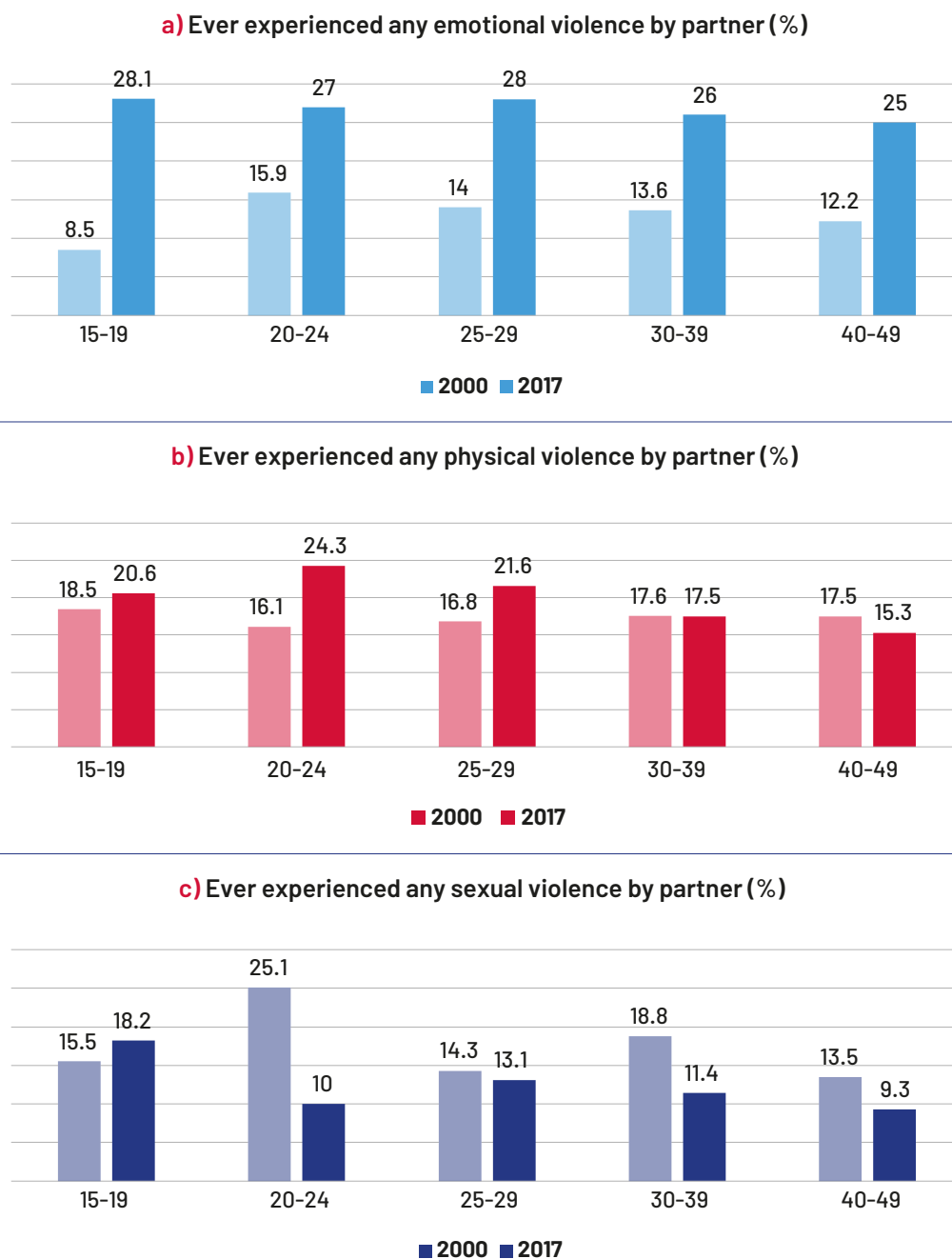
Figure 11 Alcohol Consumption and Intimate Partner Violence Experienced by Women in Haiti, 2017



Source: DHS (2016–17).

Not unrelated to the security situation and social norms that justify the violence of gangs against women, women are more likely to be victims of domestic violence and violence in the workplace. Many women and men in Haiti believe that wife beating is justified for one reason or another and women are very likely to experience physical, sexual, emotional violence, or a combination by their partners. Reports of emotional and physical violence increased over the period 2010 to 2017 for almost all age groups, while reports of sexual violence decreased for all age groups except among 15–19 years (**figure 12**). Women residing in Port-au-Prince feel targeted by gang violence where gangs are prominent and social support and justify the harassment of women (Maclin et al. 2022).

Figure 12 Intimate Partner Violence Experienced by Women in Haiti, 2000 vs. 2017



Sources: DHS (2000, 2016-17).

Note: "Ever experienced any emotional violence by partner": spouse has ever humiliated her, threatened her with harm, insulted her, or made her feel bad about herself. "Ever experienced any physical violence by partner": spouse has ever pushed, shaken, or thrown something; ever slapped or twisted her arm or pulled her hair; ever punched her with the fist or something harmful; ever kicked or dragged her; ever tried to strangle or burn her; or ever threatened her with a knife/gun or other weapons. "Ever experienced any sexual violence by partner": spouse has ever physically forced her to have sex when she did not want to, ever forced her to engage in other sexual acts when she did not want to, or ever forced her with threats or in any other way to perform sexual acts she did not want to.

3.4. Disaster and risk management

Haiti's geographic location makes it one of the most at-risk countries in the world for natural disasters. Earthquakes represent the country's highest hazard risk followed by cyclones, environmental degradation, droughts, and epidemics (European Commission 2020). Between 2000 and 2019, Haiti was ranked globally as the third-most affected country by impacts of climatic events (Eckstein, Künzel, and Schäfer 2021).

The country has recently suffered successive disasters with devastating human and economic costs and disasters are expected to increase in frequency and severity as the climate continues to change. The earthquake of 2010 is estimated to have killed 220,000 people and destroyed the equivalent of 120 percent of GDP (World Bank 2021). The outbreak of a cholera epidemic shortly afterward claimed an estimated 10,000 additional lives (Ministère de la santé publique et de la population 2020). In 2016, Hurricane Matthew resulted in over 500 deaths, displaced 175,000 people, and resulted in damages and losses equivalent to around 32 percent of GDP. The country has been further weakened by the COVID-19 pandemic and 2021 earthquake, the latter generated a loss equivalent to 11 percent of GDP and which, to make matters worse, came amidst a long political crisis (World Bank 2021).

Existing gender inequalities and the unique health needs of women have implications for Haitians' differential ability to recover from disasters by gender, further perpetuating and exacerbating these inequalities. Gender inequalities in economic opportunity, limited access to information, limited involvement in disaster management policies, and limited opportunities for decision-making may place women in a position of higher vulnerability against disasters. Recovery from natural disasters has proved difficult and each subsequent crisis has multiplied the effects of the previous ones, which are particularly worrisome for women. The widespread insecurity most notably affects the ability of all Haitians to conduct business, manage personal affairs, and attend school and work safely.

Even before disaster strikes, women may be at a disadvantage. Preparedness plans, communications about disasters, and community groups who plan for disasters may exclude women. Lower literacy rates and lower access to the internet hinder women's access to information about disasters (World Bank forthcoming). Common forms of the communication of planning mechanisms are posters that, despite often including pictures, may not be as accessible to women as verbal messages that come through community structures (World Bank forthcoming).

Box 3 The Role of Women in Disaster-Preparedness Activities

In general, it is men who participate more in community meetings organized during preparedness activities or other disaster risk management (DRM) training activities. This is explained by the fact that women have to fulfill other obligations (such as going to the market or taking care of children) at the time chosen for the meetings. Even when we consider these factors, it is still not easy to obtain a large participation of women. Thus, there is not a major role given to women in preparedness (Nongovernmental specialist in the DRM sector, unpublished interview, Port-au-Prince, 2021).

Women are less likely to be employed or have disaster-resilient employment and have less access to savings and credit and so lack a safety net and the ability to recover from disasters. As discussed above, women are more likely to be unemployed and were shown to be more vulnerable to job loss during the pandemic. They are likely to be engaged in services work, which may be less in demand following a disaster, especially compared to male-dominated sectors such as construction, when the need to rebuild infrastructure is immediate and apparent. Though women represent the majority of street traders and key nodes in the transportation of agricultural goods to markets, the destruction of farms may erode markets and all Haitians likely have lower buying power following a disaster, putting those in services and trading at a higher risk of poverty. Women have less access to savings and credit than men, so they lack that safety net as well.

At the same time as paid work becomes less accessible, women's unpaid work may increase in the face of disasters. Daily tasks entrusted to women such as caring for the elderly, caring for children, and providing water become more difficult during times of crisis.

In addition, women may have trouble meeting the health care needs of themselves and their children. Disasters affect access to and availability of health services (UN Women and Care 2021). Women and young children in Haiti are particularly vulnerable, given the existing high maternal and infant mortality as well as high malnutrition rates (see section 2). For example, qualitative evidence suggests that after Hurricane Matthew, access to pre- and postnatal care was increasingly limited and nursing mothers were particularly at risk of malnutrition and dehydration (World Bank forthcoming).

Disasters may put women and girls at risk for societal and domestic violence. Recent data from Haiti additionally show that domestic violence and general insecurity have increased in recent years. Increased poverty and frustration on the part of male breadwinners often lead to increased violence in the home, while the growth of gangs as a source of community and survival is undergirded by negative masculinities and normative expectations of gang members to harass and assault women. Women

and girls are also exposed to gender-based violence during aid distribution and in emergency shelters where they are vulnerable due to imbalanced power relations and the inability to physically separate themselves from abusive men. Though we lack specific data from Haiti, evidence from other countries shows that, in the wake of a disaster, women and girls often fall into poverty and may turn to transactional sex as a means of survival. While not necessarily violent, transactional sex puts women at risk for more violence and disease.

Box 4 Gender-Based Violence in Postdisaster Situations

Women tend to be victims of gender-based violence in postdisaster aid contexts. Especially when it comes to distribution, it is men who receive the aid, especially if it is a substantial amount (such as a bag of rice or something else that requires greater physical strength). It happens that women come back from the distribution lines beaten and without having received anything. At this point, the context is set for haggling, especially if they have children. It also happens that women find themselves in a situation where they engage in prostitution to ensure their survival. In this type of situation, men have power relationships with women who are the most vulnerable and usually the victims (Head of a community-based women's organization, unpublished interview, Northern Haiti, 2021).

4. The Way Forward: Identifying Policy Options in a Complex and Challenging Environment

The policy landscape in Haiti is complex and will require significant effort to implement reforms and programs to narrow gender inequalities, yet there are a few key opportunities for impactful policy reform both now and in the future. Ultimately, the security and governance situations will determine what is feasible to implement. That said, the literature and experiences from other countries can guide recommendations for policies that can, even in fragile contexts, improve the gender-equitable nature of community-based initiatives and aid and disaster response in the short term and put in place more structural reforms in the medium to long term. In order to identify policy options for increasing gender equality and alleviating the constraints identified in this CGA, we consulted with experts in organizations in Haiti and the World Bank and referred to the recently released *Haiti Systematic Country Diagnostic Update* (World Bank 2022).

We focus on six key areas that were identified in the CGA where policies might be feasible to implement in the current context and near term: women's health care, education, social norms, labor market access, response to gender-based violence, and disaster and risk management. We highlight a few of them here, with a longer discussion in the full paper.

Low overall educational attainment and increasingly worrisome dropout rates of boys will require particular attention from policy makers. Although some policies to increase attainment will work for all, determining the cause of dropout for boys and addressing those concerns will be necessary to support boys' staying in school and out of gangs (in urban areas) or out of the labor market (in rural areas and through migration to urban areas). Girls require attention from policy makers as well to ensure they have access to menstrual care and a safe learning environment.

Women suffer from sexual harassment and gender-based violence in the home, at school, at work, and while traveling, and simultaneously shoulder more care responsibilities in the home due to gendered social norms. Policies like parental

leave for fathers can help to alleviate women's care responsibilities, especially when implemented alongside gender-sensitization campaigns, especially in schools and workplaces, and positive masculinity campaigns to reduce risky behaviors and domestic violence. These may have the additional effect of increasing enforcement and compliance with existing laws, such as the one prohibiting sexual harassment, though we acknowledge norms change can be slow. Expanding prevention and response mechanisms to gender-based violence is another policy that may be accomplished in the current environment by putting in place hotlines or messaging support for survivors and increasing shelter capacity, infrastructure, and proximity to areas with a high incidence of gender-based violence.

Women face higher barriers to entry to the labor market than men and tend to be segregated in particular sectors when they do participate. Easing entry for women into the labor force may come through programs offering job skills training linked to employment opportunities, empowerment and negotiation training, business training, and financial and digital literacy training to improve women's self-employment opportunities as well as formal employment opportunities. Childcare constraints may be felt most keenly by the poorest women and so community-based programs for the provision of childcare have the double benefit of freeing up time to work for some women and providing employment opportunities for others.

Implementing the quota that reserves 30 percent of public posts for women will be key to short- and long-term progress toward gender equality. In the short term, incorporating the voices of women into disaster response and prevention measures can help to ensure that women's needs are accounted for and that women can access aid. The deployment of resources ensuring that women have a voice at all levels of government, including public administration and the legislature as well as community-based disaster response, is an important step to including women's needs in policy and practice on the road to a more gender-equitable society.

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