

# Syrian Arab Republic

Population	19 890 585
Female population (as % of total population)	49.5
Women's life expectancy (in years)	76.1
Men's life expectancy (in years)	72.3
Fertility rate (average births per female)	3.1



## Degree of gender discrimination (based on SIGI quintile)

Low	Low/medium	<b>Medium</b>	Medium/high	High
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The Constitution of the Syrian Arab Republic grants equal rights to all its citizens. Syrian women have seen their economic opportunities improve in recent years, but they still face various degrees of inequality in the social sphere.

Traditional values and patriarchal societal norms prevail, particularly in rural areas. About 90% of the population is Muslim. According to Bellafronto, some extremist Islamic groups are said to influence government decisions, thereby using legislation to maintain a subordinate status for women.

## Family code

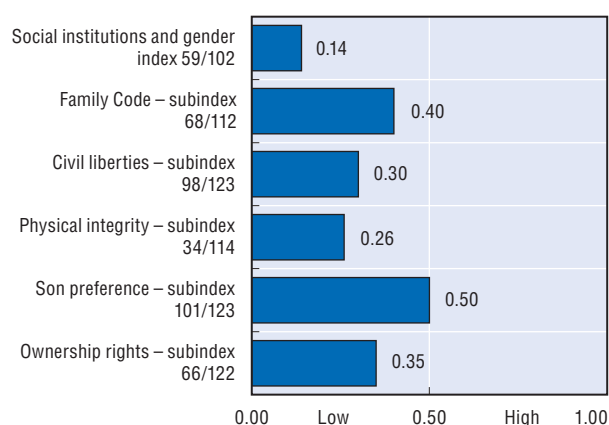
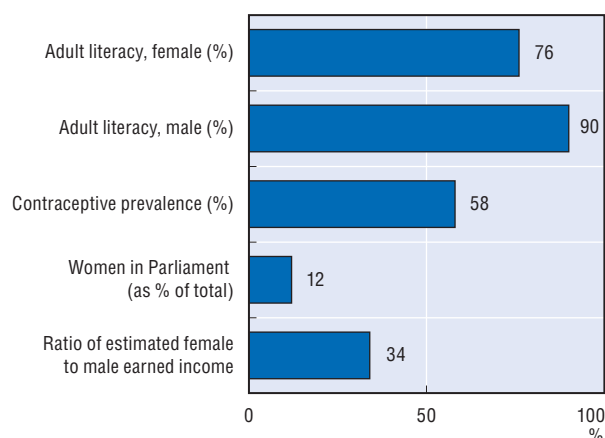
Syrian women governed by the Personal Status Code are considered to be legal dependents of their fathers or husbands.

The legal age of marriage in Syria is 17 years for women and 18 years for men, but judges may authorise marriages at even younger ages: as low as 13 years for women and 15 years for men. Early marriage is still quite frequent, although the female age of marriage has increased in recent years. A 2004 United Nations report estimated that 25% of girls between 15 and 19 years of age were married, divorced or widowed. Women have no role in the marriage contract, as it is signed by the groom and their male guardian.

Under Islamic Sharia law, polygamy is allowed, permitting men to take as many as four wives. However judges frequently prohibit men from taking second (or subsequent) wives if they deem the man to be incapable of providing adequate financial support. Subsequently, the practice of polygamy is believed to be relatively rare.

In the area of parental authority, Syrian law grants fathers more rights than mothers. Mothers can act as the legal guardians of children only if the father is dead, legally incapacitated, stateless or unknown. In the event of divorce, mothers are usually granted custody of sons until they are 13 years and daughters until they are 15 years. Women cannot confer citizenship to children born to non-Syrian fathers.

Under Islamic law, a woman may inherit from her father, mother, husband or children, and under certain conditions, from other family members. However, her share is generally smaller than a man's entitlement. In rural areas in particular, many women are not aware of their inheritance rights and are easily persuaded to transfer their entitled share to a male relative.

**SIGI ranking****Select indicators of gender equality****Physical integrity**

Women in Syria have only a low level of protection for their physical integrity. The Penal Code criminalises violence against women, but other laws create loopholes that allow perpetrators to have their penalties reduced or abolished. So-called honour crimes, whereby a woman is killed by male family members for having put shame on the family honour, also occur. Until 2004, the media was banned from reporting such crimes.

Domestic violence has long been a subject of social taboo, but public awareness of the problem appears to have increased in recent years.

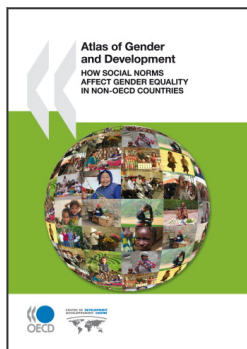
**Ownership rights**

Syrian women have strong legal support in terms of their financial independence. There are no legal restrictions on women's access to land or access to property other than land.

The law does not make any distinction between men and women's access to bank loans and credit.

**Civil liberties**

Syrian law provides freedom of movement for women but is constrained to their local areas. It is generally not socially accepted for women to travel or to live alone. In the case of married couples, the choice of residence generally lies with the husband. Married women no longer need permission from their husbands to apply for passports, although there are indications that husbands can still stop their wives from leaving the country. Unmarried women over the age of 18 years do not need the permission of their male guardians prior to travelling. There are no legal restrictions on women's freedom of dress and, in the 1980s, women were strongly discouraged from wearing the veil. Recent years have seen an increase in the number of women wearing veils in public.



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