

# Progress towards Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women in the Commonwealth

July 2024



The Commonwealth



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# Foreword

Gender equality is a fundamental pillar of a just and equitable society. This report sheds light on both the progress achieved and the challenges that remain. The Commonwealth, with its long-standing commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment, recognises the vital importance of promoting a rights-based approach in all areas of its work.

In 2022, Heads of Government adopted the Commonwealth Declaration for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women 2022–2030.

The leadership of Commonwealth Women's Affairs Ministers, who first proposed the Declaration in 2019, has been exemplary, and I thank them for their continued support in the development of the Declaration and the roadmap for the report.

This report is a testament to the collective efforts of the Commonwealth member countries to uphold the principles enshrined in the Commonwealth Charter, which emphasises the promotion of gender equality as a key driver for sustainable development. It demonstrates the shared commitment of member countries to create an inclusive environment where everyone can thrive, contribute and realise their full potential.

The journey towards gender equality is neither straightforward nor uniform. Each member country within the Commonwealth has its own unique context, shaped by its own social, political and economic history. This diversity, while enriching, also presents distinct challenges that require tailored approaches to how we consider the available data on gender equality and women's empowerment.

Throughout this report, we present an array of data that collectively portray the current state of gender equality across the Commonwealth. We examine areas such as education, economic participation, political representation and social inclusion, offering insights into the strides made and the hurdles that persist.

Importantly, this report is not merely a documentation of statistics and policies; it is a call to action. It urges governments, civil society and individuals to engage in meaningful dialogue and concerted efforts to close the gender gap. It underscores the necessity of continuous investment in gender-responsive policies, education and initiatives that empower women and girls while addressing the systemic barriers they face.

As we reflect on the findings presented here, we are reminded that gender equality is not an isolated goal but a cornerstone of a prosperous and peaceful society. The Commonwealth's commitment to this cause is unwavering, and through collaboration, innovation and persistent advocacy we can pave the way for a future where gender equality is not just an aspiration but a reality.

*The Rt Hon. Patricia Scotland KC*  
*Secretary-General of the Commonwealth*





# Executive Summary

Successive Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings (CHOGMs) have confirmed their commitment to achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women. This report informs Heads about progress on the commitments made in the **Commonwealth Declaration for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women 2022–2030** ('the Declaration').

Progress is presented for the five priorities in the Declaration: women in leadership; women's economic empowerment; ending violence against women and girls; gender and climate change; and accountability for gender equality.

For some priorities, progress has been achieved, for others it has stalled. In general, there are more women in leadership positions across the parliaments of the Commonwealth, but potentially declining numbers in managerial roles in the private sector.

Goals set for the percentage of girls enrolled in secondary education will not be achieved at the current rate of progress. There is a reduction in female graduates in information and communication technology (ICT) programmes, and unpaid household labour continues to be a barrier to women's economic empowerment.

Rates of violence against women and girls remain staggering high across the Commonwealth. While global data indicate that rates of early, child and forced marriage declined between 2000 and 2021, such data suggest rates have increased in Commonwealth countries.

Including women in planning and decision-making about climate change at the national and local levels will ensure that climate plans and decisions are more likely to be effective for the whole population. More nations are doing so, but progress is slow.

Analysis was limited by gaps in the collection of gender- and sex-disaggregated data across the Commonwealth. The report concludes with a series of recommendations for Heads of Government with opportunities to accelerate gender equality and the empowerment of women.

Table A.1. Summary scorecard of progress against gender equality indicators, using our 'traffic light' rating

| No. | Indicator                                                                               | Status |        |       |
|-----|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|--------|-------|
|     |                                                                                         | Red    | Orange | Green |
| 1.1 | More women candidates standing for public office                                        |        |        |       |
| 1.2 | Increasing representation of women in the private sector                                |        |        |       |
| 2.1 | Equitable access to education, including primary, secondary and training for employment |        |        |       |
| 2.2 | Access to adequate ICT education                                                        |        |        |       |
| 2.3 | Access to good employment opportunities                                                 |        |        |       |
| 2.4 | Enabling legal environment                                                              |        |        |       |
| 2.5 | Increased land ownership rates for women                                                |        |        |       |
| 2.6 | Support for women entrepreneurs and increased access to capital                         |        |        |       |
| 2.7 | Sharing the burden of unpaid labour                                                     |        |        |       |
| 3.1 | Rates of child, early and forced marriage decline                                       |        |        |       |
| 3.2 | Rates of violence against women and girls decline                                       |        |        |       |
| 3.3 | Improved laws, policies and funding to protect women and girls from violence            |        |        |       |
| 3.4 | Improved health outcomes for women and girls                                            |        |        |       |
| 4.1 | Representation of women in decision-making processes and national action plans          |        |        |       |
| 4.2 | Gender-responsive funding for climate initiatives                                       |        |        |       |
| 4.3 | Collecting and monitoring of the impact of climate change on women                      |        |        |       |

# Introduction

Successive Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings (CHOGM) have confirmed their commitment to achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women. In 2018, Heads committed to ratifying and implementing the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and, in 2022, adopted the **Commonwealth Declaration for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women 2022–2030** ('the Declaration').

The Declaration presents a series of commitments that when implemented, will progress gender equality and the empowerment of women throughout the Commonwealth. A roadmap was subsequently developed by the Commonwealth Secretariat to assist member governments, the Secretariat and other Commonwealth organisations and partners. It consists of a series of indicators that can be used to monitor progress on Declaration commitments.

Development co-operation is at the heart of the Declaration, as it encourages the pooling of resources and sharing between interested member countries, development partners and other stakeholders. The need for long-term engagement and sustainable development, as outlined in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), is recognised.

The Declaration upholds the Commonwealth Charter through promoting equitable access to resources and benefits, peacebuilding, democratisation, and the creation of opportunities for sustainable livelihoods.

The purpose of this briefing is to inform Heads about progress towards achieving the commitments in the Declaration. The roadmap and its indicators provide the structure. Also included are a series of recommendations for consideration by Heads about how progress towards gender equality and the empowerment of women in the Commonwealth can be accelerated.

Heads of Government are asked to note that the analysis contained in this report was limited by important gaps in the collection of gender- and sex-disaggregated data across the Commonwealth.



# Progress towards Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women in the Commonwealth

The Commonwealth Declaration for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women 2022–2030 outlined five priorities: women in leadership; women's economic empowerment; ending violence against women and girls; gender and climate change; and accountability for gender equality.

Progress for each priority is outlined in the following sections. A traffic light classification of progress has been adopted: a green light means nearly all Commonwealth regions have made positive gains; an orange light means progress is mixed; while a red traffic light denotes a consistent lack of progress.

## 1. Women in leadership

Women's contribution to decision-making in the political, public and private sectors is essential to achieving gender equality. The absence of women in senior leadership positions and lack of participation risks creating policies that exclude and further marginalise women and girls.



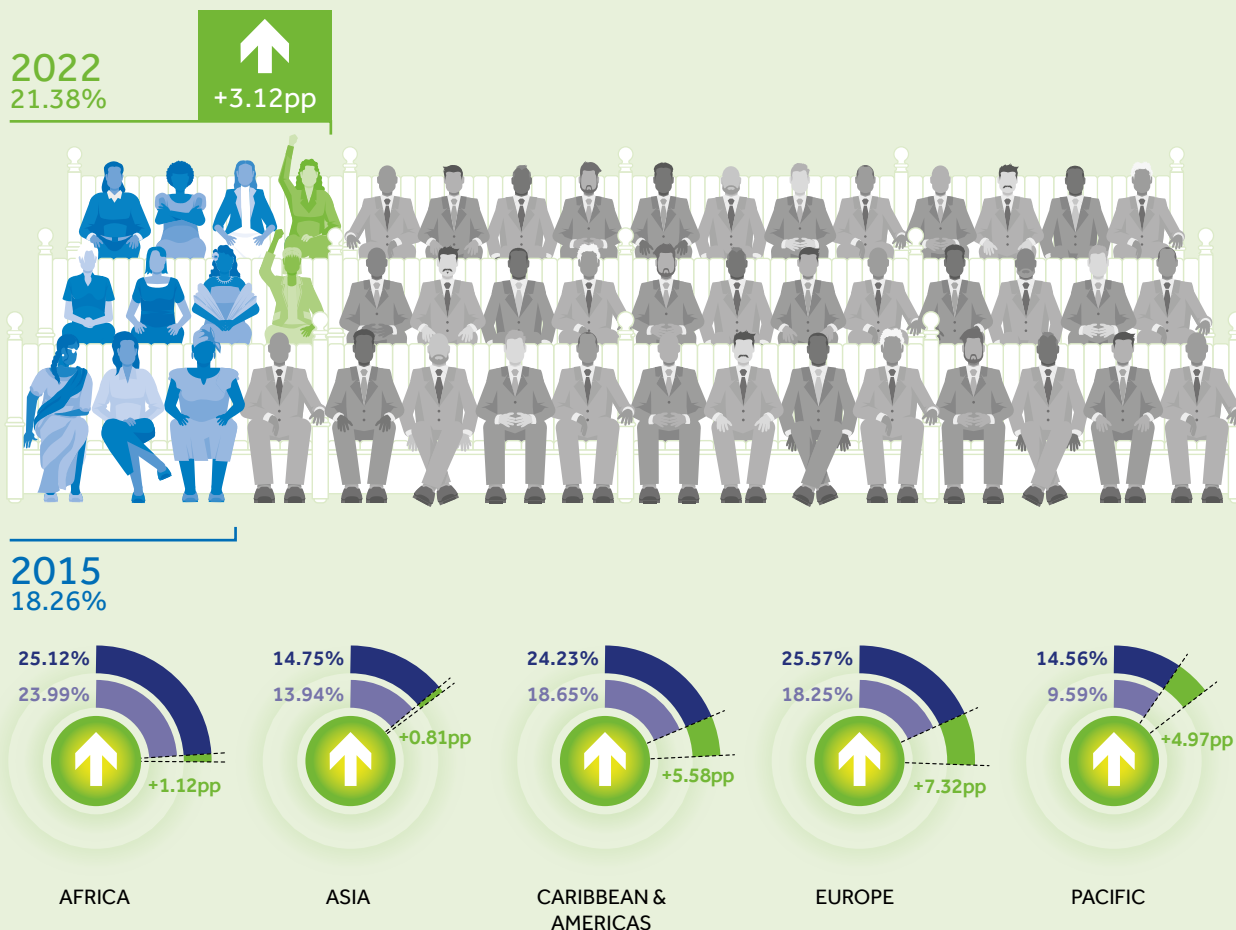


## 1.1 More women candidates standing for public office

Heads, in the Declaration, committed to ensuring more women candidates stood for public office. The available data show that while most Commonwealth countries are a long way from achieving gender equality in their national parliaments, between 2015 and 2022 the percentage of women elected to parliaments increased by 3 percentage points across all Commonwealth regions. In Europe, there was a 7 percentage point increase in women elected to parliaments during this time, and a nearly 6 percentage point increase in the Caribbean and Americas region.

However, overall progress is slow: at the current pace of change, only around 26 per cent of seats will be held by women across the Commonwealth in 2030. Once elected, fewer women than men are appointed to ministerial roles. While numbers of ministers who are women have increased – by 4.6 percentage points across the Commonwealth since 2015 – progress is predicted to be similarly slow, rising only to 27 per cent by 2030.

**The proportion of female members of parliament has risen – dramatically in some regions – but remains far from equal**



■ 2015  
■ 2022

Figure 1.1. Proportion of women in parliaments, and percentage point change, in the Commonwealth and in Commonwealth regions, 2015 and 2022

The latest research<sup>1</sup> on the inclusion of women in local government reports a pan-Commonwealth upward trend, with a 3 percentage point increase in women elected to local government between 2017 and 2023. The Pacific region experienced an encouraging 11 percentage point increase, with the Caribbean and Americas region and Europe showing positive changes of 9 and 5 percentage points respectively.

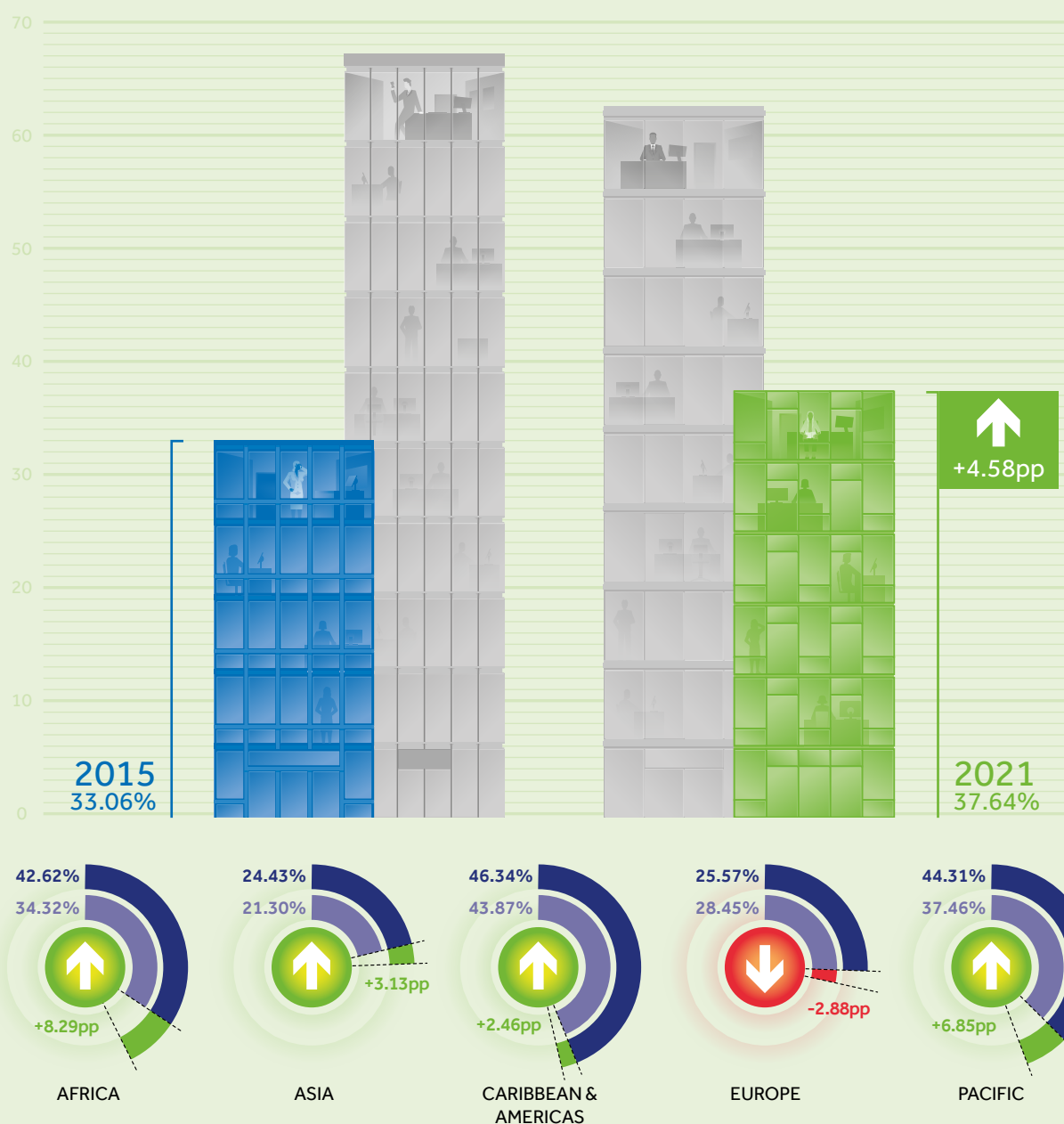
<sup>1</sup> Commonwealth Local Government Forum, (2024 forthcoming), *Commonwealth Local Government Handbook*



## 1.2 Increasing representation of women in the private sector

Heads also committed in the Declaration to enabling more women to take leadership positions in the private sector. Across the Commonwealth, women now hold nearly 38 per cent of management roles. Most regions reported a moderate increase, with most noticeable growth in Africa, the Pacific, Asia and the Caribbean and Americas (reporting 8, 7, 3 and 2.5 percentage point growth respectively). Europe, however, reported declining numbers. Forecasting also suggests that, over time, the percentage of women in managerial roles could decline across the Commonwealth.

### Women occupy managerial roles in increasing but still unequal numbers



■ 2015  
■ 2021

Figure 1.2. Percentage of managerial positions occupied by women, and percentage point change, in the Commonwealth and in Commonwealth regions, 2015 and 2021

### Accelerating women in leadership

To accelerate progress towards more women in leadership positions, Heads are encouraged to use the opportunities afforded by their public services in governance and managerial roles. By setting targets for women in leadership in their public services or encouraging and celebrating the appointment of women to such roles, Heads will contribute to growing the pipeline of women leaders in their nations, as well being a role model for other sectors. Indeed, Heads may wish to intensify their work with private sector leaders to collectively grow the pipeline of women leaders in their nations.

Where appropriate, Heads can also provide ongoing resources to attract, support, mentor and sponsor women candidates for political office within national and local governments. Heads may also choose to set gender targets for their cabinets and ministerial appointments and work with their political machinery to achieve them.

Women's machineries can also be resourced to share case studies and promote women leaders as role models. Women's groups and machineries could be better resourced to provide development for emerging women leaders across all sectors.

## 2. Women's economic empowerment

Gender-inclusive growth has many facets. It includes ending discriminatory norms and policies that deny girls a full education and women access to credit and financial services. Gender-responsive law, regulation and procurement systems are important. Reforming land rights to ensure women have access to such resources is also critical to the economic wealth of nations.





## 2.1 Equitable access to education, including primary, secondary and training for employment

Quality primary and secondary education for all girls will be a foundation of gender equality and the empowerment of women in the Commonwealth. There has been some progress here, especially in girls enrolling in secondary education in Asia and Africa. However, the Caribbean and Americas and Pacific regions have seen declines. Forecasts suggest that the 2030 goal of having all girls enrolled in secondary education will not be achieved at the current rate of progress, falling short by approximately 15 per cent.

Modest overall progress masks a mixed results in female enrolment in secondary education

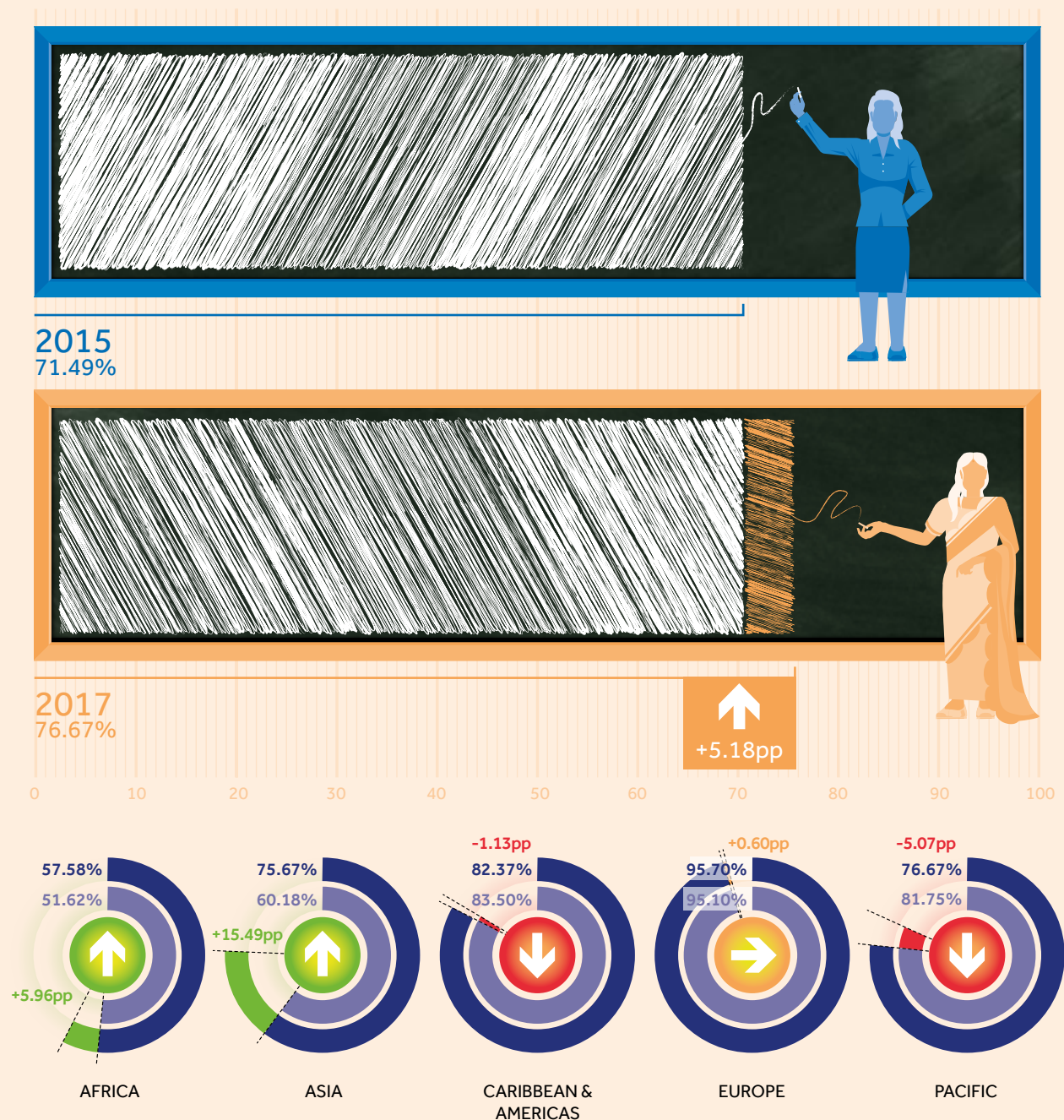


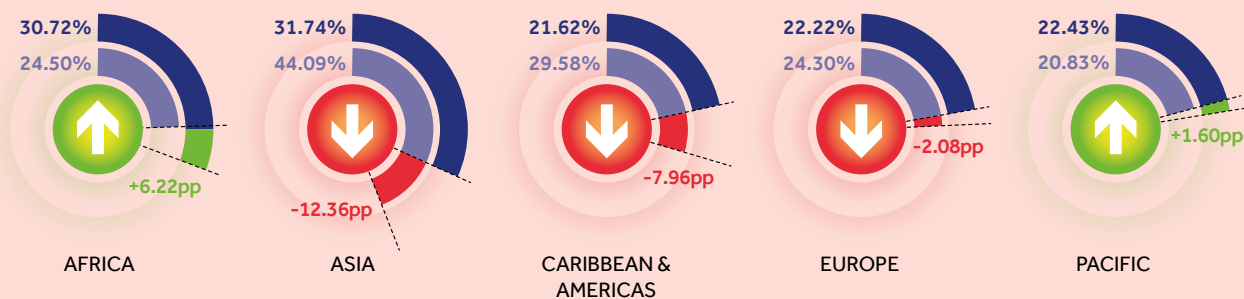
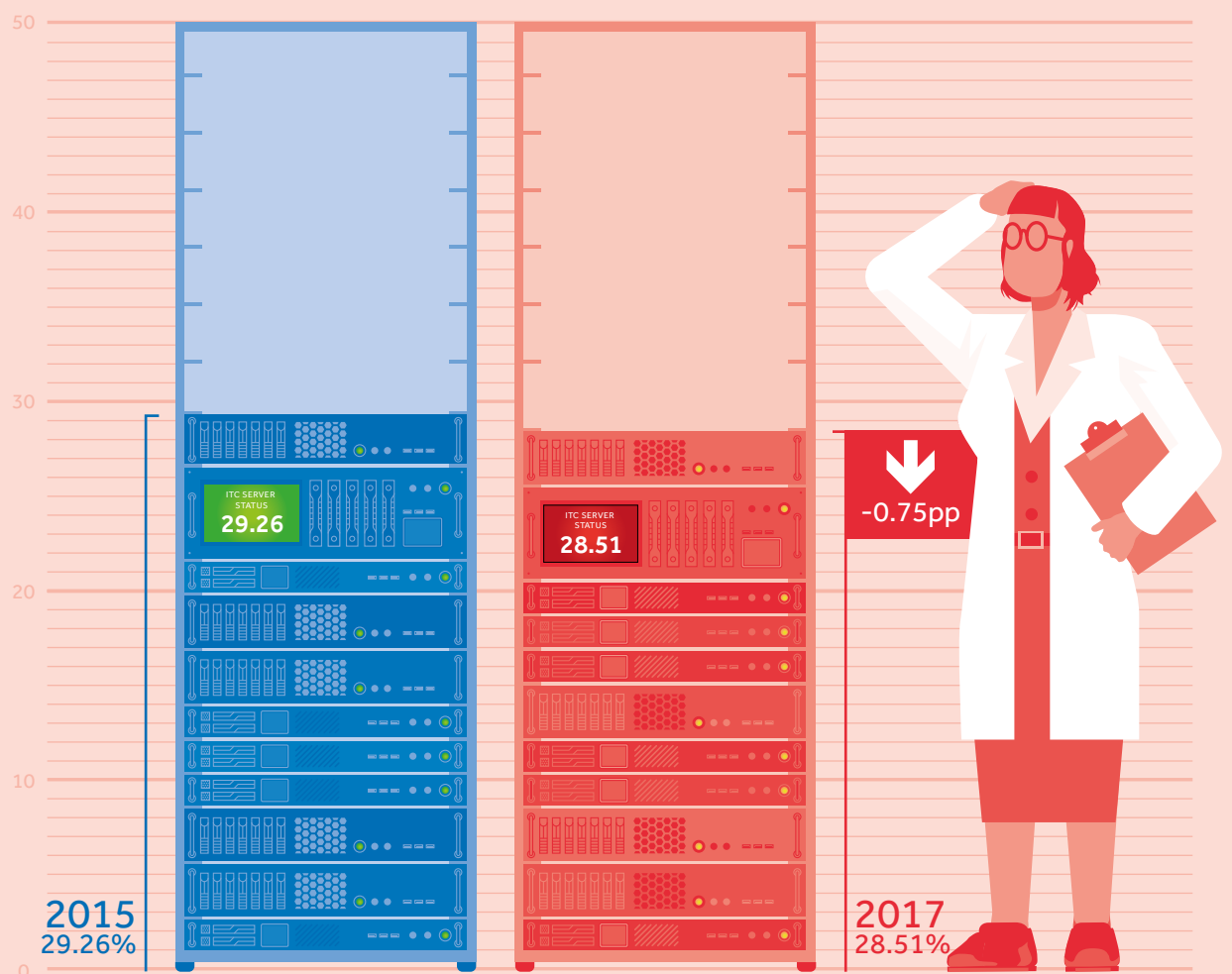
Figure 2.1. Net percentage of females enrolled in secondary education, and percentage point change, in the Commonwealth and in Commonwealth regions, 2015 and 2017



## 2.2 Access to adequate ICT education

Technology literacy is critical for the employability and career advancement of women. Pan-Commonwealth data show an overall reduction in female graduates in ICT programmes, with Asia, the Caribbean and Americas, and Europe all experiencing significant declines.

The proportion of female ICT graduates declined between 2015 and 2017, though Africa and the Pacific bucked the trend



■ 2015  
■ 2017

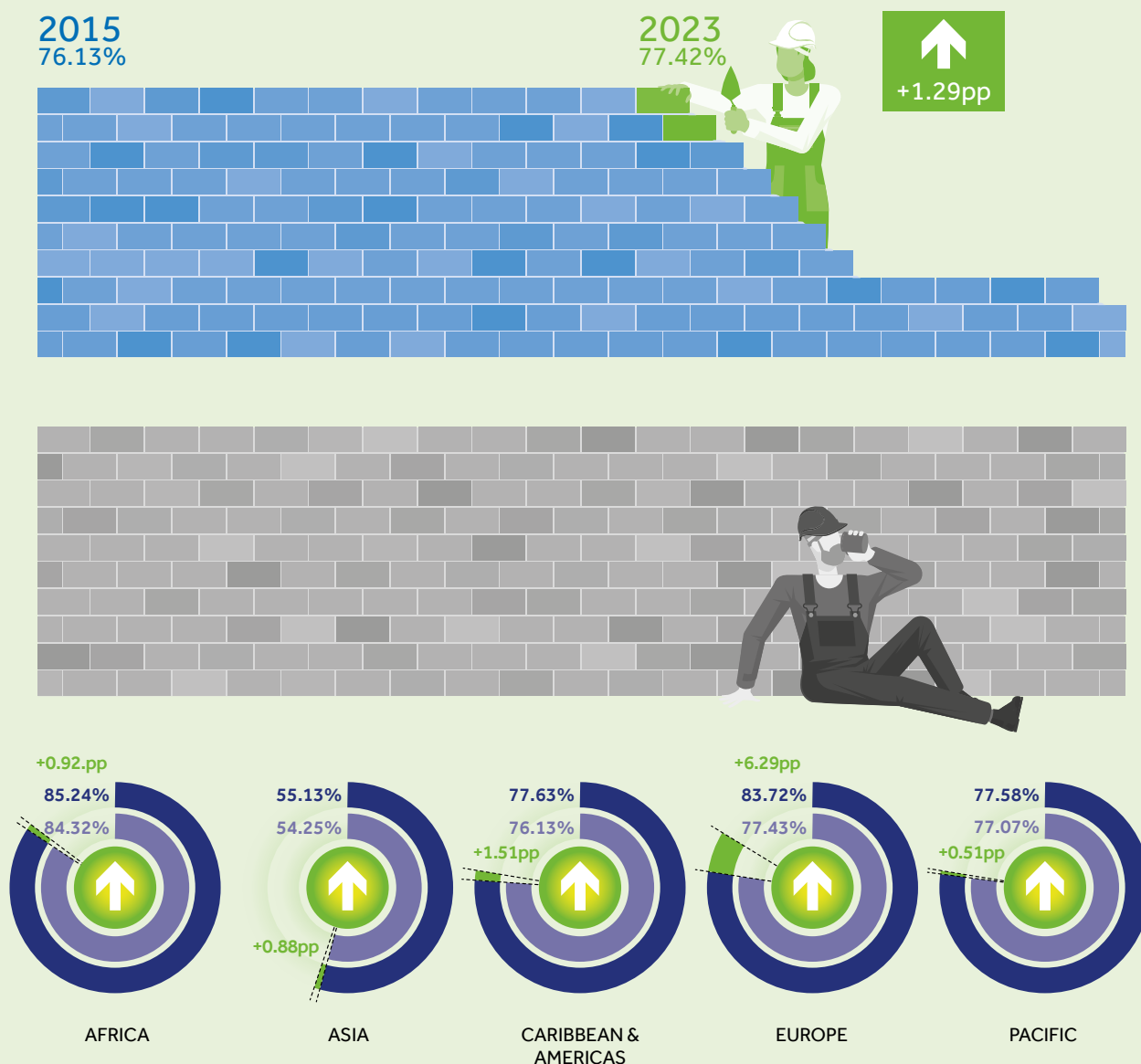
Figure 2.2. Percentage of ICT programme graduates who are female, and percentage point change, in the Commonwealth and in Commonwealth regions, 2015 and 2017



### 2.3 Access to good employment opportunities

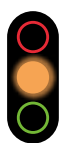
Small increases in the proportion of women participating in the workforce occurred in all Commonwealth regions. Europe had the most notable increase in women's labour market participation, with a 6 percentage point increase between 2015 and 2023. Africa has the most inclusive labour market, with 85 per cent of women engaged.

**Female labour market participation improved modestly but remains far from equal**



2015  
2023

Figure 2.3. Ratio of female to male labour market participation, and percentage point change, in the Commonwealth and in Commonwealth regions, 2015 and 2023 (modelled data)



## 2.4 Enabling legal environment

An enabling legal environment is a critical factor to ensuring that women can access good employment opportunities. There is a positive trend in the Commonwealth for the introduction of legislation to prevent discrimination in employment, with three additional countries introducing such legislation between 2015 and 2022. Thirty-eight countries now have such legislation in place.

However, the World Bank's Workplace Indicator<sup>2</sup> in 2023 showed that while progress is being made, women in 46 per cent of Commonwealth countries lacked the comprehensive legal protection that could help them enter and remain in paid employment.



## 2.5 Increased land ownership rates for women

Land ownership for women is critical to their ability to generate income and ensure food security. Data limitations prevent comment on the levels of land ownership by women in the Commonwealth. Most Commonwealth countries, however, have repealed legislation preventing women owning land. The Pacific region lags on this indicator, with only 5 out of 11 countries ensuring both women and men have equal access to property ownership.



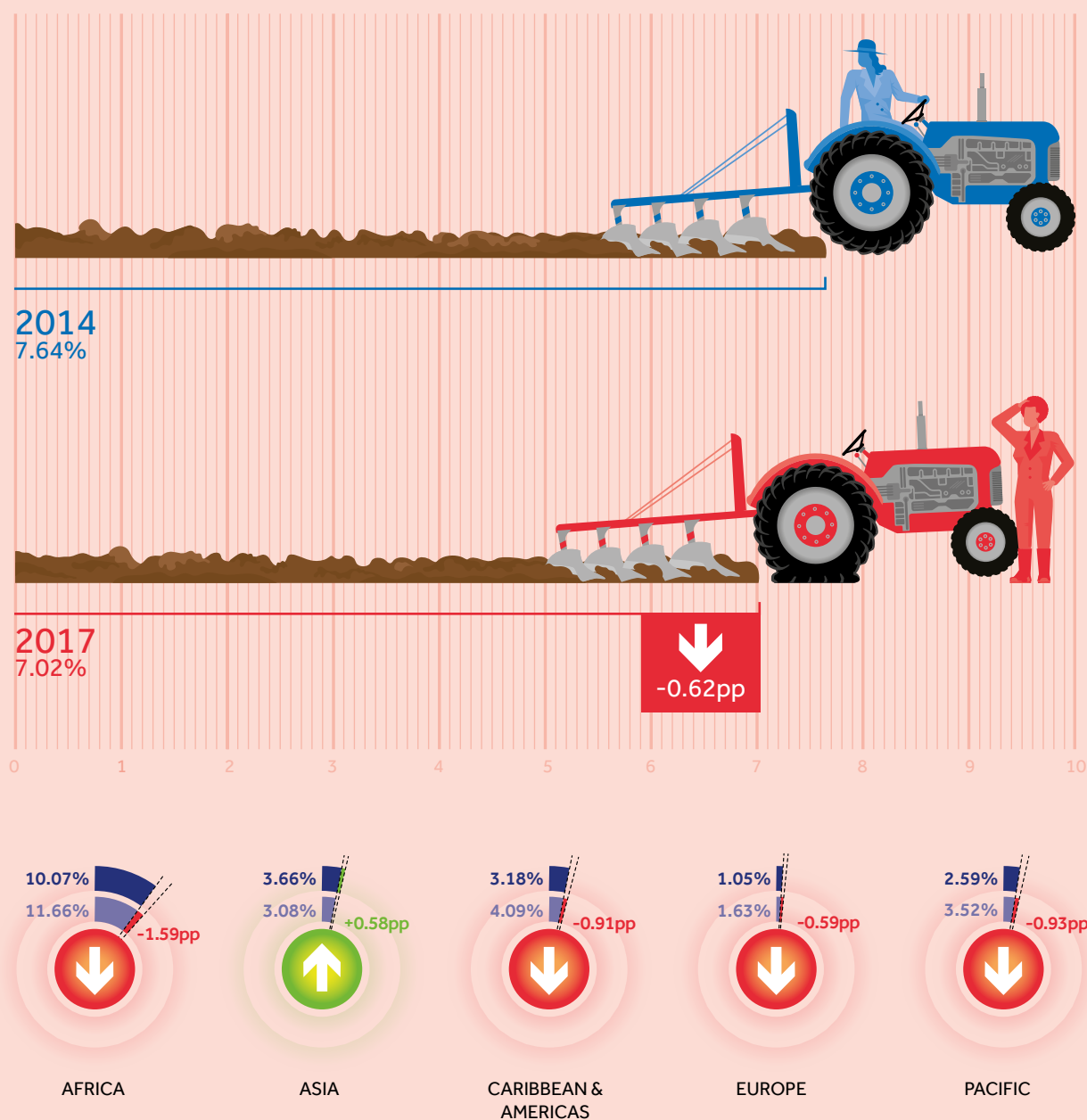
<sup>2</sup> World Bank Group, Gender Data Portal, 'Women, Business and the Law: Workplace Indicator Score (scale 1–100)', <https://genderdata.worldbank.org/en/indicator/sg-law-indx-wp>



## 2.6 Support for women entrepreneurs and increased access to capital

Most Commonwealth countries have removed restrictions on women opening bank accounts and signing legal contracts. These restrictions have been barriers to women starting their own businesses. The ability to access finance is another enabler of women entrepreneurs – yet all Commonwealth regions, except Asia, women's access to finance declined between 2014 and 2017.

### Women's borrowing to finance their enterprises not only stalled but went into reverse



■ 2014  
■ 2017

Figure 2.4. Percentage of women who borrowed to start or finance a farm or business, and percentage point change, in the Commonwealth and in Commonwealth regions, 2014 and 2017



## 2.7 Sharing the burden of unpaid labour

Despite progress in education, advancement in women's economic empowerment has been slowed by the continued expectation of women providing unpaid care and domestic work. Global data show that although the unpaid labour gender gap is expected to narrow slightly by 2050, women will still spend 9.5 per cent more time (equivalent of 2.3 hours extra per day) on unpaid care work than men.<sup>3</sup>

### Accelerating women's economic empowerment

Accelerating initiatives to keep girls at school, especially in the post-COVID environment and at secondary school, will be a key enabler of women's equality and economic empowerment across the Commonwealth. Investing in the ICT education of women and girls, likewise, will be crucial.

While Heads of Government should celebrate the increasingly enabling legal environment for women in the workforce across the Commonwealth, accelerating legal reform and resourcing the implementation of new laws could result in the protection of the employment of the nearly half of women in the Commonwealth who currently do not have such protections.

Specific initiatives to support women entrepreneurs, including increased access to capital, are likely to result in increased levels of business and economic activity. Implementing campaigns encouraging gender equality in unpaid domestic and caring work and ensuring accessible and affordable childcare for all will likely do the same.

## 3. Ending violence against women and girls (VAWG)

An estimated one woman in three will experience violence in her lifetime. VAWG is one of the more pervasive human rights violations, having a detrimental impact on the rights of women and girls to non-discrimination, equal protection under the law, to not be subject to torture or degrading treatment, the right to life, and the right to health and liberty and security of person. VAWG has many damaging consequences affecting the physical, mental and sexual health of women and girls.



### 3.1 Rates of child, early and forced marriage

Child, early and forced marriage (CEFM) refers to any marriage where at least one of the parties is under 18, or where one or both parties have not expressed their full, free and informed consent. Globally it was predicted in 2023 that 20 per cent of women aged 20 to 24 were married as children. While global rates of CEFM are declining, it is estimated that at the current rate of progress it will take 300 years to end the practice.<sup>4</sup>

The global data available, compiled by the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), indicate that CEFM was in decline between 2000 and 2021, although more recent information suggests an increase in Commonwealth countries.

<sup>3</sup> UN Women (2023), 'Forecasting time spent in unpaid care and domestic work', Technical Brief, [www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2023-10/technical-brief-forecasting-time-spent-in-unpaid-care-and-domestic-work-en.pdf](https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2023-10/technical-brief-forecasting-time-spent-in-unpaid-care-and-domestic-work-en.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> UNICEF (2023), Is an End to Child Marriage within Reach? Latest trends and future prospects, [https://data.unicef.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Is\\_an\\_End\\_to\\_Child\\_Marriage\\_Within\\_Reach-3.pdf](https://data.unicef.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Is_an_End_to_Child_Marriage_Within_Reach-3.pdf)



### 3.2 Rates of violence against women and girls

Violence against women and girls includes physical, sexual, emotional, economic and psychological actions or threats of actions. Collecting accurate data about VAWG is difficult and only 2018 data were available for this report. These figures are sobering. Nearly 20 per cent of girls and women from the Pacific region reported they had been subjected to violence by a current or former partner in the last 12 months; more than 18 per cent of African women, and 11.5 per cent of Asian women, reported the same. The Commonwealth average is more than 15 per cent.

**As many as one in five women were victim to physical or sexual violence in a single year**

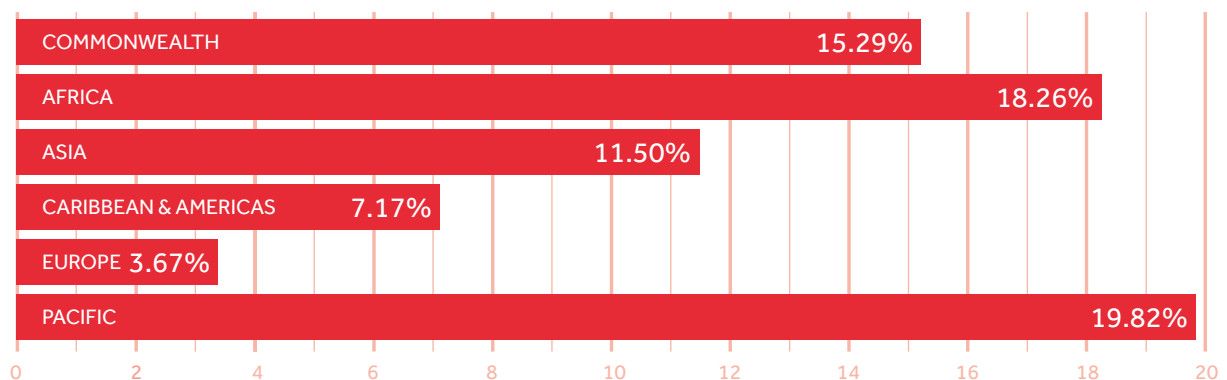


Figure 3.1. Percentage of women aged 15–49 subjected to physical and/or sexual violence by a current or former intimate partner in the last 12 months, in the Commonwealth and in Commonwealth regions, 2018 (modelled data)

When asked if they had ever experienced physical and/or sexual violence from an intimate current or former partner, on average 33 per cent of Commonwealth women answered yes. This is higher than the global average of 27 per cent. The Pacific and Africa have the highest rates of violence (42 and 33 per cent, respectively), with about 27 per cent for Asia and the Caribbean and Americas.

**One third of Commonwealth women have experienced intimate partner violence**

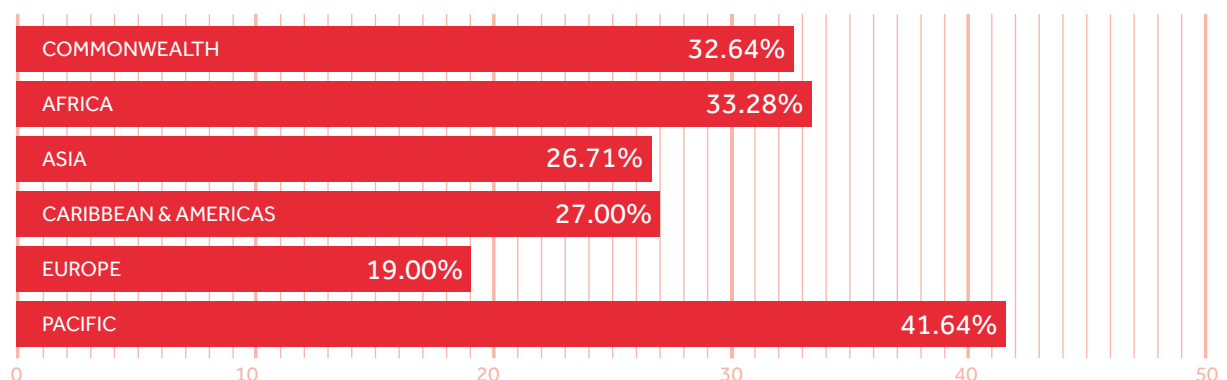


Figure 3.2. Percentage of women aged 15–49 who have ever experienced intimate partner violence, in the Commonwealth and in Commonwealth regions, 2018 (modelled data)



3.3 Improved laws, policies and funding to protect women and girls from violence

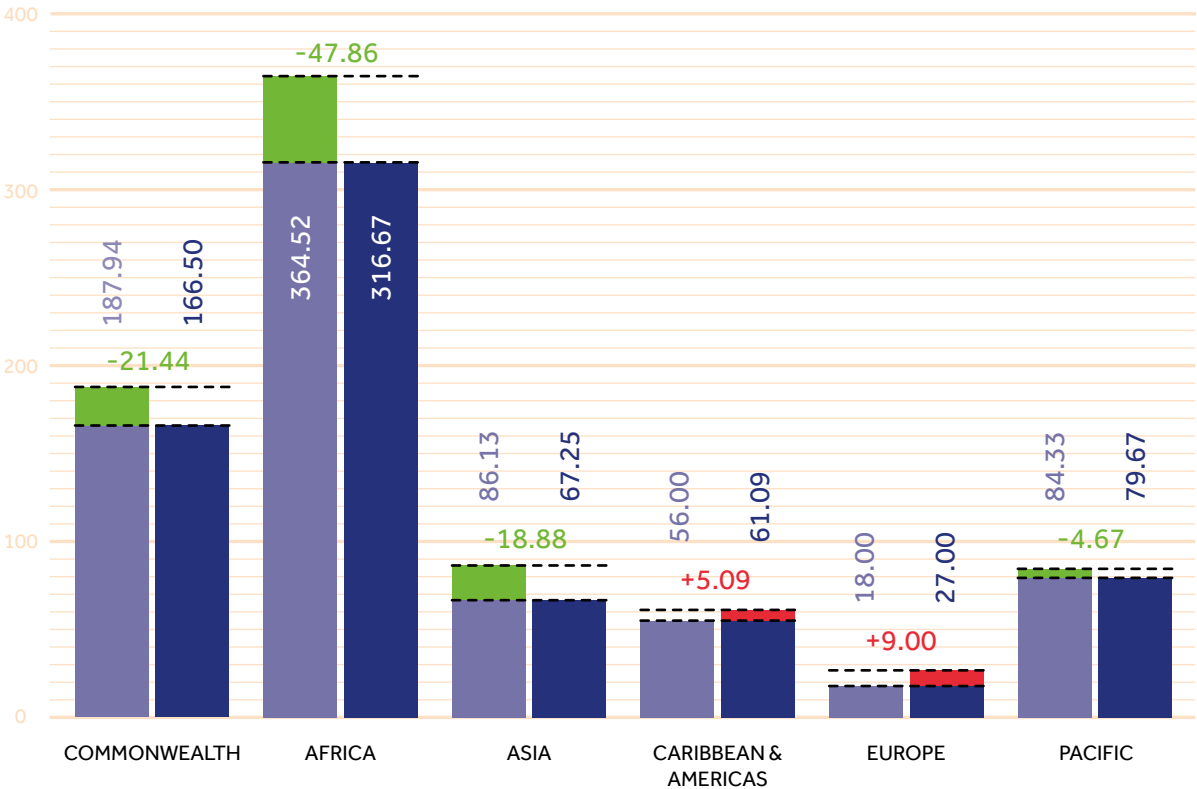
Commonwealth nations have increasingly demonstrated their recognition of the importance of preventing and addressing VAWG. In 2000, 34 Commonwealth countries did not have legislation in place to protect women and girls from violence. By 2015, this figure had dropped to seven countries. In 2023, only two of the 54 Commonwealth countries for which data were available were still to introduce such legal protections.



3.4 Improved health outcomes for women and girls

Improving health outcomes for women and girls, including reducing inequalities in access to healthcare, and ensuring reproductive and maternal health services are accessible and affordable, can contribute to addressing social issues and preventing VAWG. One indicator of this is the maternal mortality rate (MMR), which is measured by mortality per 100,000 live births. MMR across the Commonwealth reduced by 21 per 100,000, from 188 in 2015 to 167 in 2020. Within that overall figure, MMRs in Asia, Africa and the Pacific have significantly reduced, yet rates have increased in Europe and the Caribbean and Americas.

Maternal mortality rates have fallen overall despite dramatic variations in regional performance



■ 2015  
■ 2020

Figure 3.3. Maternal mortality rates per 100,000 live births in the Commonwealth and Commonwealth countries, 2015 and 2020 (modelled)

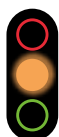
### Accelerating ending violence against women and girls

While Heads should celebrate the introduction of legal protections for VAWG for most Commonwealth women, there is a need to ensure such protections are well implemented with the necessary policy and resources.

Given the high prevalence of VAWG and increasing rates of CEFM, Heads are also urged to concentrate their efforts on prevention. Increased data collection, increased investment in the evaluation of VAWG and CEFM programmes, and increased information-sharing across the Commonwealth about what is effective will be positive steps. Heads can make preventing VAWG and CEFM national and regional priorities as well as a Commonwealth one.

## 4. Gender and climate change

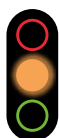
Women and men have different capabilities, opportunities and access to resources to adapt to the changing climate. Pre-existing structural inequalities and gender-based discrimination mean women are more vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change, such as the availability of food, fuel, water and protection against adverse weather events.



### 4.1 Representation of women in decision-making processes and national action plans

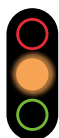
Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) are self-defined pledges under the Paris Agreement that outline proposed actions to limit global temperature rises to 1.5 degrees Celsius. They are submitted to the United Nations every five years.

Nearly 21 per cent of Commonwealth countries included women's groups and/or gender institutions in the development of their NDC in 2021. Africa and the Pacific regions were the most gender inclusive, with women's groups participating in 37 per cent and 22 per cent of NDCs, respectively. In contrast, Europe and Asia's NDCs showed no evidence of a participatory approach.



### 4.2 Gender-responsive funding for climate initiatives

The use of gender-responsive budgeting for climate initiatives was reported in only 12.5 per cent of Commonwealth NDCs. Pacific member countries led the way with 22 per cent recording gender-responsive budgeting for climate initiatives, with Africa (16 per cent) and Caribbean and Americas (11 per cent) following. No gender-responsive budgeting was noted in any NDCs from Europe or Asia.



### 4.3 Collecting and monitoring of the impact of climate change on women

Nearly 15 per cent of Commonwealth NDCs reported the use or planned use of gender-disaggregated data to monitor the impact of climate change on women. Twenty-two per cent of the Caribbean and Americas' NDCs plan to use gender analysis and track gendered outcomes of their climate change actions, which is significantly above the Commonwealth average; the same indication is included in 16 per cent of African submissions, 12.5 per cent of Asian and 11 per cent of Pacific NDCs.

### Accelerating gender and climate change initiatives

Including women in planning and decision-making about climate change at the national and local levels will ensure that such plans and decisions are more likely to be effective for the whole population. Heads can direct their officials to ensure this occurs, including that climate budgets are gender responsive and gendered data are gathered, analysed and used in planning and decision-making.

## 5. Accountability for gender equality

To monitor, celebrate and accelerate progress towards gender equality and the empowerment of women in the Commonwealth, consistent, high-quality data are needed. Reporting on the roadmap for this report demonstrated that there are considerable gaps in gendered data across the Commonwealth.

There are, for example, limited data on women in leadership roles beyond parliamentary representation. Additional data collection focused on the private sector, non-governmental organisations, public services, and local and provincial governments will provide a more accurate picture.

Data on unpaid care and domestic work are also critical to understanding the extent to which this impacts women and girls and their ability to engage in education, paid employment or politics.

Regular and reliable data collection, including the collection and analysis of administration data, on violence against women and girls, and child, early and forced marriage rates, will enhance the ability of nations to more effectively prevent these human rights violations.

Collecting data on gender and climate should be a key priority, as this is currently not well conceptualised or carried out.

In the Declaration, Heads committed to ensure the widespread collection and reporting of good quality comparable and disaggregated gender data. It is timely for Heads to re-commit to this intention.

# Recommendations to Accelerate progress towards Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women in the Commonwealth

Heads are encouraged to consider and endorse the following recommendations.

## Accelerating Women in Leadership

1. Set targets for the appointment of women in managerial and governance roles in their public services.
2. Work collectively with private sector leaders to grow the pipeline of women leaders in their nations, and across the Commonwealth.
3. Champion initiatives to attract, support and mentor women candidates for political office within their national, provincial and local governments.
4. Set gender targets for their Cabinets and Ministerial appointments and work with their political machinery to achieve them.
5. Resource their national women's machineries and women's groups so that they can share case studies promoting women leaders as role models and provide development opportunities for emerging women leaders across all sectors.

## Accelerating Women's Economic Empowerment

6. Accelerate initiatives to keep girls at school.
7. Continue to invest in the ICT education of women and girls.
8. Accelerate legal reform and resource the implementation of new laws to protect the employment of women.
9. Invest in initiatives to support women entrepreneurs, including increased access to capital.

10. Implement campaigns encouraging gender equality in unpaid domestic and caring work and ensuring accessible and affordable childcare for all.

## Ending Violence Against Women and Girls

11. Ensure preventing VAWG and CEFM is a national priority, including ensuring that VAWG and CEFM prevention is a funding priority.
12. Ensure the legal protections for women and girls against violence and early and forced marriage are well implemented and resourced.
13. Intensify their efforts on prevention, including increased data collection, increased investment in the evaluation of VAWG and CEFM programmes, as well as increased sharing of what is effective across the Commonwealth.

## Accelerating gender and climate initiatives

14. Ensure women are included in planning and decision-making about climate change at the national and local level.
15. Ensure climate budgets are gender responsive and that gendered data is gathered, analysed and used in planning and decision-making.

## Accountability for gender equality

16. Prioritise the collection and use of systematic, comparable, sex and gender disaggregated data.

## ANNEX A

# Commonwealth Declaration for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women 2022-2030

1. At their June 2022 meeting in Rwanda, the Commonwealth Heads of Government affirmed and strengthened their commitment to accelerate gender equality by continuing to take achievable, comprehensive and meaningful actions within their own countries and to strengthen their contribution to global efforts, through the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals and implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.
2. Heads reflected on the far-reaching implications of the COVID-19 pandemic on gender equality. Women and girls have been disproportionately affected by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has deepened pre-existing inequalities that perpetuate multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination. This is demonstrated by escalating rates of gender-based violence, including increased rates of child, early, and forced marriage and female genital mutilation/cutting, as well as women's and girls' under-representation in decision-making processes, including in conflict, crisis and humanitarian settings. The burden of unpaid care and domestic work has also increased for women and girls, despite women making up the vast majority of frontline health care workers. They have also been disproportionately affected by economic crisis, with women and girls more likely to have lost their employment and to have experienced less access to essential health services and education. In light of this, heads acknowledged that the COVID-19 pandemic threatens to roll back decades of gender equality gains.
3. Heads acknowledged that gender equality and inclusion is necessary to enable full, equal and meaningful participation by women and girls in all areas of social, political and economic life. While considerable efforts have been made, progress towards gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls has been slow, and the pandemic represents a further impediment. Heads remain concerned that particularly in situations of poverty, women and girls have the least access to food, health, education, land ownership, as well as the least access to capital, training and opportunities for employment and other needs that would raise the standard of living for women, girls, their communities and societies. They reiterated that all forms of discrimination and violence against all women and girls violates human rights and respect for human dignity and hampers the growth in the prosperity of societies, communities and families. To ensure women can fully achieve their potential in the service of their countries and of humanity, Heads called on all Commonwealth countries to ratify and strengthen support to implement the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). Heads resolved to address systemic barriers to women's full and equal participation in the economy by taking a gender-responsive approach to the development of trade and other related policies. In order to successfully break down the barriers facing women to trade, countries need to prioritise gender within their trade and economic agendas, including by supporting data-gathering initiatives relating to trade and gender and sharing best practices, such as through SheTrades Outlook, and by addressing the gender digital divide.

4. Convinced that the establishment of the new international economic order based on equity and justice must contribute significantly towards the promotion of gender equality, Heads committed to increasing women's access to decision-making and leadership by working to increase the proportion of women candidates standing for public office. Women's leadership and representation can be strengthened by providing training and mentoring opportunities for potential women candidates, removing discriminatory practices in campaigns and elections, and developing action plans to ensure women candidates and voters are free from violence, harassment and discrimination, including online. Heads committed to investigate the benefits of voluntary or legislative quotas or targets for women in the political, public and private sectors. Economic empowerment principles based on equity and justice will contribute significantly towards gender equality. As such, Heads committed to increasing women's participation in all levels of the decision-making process and leadership, improving women and girl's access to education, eliminating violence against women and girls, ensuring equal pay for work of equal value, and valuing and recognising women's unpaid care and domestic work.
5. Heads affirmed their unwavering commitment to strongly encourage access to a minimum 12 years of free quality education for girls, and celebrated progress made thus far. They committed to urgent action to ensure the right to education for marginalised girls in vulnerable circumstances. Heads commended the member states which now provide bursaries to girls pursuing higher learning at tertiary levels. Heads committed to build and upgrade education facilities that are child-, disability-, and gender-responsive and provide safe, inclusive, accessible and effective learning environments for all, which are free from violence. Heads committed to move away from measuring gender parity, and towards wider gender equality in education, understanding and addressing the barriers that stop women and girls from accessing education throughout their lifetime. Heads committed to end discriminatory policies and practices such as exclusion of pregnant or married girls from school.
6. Heads committed to ensure universal health coverage for all women and girls in the Commonwealth. Heads committed to build on the call of the 2018 Commonwealth Women's Forum (CWF), to 'implement and uphold comprehensive quality Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights for all women and young people and ensure universal health coverage, ensuring that by 2030 women and young people have universal access to sexual and reproductive health care services, including for family planning, information and education, with relevant data collection, review and follow-up' - with further progress including improved access to Comprehensive Sexuality Education.
7. Heads acknowledged the gendered impacts of climate change and environmental degradation, and committed to drive forward inclusive and gender-responsive solutions within national action plans across mitigation, adaptation and resilience across the Commonwealth.
8. To ensure action is sustained, collaboration across nations enhanced and best practice shared, Heads committed to mobilising technical and financial resources for gender equality at all levels and reporting on progress towards gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls at the next CHOGM.
9. Heads requested the Chair in Office of CHOGM with the support of the Commonwealth Secretariat to bring this Declaration to the attention of member countries, relevant international organisations, including the United Nations system, regional entities and other stakeholders as the Commonwealth's commitments to Beijing +25 in 2020 to 2030.
10. Heads invited members of civil society, non-government organisations, private sector, academia and development partners to support member countries in accelerating the realisation of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in the Commonwealth and beyond.

## ANNEX B

# Roadmap in support of the Commonwealth Declaration for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women 2022-2030

| Commonwealth gender priorities | Declaration commitments                                                                 | Indicators of progress                                                                                                                                              |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Women in leadership            | More women candidates standing for public office                                        | Percentage of seats held by women in national parliament                                                                                                            |
|                                |                                                                                         | Percentage of ministerial posts held by women                                                                                                                       |
|                                |                                                                                         | Percentage of seats held by women in local government                                                                                                               |
|                                | Increased representation of women in the private sector                                 | Percentage of women in board governance roles                                                                                                                       |
|                                |                                                                                         | Percentage of women managers and supervisors                                                                                                                        |
| Women's economic empowerment   | Equitable access to education, including primary, secondary and training for employment | Percentage of females enrolled in secondary education                                                                                                               |
|                                | Access to adequate ICT education                                                        | Percentage of female graduates in ICT programmes                                                                                                                    |
|                                | Access to good employment opportunities                                                 | Ratio of female to male labour market participation                                                                                                                 |
|                                |                                                                                         | Percentage of women over 15 who are economically active                                                                                                             |
|                                |                                                                                         | Laws mandating non-discrimination by gender in employment (y/n)                                                                                                     |
|                                |                                                                                         | Legal protections for women in place in the workplace, equal work for equal pay, access to assets and entrepreneurship, and protections for parenthood and marriage |
|                                | Increased land ownership rates for women                                                | Proportion of women who own land alone                                                                                                                              |
|                                | Support for women entrepreneurs and access to capital                                   | Percentage of women who have borrowed to start or finance a farm or business                                                                                        |
|                                |                                                                                         | A woman can open a bank account the same as a man (y/n)                                                                                                             |
|                                |                                                                                         | A woman can sign a contract the same as man (y/n)                                                                                                                   |
|                                | Sharing of the burden of unpaid labour                                                  | Case studies of data collection and policy initiatives                                                                                                              |

| Commonwealth gender priorities          | Declaration commitments                                                                       | Indicators of progress                                                                                                  |
|-----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Ending violence against women and girls | Rates of child, early and forced marriage decline                                             | Rates of child marriage                                                                                                 |
|                                         | Rates of violence against women and girls decline                                             | Proportion of women subjected to physical and/or sexual violence in the last 12 months (percentage of women aged 15–49) |
|                                         |                                                                                               | Proportion of women who have ever experienced intimate partner violence (percentage of women aged 15–49)                |
|                                         | Improved laws, policies and funding to protect women and girls from violence                  | Existent legal protections from domestic violence (y/n)                                                                 |
|                                         | Improved health outcomes for women and girls                                                  | Maternal mortality rates                                                                                                |
|                                         |                                                                                               | Women's life expectancy as a ratio of men's                                                                             |
| Gender and climate change               | Representation of women in decision-making processes and national action plans                | Evidence of women's groups and national and gender institutions being engaged in developing action plans                |
|                                         | Gender-responsive funding for climate initiatives                                             | Reference to gender-responsive budgeting in climate action plans                                                        |
|                                         | Collection and monitoring of impact of climate change on women                                | Reference to the collection of sex-disaggregated data and gender analysis in national climate action plans              |
| Accountability for gender equality      | Widespread collection and reporting of good quality, comparable and disaggregated gender data | Case studies from member states; for example, growing use of gender-responsive budgeting                                |





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