

Azerbaijan

Population	8 556 379
Female population (as % of total population)	51.4
Women's life expectancy (in years)	71.2
Men's life expectancy (in years)	63.8
Fertility rate (average births per female)	2



Degree of gender discrimination (based on SIGI quintile)

Low	Low/medium	Medium	Medium/high	High
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The Constitution of Azerbaijan guarantees equality and rights for all citizens. Article 25 specifically prohibits any restriction of these rights on the grounds of gender. Principles contained in the Employment Code, the Penal Code and the Marriage and Family Code all stem from the Constitution, thereby further sanctioning equal rights and freedoms for men and women.

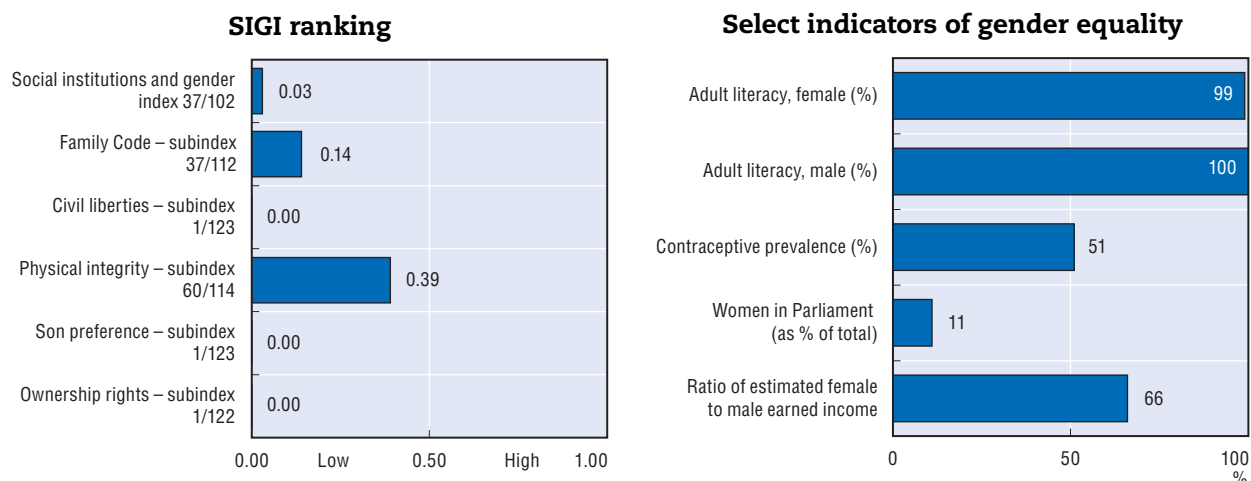
Azerbaijan also transposes international treaties into its legislation. This allows courts and other competent bodies to make direct reference to Article 1 of CEDAW. In October 2006, Azerbaijan passed a law on gender equality, which defines gender-based discrimination as any distinction, exclusion or restriction exercised on the basis of gender, including sexual harassment.

Family code

Azerbaijani Family Code offers women a relatively high level of protection. The minimum legal age for women to marry is 17 years, though the local government has authority to lower this by one year if the family submits a reasoned request. Early marriage is uncommon, but is increasing among poor families living in rural areas in the centre and south of the country. According to a 2004 United Nations report, 13% of girls between 15 and 19 years of age were married, divorced or widowed.

Polygamy is prohibited by Azerbaijani law. The Penal Code also prohibits any attempt (for example, the use of force or threats) to oblige women to enter into marriage or polygamous relationships. Parental authority is covered by the family code, which stipulate that both parents have the same rights and responsibilities in caring for and educating their children. Nonetheless, traditional norms sometimes restrict women to a subordinate role. In general, men are considered the head of the family and have primary control over all aspects of family life. Conversely, women are expected to seek agreement from their husbands before making important decisions.

The law on inheritance reflects legislation granting spouses equal property rights. It awards preference to the surviving spouse, thereby ensuring that the spouse receives shares equal to that of the children and parents of the deceased. Regardless of what the will of the deceased states, a portion of the inheritance must pass to the surviving spouse – and must equal at least half the share to which the spouse would be legally entitled. The



practice of obliging widows to marry a man from the deceased husband's family, which is common in some countries in the region, is practically unknown in Azerbaijan. Widows are free to decide whether they wish to remarry and, indeed, who to wed.

Physical integrity

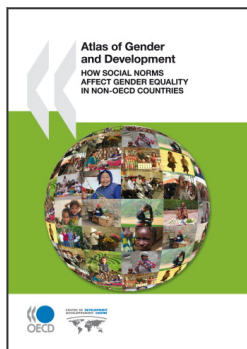
Azerbaijan faces challenges with respect to ensuring the physical integrity of women. Violence against women remains a key problem, particularly in rural areas. Very few official statistics about the extent of the problem exist, and those available provide a distorted picture. Legislation provides for criminal prosecution in cases of domestic violence and outlines punishment for acts of rape (including spousal rape), forced sexual relations or marriage, the prevention of marriage by force, and polygamy. In practice, the law is difficult to apply, particularly in cases of domestic violence in rural areas. An unofficial centre for women in crisis, which recently opened in Baku, provides victims of violence with free medical, psychological and legal aid.

Ownership rights

Azerbaijani women have the right to pursue economic independence. Access to land is a guaranteed right for all Azerbaijani citizens, regardless of gender. There are no legal restrictions on women's access to property other than land, and no statutory limits on their access to bank loans. Both spouses have the same rights of ownership and tenure of the couple's joint property, whether such property was acquired with the husband's or wife's income.

Civil liberties

Women in Azerbaijan have a high degree of civil liberty. No restrictions are reported on their freedom of movement or freedom of dress.



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