

Social Institutions and Gender Index

Oman

SIGI Country Profile

17 of June 2024

SIGI Country Profiles are produced by the OECD Development Centre

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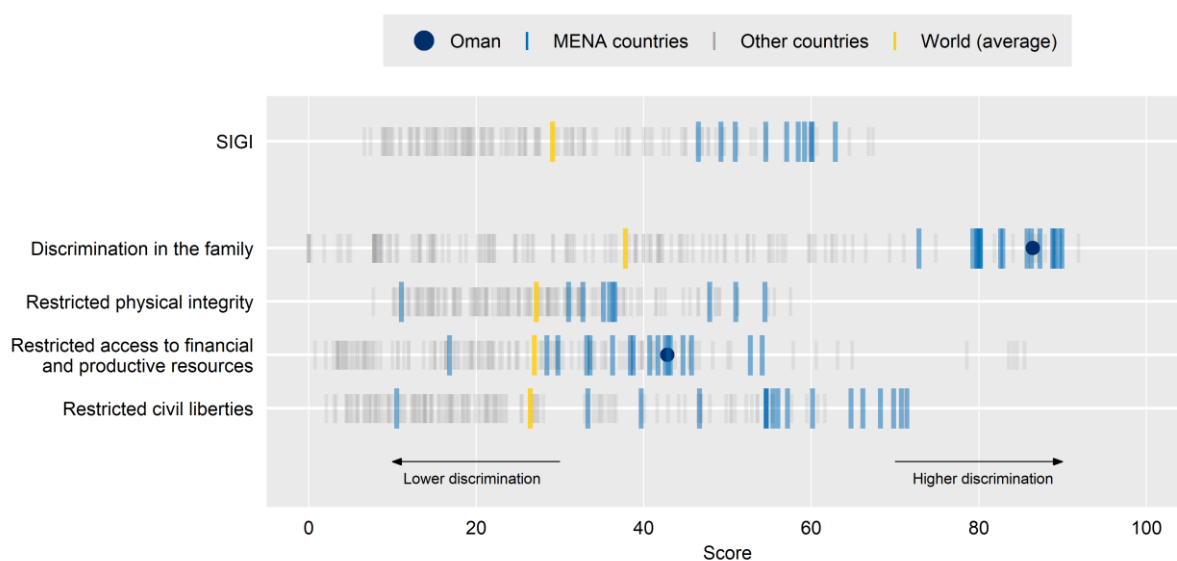
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Social institutions in Oman

The state of gender equality in Oman

The SIGI 2023 profile for Oman provides a comprehensive overview of the state of gender equality in the country, as measured by the OECD’s Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI). The fifth edition of the SIGI, released in 2023, assesses 140 countries based on the level of gender-based discrimination in their social institutions. These discriminatory social institutions encompass both formal and informal laws, as well as social norms and practices that restrict women’s and girls’ access to rights, justice, empowerment opportunities and resources, thereby undermining their agency and authority.

Figure 1. SIGI and dimension scores for Oman, 2023



Note: Scores range from 0 to 100, with 0 indicating no discrimination and 100 indicating absolute discrimination. The MENA region covers Algeria, Bahrain, Djibouti, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates, the West Bank and Gaza Strip and Yemen.

Source: OECD (2023), “Social Institutions and Gender Index (Edition 2023)”, *OECD International Development Statistics* (database), <https://doi.org/10.1787/33beb96e-en>.

In 2023, Oman did not obtain a SIGI score due to missing data in the “Restricted physical integrity” and “Restricted civil liberties” dimensions (Figure 1). The country is missing data on practices related to violence against women and freedom of movement – more specifically, (1) the share of women and girls aged 15-49 who have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by a current or former intimate partner at least once during their lifetime and (2) the share of women among those declaring not feeling safe walking alone at night in the city or area where they live. The country obtained a score of 86 in the

“Discrimination in the family” dimension, followed by “Restricted access to productive and financial resources” (43).¹

Legislative framework in Oman

The legal system is based on Civil law and Islamic law. Article 2 of the Constitution of Oman stipulates that the Sharia is the basis of the legislation while Article 34 recognises the freedom of religion and to practice religious rites according to recognised customs, provided they do not violate the public order or contradict morals. The Personal Status Law applies to the Muslim population and Sharia courts review all cases related to personal status and family law. Article 282 of the Personal Status Law establishes that marriage and family relations of non-Muslim minority communities are governed by their own laws.

Article 21 of the Constitution recognises and prohibits multiple and intersectional discrimination – an essential provision to enhance gender equality from a legal perspective. Moreover, Oman ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)² in 2006 but maintains reservations on Articles 9(2), 16 and 29(1).³ In general, Oman expresses its reservations on all the articles that are not in accordance with the provisions of the Islamic Sharia. For instance, Article 9(2), which requires States to grant women and men equal rights to confer their nationality to their children, is not accepted by Oman. Moreover, the country holds reservations on Article 16, regarding equality in marriage and family life, as it conflicts with the national legislation. For instance, Oman’s Personal Status Law does not grant women and men equal rights in matters of divorce.

Gender-disaggregated, gender-relevant and intersectional data and indicators are essential to better identify policy areas that have strong linkages with gender. In Oman, there are no applicable legal provisions regulating the production and dissemination of gender statistics.

Positive highlights and significant challenges since the fourth edition of the SIGI

Positive highlights

In 2019, the Child Law was amended to recognise FGM/C as a harmful traditional practice, making anyone carrying out or promoting such practice liable to criminal penalties. In the economic sphere, the law grants women and men the same rights to own and use land and non-land assets as well as financial services. Moreover, women and men enjoy equal rights in terms of applying for national identity cards and passports, and to travel outside the country. However, informal laws often undermine women’s and girls’ rights in practice.

Significant challenges

Discriminatory social institutions undermine women’s and girls’ rights and opportunities in many spheres of their lives. The Personal Status Law contains discriminatory provisions that restrict women’s rights to be

¹ SIGI scores range from 0 to 100, with 0 indicating no discrimination and 100 indicating absolute discrimination. Levels of discrimination in the SIGI and its dimensions are assessed based on scores as follow: very low [0-20]; low [20-30]; medium [30-40]; high [40-50]; and very high [50-100].

² United Nations (1979), *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women*, United Nations, New York, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-elimination-all-forms-discrimination-against-women>.

³ United Nations (2023), “Status of Treaties: Chapter IV- 8. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women”, *Treaty Collection*, United Nations, New York, https://treaties.un.org/pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=IND&mtdsg_no=IV-8&chapter=4.

legal guardians of their children, to file for divorce, to inherit on equal grounds as men, and that require a married woman to obey her spouse. Moreover, the law does not comprehensively protect women from all forms of violence. For instance, domestic violence and marital rape are not criminalised. Additionally, the absence of data on the prevalence of violence against women limits the ability to design effective policies to prevent and eradicate it. Discriminatory legal provisions further limit women's political participation and undermine their citizenship rights and access to justice. In family courts, a woman's testimony does not carry the same evidentiary weight as a man's, and a married woman does not have the same rights as a man to confer her nationality to her spouse and children.

Summary of results for Oman

Discrimination in the family	Unit	Value
Laws on child marriage	Score	50
Girl child marriage rate ¹	%	3.3
Boy child marriage rate ¹	%	1.4
Laws on household responsibilities	Score	100
Share of the population that agrees or strongly agrees that "if a woman earns more than her husband, it is a problem"	%	-
Share of the population that agrees or strongly agrees that "when a mother works for pay, the children will suffer"	%	-
Female-to-male ratio of time spent on unpaid care and domestic work	Ratio	2.5
Number of hours spent by men on unpaid care and domestic work in a 24-hour period	Hours	1.8
Number of hours spent by women on unpaid care and domestic work in a 24-hour period	Hours	4.5
Laws on divorce	Score	100
Laws on inheritance	Score	100
Restricted physical integrity	Unit	Value
Laws on violence against women	Score	75
Share of women who consider a husband to be justified in hitting or beating his wife under certain circumstances	%	10
Lifetime intimate-partner violence rate ²	%	-
12-month intimate-partner violence rate ²	%	-
Laws on female genital mutilation	%	25
Share of the female population who has heard about female genital mutilation and think the practice should continue	%	-
Prevalence of female genital mutilation (% of women aged 15-49 years who have undergone FGM)	%	-
Boy-to-girl ratio at birth (natural = 105) ³	Ratio	103.9
Laws on reproductive autonomy	Score	75
Unmet needs for family planning ⁴	%	25.7
Restricted access to productive and financial resources	Unit	Value
Laws on land assets	Score	25
Share of women among landowners	%	-
Laws on non-land assets	Score	25
Share of women among house owners	%	-
Laws on financial assets	Score	25
Share of women among bank account owners	%	29
Laws on workplace rights	Score	100
Share of the population declaring that "when jobs are scarce, men should have more right to a job than women"	%	-
Share of the population declaring that "men make better business executives than women do"	%	-
Share of women among managers	%	25.9
Share of firms with a woman as top manager	%	-
Restricted civil liberties	Unit	Value
Laws on citizenship rights	Score	100
Laws on political voice	Score	75
Share of the population declaring that "men make better political leaders than women do"	%	-
Share of women in Parliament (lower chamber)	%	2.3
Laws on freedom of movement	Score	25
Share of women among those who declare not feeling safe walking alone at night in the city or area where they live	%	-
Laws on access to justice	Score	75
Share of women among those who declare not having confidence in the judicial system and courts of their country	%	-

Note: Scores of legal variables range from 0 to 100, with 0 indicating no discrimination and 100 indicating absolute discrimination.

¹ % of girls/boys aged 15-19 years who have been or are still married, divorced, widowed or in an informal union.

² % of ever-partnered women and girls who have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by a current or former intimate partner during their lifetime/over the previous 12 months. Population base for lifetime IPV: 15-49 years. Population base for 12-month IPV: 15 years and older.

³ A natural boy-to-girl sex ratio at birth is generally estimated to be below 105. A ratio exceeding 105 implies the existence of more boys aged 0-4 than one would expect, indicating a potential phenomenon of son preference resulting in the systemic elimination of new-born girls.

⁴ % of married or in-union women of reproductive age who want to either stop or delay childbearing but are not using any contraception method.

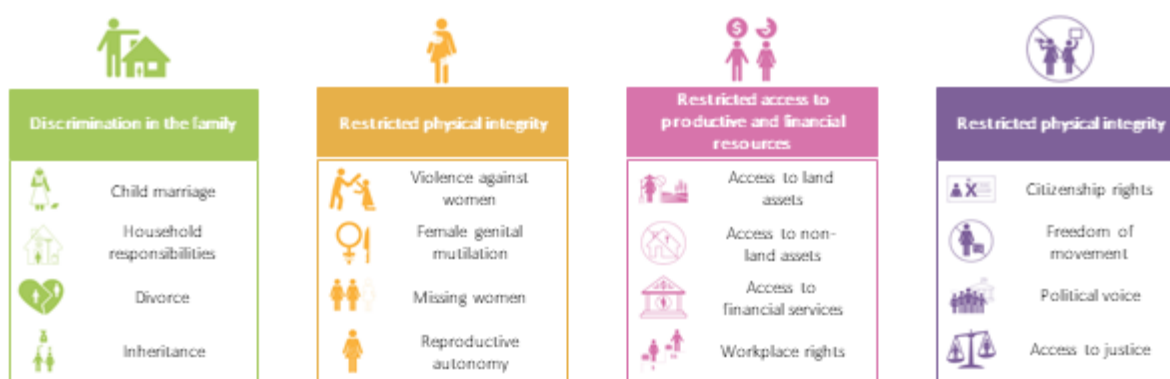
Source: OECD Development Centre/OECD (2023), "Gender, Institutions and Development Database", <https://doi.org/10.1787/7b0af638-en>.

Results across the SIGI's four dimensions

The SIGI measures gender-based discrimination across four dimensions covering the major socio-economic areas that affect women and girls throughout their lifetime:



- The **“Discrimination in the family”** dimension captures social institutions that limit women’s decision-making power and weaken their status in the household and the family.
- The **“Restricted physical integrity”** dimension captures social institutions that increase women’s and girls’ vulnerability to multiple forms of violence and limit their control over their reproductive autonomy.
- The **“Restricted access to productive and financial resources”** dimension captures social institutions that limit women’s economic opportunities and rights.
- The **“Restricted civil liberties”** dimension captures social institutions restricting women’s access to, and participation and voice in, the public and political spheres.

Figure 2. Conceptual framework of the fifth edition of the SIGI



Each dimension builds on four indicators which, in turn, build on one to three variables depending on data availability (Figure 2). This section features the results by dimension, examining the pertinent social norms, practices and legal frameworks for each indicator.

The legal information collected through the *SIGI 2023 Legal Survey* covers both formal and codified laws, as well as informal laws. The information is assessed based on whether the law protects women’s rights or not, and is icon-coded as follows:

-  : The legal framework protects women’s rights.
-  : The legal framework does not fully protect women’s rights.

There is no universal agreement on what informal laws refer to, given contextual differences across time and place, as well as distinct disciplinary or theoretical approaches. In the context of the SIGI, informal laws (customary, traditional or religious laws/rules) describe mechanisms that operate outside the formal legal system of state-based laws. Informal laws vary from one community to another and are generally uncodified and unwritten. In some cases, informal laws may reflect unequal power dynamics within a given community and discriminatory social norms, with adverse consequences on women and girls and other vulnerable groups. Informal laws are unsteady and have been adapted over time in response to external factors.

For example, customary laws are laws that are embodied in customs, rules or traditions and accepted by members of the community as binding but remain adaptable, dynamic and flexible.⁴ The CEDAW General Recommendation No. 33 also recognises indigenous laws.⁵ These are similar to customary laws but are often given a distinct identity in recognition of the specific international standards related to the rights and protections of indigenous peoples and their justice systems. Informal religious laws may refer to norms that are derived from interpretations of codified religious texts and/or longstanding traditions.

⁴ United Nations (2018), "Module 1: The Theory and Practice of Women's Access to Justice Programming", *A Practitioner's Toolkit on Women's Access to Justice Programming*, UN Women, UNDP, UNDOC and OHCHR, New York, Vienna and Geneva, https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Publications/PractitionerToolkit/WA2J_Module1.pdf.

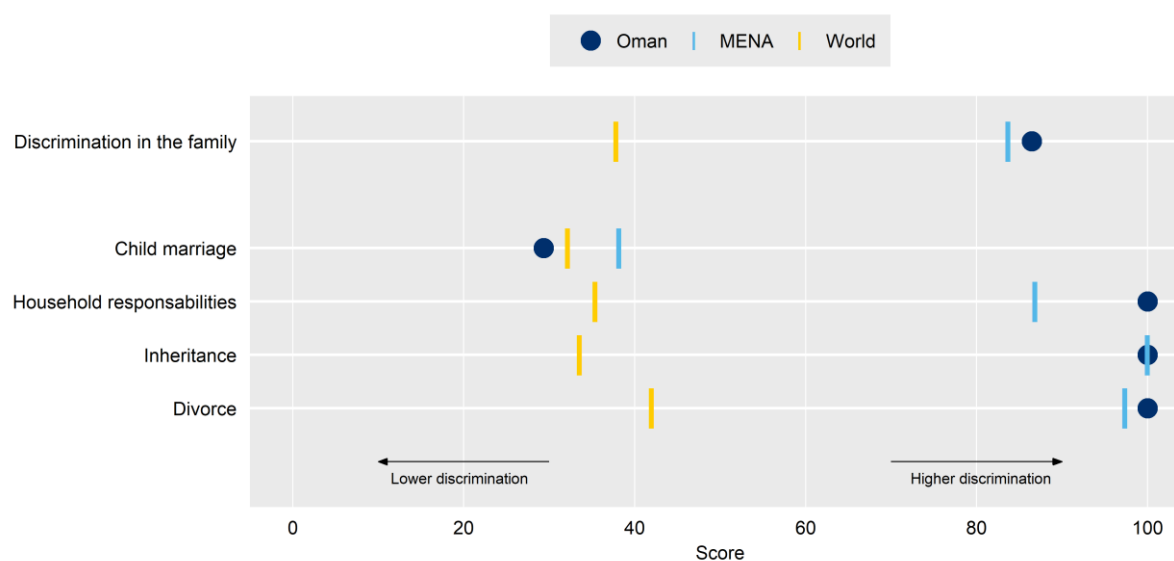
⁵ UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (2015), "General recommendation No. 33 on women's access to justice", *CEDAW/C/GC/33*, United Nations, New York, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/807253>.

Discrimination in the family

Oman exhibits very high levels of discrimination within the family with a score of 86, compared to a world average of 38 and an average score of 84 in the MENA region – based on countries for which scores could be calculated.

In this dimension, women and girls in Oman experience the highest levels of discrimination in the “Household responsibilities”, “Inheritance” and “Divorce” indicators with scores of 100. The lowest levels of discrimination are found in the “Child marriage” indicator with a score of 29.

Figure 3. Discrimination in the family scores for Oman, 2023



Note: Scores range from 0 to 100, with 0 indicating no discrimination and 100 indicating absolute discrimination. The MENA region covers Algeria, Bahrain, Djibouti, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates, the West Bank and Gaza Strip and Yemen.

Source: OECD (2023), “Social Institutions and Gender Index (Edition 2023)”, *OECD International Development Statistics (database)*, <https://doi.org/10.1787/33beb96e-en>.

Child marriage

Practices related to child marriage

Child marriage remains limited but present in Oman. In 2023, 3% of girls aged 15-19 were or are still married, divorced, widowed or in an informal union, compared to 1% of boys. In addition, 4% of women aged 20-24 were married or in a union before the age of 18,⁶ compared to a world average of 26% and an average of 17% in the MENA region – based on countries for which data are available.

Legal frameworks concerning child marriage

Article 7 of the Personal Status Law⁷ sets the minimum legal age of marriage at 18 years. However, Article 10c provides that a judge may permit girls and boys below the age of 18 years to marry if the marriage is

⁶ This indicator corresponds to SDG indicator 5.3.1

⁷ Sultanate of Oman (1997), “Royal Decree No. 32/97 issuing the Personal Status Law”, *Official Gazette No. 601 of 15/06/1997*.

considered to be beneficial. Moreover, Article 282 of the Personal Status Law establishes that marriage and family relations of non-Muslim minority communities are governed by their own laws.

Question	Answer	Assessment
What is the legal age of marriage for men?	18	✓
What is the legal age of marriage for women?	18	✓
Are there legal exceptions to the legal age of marriage that allow women and men under the legal age of marriage to marry with the consent of parent and/or legal guardian?	No	✓
Are there legal exceptions to the legal age of marriage that allow women and men under the legal age of marriage to marry with the consent of judge or court?	Yes	!
Are there legal exceptions to the legal age of marriage that allow women and men under the legal age of marriage to marry with the consent of another person or institution?	No	✓
Does the legal age of marriage apply to all groups of women?	No	!
Are there informal laws (customary, traditional or religious laws/rules) that allow or encourage the early marriage of girls?	Yes	!

Note: Cut-off date for the legal data is 31 August 2022.

Source: OECD Development Centre/OECD (2023), *SIGI 2023 Legal Survey*, <https://oe.cd/sigi-dashboard>.

Household responsibilities

Practices and social norms related to household responsibilities

In Oman, domestic responsibilities disproportionately fall on women's shoulders. On average, women dedicate 4.5 hours per day to unpaid care and domestic tasks – such as caring for household members, preparing food and cleaning – compared to 1.8 hours for men. This translates into women dedicating 2.5 times more time on unpaid care and domestic work than men.⁸ In comparison, the world average ratio is 2.6 and the average ratio for the MENA region is 5.9 – based on countries for which data are available.

There are no available data in Oman that are comparable to other countries on attitudes related to the division of household responsibilities. In 2023, 56% of the world's population and 70% of the population of the MENA region believes that when women work, the children will suffer – based on countries for which data are available.

Legal frameworks concerning household responsibilities

According to Article 4 of the Personal Status Law,⁹ spouses shall establish a family under the “patronage” of the husband, thus establishing the man as head of household. Article 38 stipulates that the married woman must obey her spouse and that her duty is to take care of the household and children. Article 11 of the Personal Status Law mandates that guardians must be male, and Article 159 establishes that guardianship belongs to the father. In contrast, the mother has priority right to child custody except when belonging to a different religion than the father (Articles 126, 127, 128 and 135). Finally, Article 282 of the Personal Status Law establishes that marriage and family relations of non-Muslim minority communities are governed by their own laws.

Question	Answer	Assessment
Does the law provide women with the same rights as men to be “head of household” or “head of family”?	No	!
Does the law provide women with the same rights as men to be the legal guardians of their children during marriage?	No	!
Does the law provide women with the same rights as men to be legal guardians of their children in informal unions?	No	!
Regarding women's legal rights to be recognised as head of household or head of family, does the law apply to all groups of women?	No	!

⁸ This indicator corresponds to SDG indicator 5.4.1

⁹ Sultanate of Oman (1997), “Royal Decree No. 32/97 issuing the Personal Status Law”, *Official Gazette No. 601 of 15/06/1997*.

Question	Answer	Assessment
Are there informal laws (customary, traditional or religious laws/rules) that create different rights or abilities between men and women when it comes to being recognised as the head of household?	Yes	!
Are there informal laws (customary, traditional or religious laws/rules) that create different rights or abilities between men and women when it comes to being the legal guardians of their children?	No	✓
Are there informal laws (customary, traditional or religious laws/rules) that create different rights or abilities between men and women when it comes to the choice of where to live?	No	✓

Note: Cut-off date for the legal data is 31 August 2022.

Source: OECD Development Centre/OECD (2023), *SIGI 2023 Legal Survey*, <https://oe.cd/sigi-dashboard>.

Divorce

Legal frameworks concerning divorce

The Personal Status Law introduces several restrictions regarding Muslim women's rights to initiate and finalise a divorce. Pursuant to Articles 81 to 84, 94, 98 and 107 of the Personal Status Law,¹⁰ a married man has the right to unilaterally divorce his wife for any reason (*talaq*) while the law stipulates a limited number of grounds upon which a woman may seek divorce. The law also grants married woman the right to seek divorce by *khul'* – the process whereby the woman obtains divorce in exchange of paying her spouse an agreed financial compensation.¹¹ Articles 129 and 132 of the Personal Status Law establish that following a divorce, the mother retains custody of the son until he reaches the age of 7 years, and of the daughter until she reaches puberty. Beyond these age thresholds, a judge may extend mothers' priority right to custody. Finally, Article 282 of the Personal Status Law establishes that marriage and family relations of non-Muslim minority communities are governed by their own laws.

Question	Answer	Assessment
Do women and men have the same rights to initiate/file for a divorce?	No	!
Can women and men finalise a divorce or annulment with the same requirements?	No	!
Do women and men have the same rights to child custody following a divorce?	No	!
Regarding divorce, does the law apply to all groups of women?	No	!
Are there informal laws (customary, traditional or religious laws/rules) that create different rights or abilities between men and women when it comes to initiating divorce?	Yes	!
Are there informal laws (customary, traditional or religious laws/rules) that create different rights or abilities between men and women when it comes to being the legal guardians of their children after divorce?	Yes	!

Note: Cut-off date for the legal data is 31 August 2022.

Source: OECD Development Centre/OECD (2023), *SIGI 2023 Legal Survey*, <https://oe.cd/sigi-dashboard>.

Inheritance

Legal frameworks concerning inheritance rights

Inheritance is governed by the principles of Islamic Sharia, whereby female heirs are entitled to half of the inheritance share of male heirs. Articles 242 to 247 of the Personal Status Law¹² stipulate surviving spouses' and children's inheritance rights according to which widows and daughters receive half the share of widowers and sons. Article 282 of the Personal Status Law also establishes that marriage and family relations of non-Muslim minority communities are governed by their own laws.

¹⁰ Sultanate of Oman (1997), "Royal Decree No. 32/97 issuing the Personal Status Law", *Official Gazette No. 601 of 15/06/1997*.

¹¹ Musawah (2017), *Oman: Overview of Muslim Family Laws & Practices*, Musawah: For Equality in the Family, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, <https://www.musawah.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Oman-Overview-Table.pdf>.

¹² Sultanate of Oman (1997), "Royal Decree No. 32/97 issuing the Personal Status Law", *Official Gazette No. 601 of 15/06/1997*.

Question	Answer	Assessment
Do daughters and sons have the same rights to inherit?	No	!
Do female and male surviving spouses have the same rights to inherit?	No	!
Regarding inheritance rights of daughters, does the law apply to all groups of women?	No	!
Regarding inheritance rights of female surviving spouses, does the law apply to all groups of women?	No	!
Are there informal laws (customary, traditional or religious laws/rules) that create different rights or abilities between sons and daughters when it comes to inheritance?	Yes	!
Are there informal laws (customary, traditional or religious laws/rules) that create different rights or abilities between male and female surviving spouses when it comes to inheritance?	Yes	!

Note: Cut-off date for the legal data is 31 August 2022.

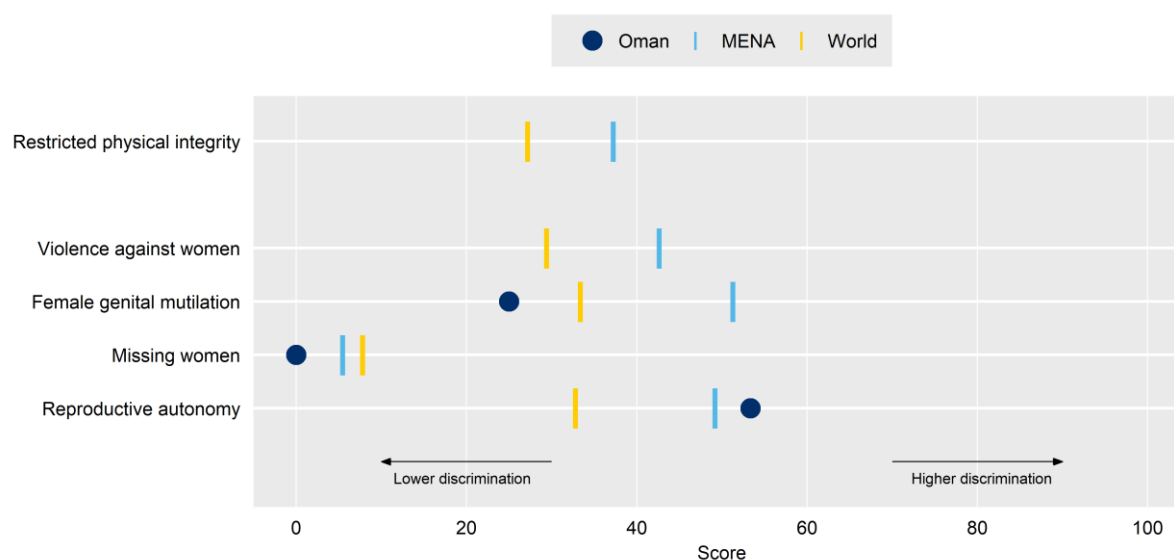
Source: OECD Development Centre/OECD (2023), *SIGI 2023 Legal Survey*, <https://oe.cd/sigi-dashboard>.

Restricted physical integrity

Oman did not obtain a score in the “Restricted physical integrity” dimension because of missing data points in certain underlying variables – namely the share of women who have experienced intimate-partner violence at least once over the last 12 months or during their lifetime.

Nevertheless, scores could be calculated in the remaining indicators of the dimension. In this dimension, women and girls in Oman experience the highest levels of discrimination in the “Reproductive autonomy” indicator with a score of 53, followed by “Female genital mutilation” with a score of 25. No discrimination is found in the “Missing women” indicator with a score of 0.

Figure 4. Restricted physical integrity scores for Oman, 2023



Note: Scores range from 0 to 100, with 0 indicating no discrimination and 100 indicating absolute discrimination. The MENA region covers Algeria, Bahrain, Djibouti, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates, the West Bank and Gaza Strip and Yemen.

Source: OECD (2023), “Social Institutions and Gender Index (Edition 2023)”, *OECD International Development Statistics* (database), <https://doi.org/10.1787/33beb96e-en>.

Violence against women

Practices and social norms related to violence against women

There are no available data in Oman that are comparable to other countries on the prevalence of intimate-partner violence against women – whether it is calculated over their lifetime or during the last 12 months.

Nevertheless, the social acceptance of intimate-partner violence remains present. In 2023, 10% of women aged 15-49 think that it is justified for a husband to hit or beat his wife under certain circumstances, such as burning the food, arguing with the spouse, going out without telling him, neglecting the children, or refusing to have sex. In comparison, 30% of women holds these discriminatory attitudes worldwide, as well as across the MENA region – based on countries for which data are available.

Legal frameworks concerning violence against women

Oman does not have a dedicated law addressing all forms of violence against women. Different forms of violence against women (such as domestic violence or sexual violence) are covered in separate or general pieces of legislation. Oman's legal framework does not criminalise domestic violence. Article 257 of the Penal Law¹³ criminalises rape as non-consensual sexual intercourse. As Article 263 defines sexual intercourse as penetration by the male organ, survivors of rape may need to prove penetration. The definition of rape does not specifically cover marital rape.

Question	Answer	Assessment
Is there a law specifically addressing violence against women?	No	!
If there is a specific law addressing violence against women, are there specific provisions for investigation, prosecution and punishment of the perpetrator?	n.a.	n.a.
If there is a specific law addressing violence against women, are there specific provisions for protection and support services for victims/survivors?	n.a.	n.a.
Does the law include reduced penalties in case of so-called "honour crimes"?	No	✓
Domestic violence		
Is domestic violence a criminal offence?	No	!
Does domestic violence legislation cover physical abuse?	No	!
Does domestic violence legislation cover sexual abuse?	No	!
Does domestic violence legislation cover psychological abuse?	No	!
Does domestic violence legislation cover economic abuse?	No	!
Are there any exceptions included in informal laws (traditional, religious, and/or customary rules/laws) that reduce penalties for domestic violence?	No	✓
Rape		
Is rape a criminal offence?	Yes	✓
Is the legal definition of rape based on lack of consent?	Yes	✓
If the legal definition of rape is based on lack of consent, does this require proof of physical force?	No	✓
If the legal definition of rape is based on lack of consent, does this require proof of penetration?	Yes	!
Does the legal definition of rape include marital rape?	No	!
Does the law permit the reduction or removal of legal punishment if the perpetrator marries the victim?	No	✓
Sexual harassment		
Does the law prohibit sexual harassment?	Yes	✓
Does the law on sexual harassment include criminal penalties?	Yes	✓
Do legal protections from sexual harassment apply in the workplace?	Yes	✓
Do legal protections from sexual harassment apply in educational establishments?	No	!
Do legal protections from sexual harassment apply in public spaces?	Yes	✓
Do legal protections from sexual harassment apply online / on the internet?	No	!

Note: Cut-off date for the legal data is 31 August 2022.

Source: OECD Development Centre/OECD (2023), *SIGI 2023 Legal Survey*, <https://oe.cd/sigi-dashboard>.

Female genital mutilation

Practices and social norms related to female genital mutilation and cutting (FGM/C)

Female genital mutilation and cutting (FGM/C) is traditionally concentrated in a limited number of countries that have been well-identified and documented by international organisations at the forefront of the fight against this harmful practice. Yet, evidence highlights that FGM/C takes place across all regions, among indigenous and/or diaspora communities originating from countries where FGM/C is known to be common.

¹³ Sultanate of Oman (2018), "Royal Decree 7/2018 promulgating the Penal Law", *Official Gazette No. 1226 of 14/01/2018*.

In some contexts, girls are taken across national borders to undergo FGM/C in a country where the legislation against the practice is either non-existent or less strict.¹⁴

There are no available data in Oman that are comparable to other countries on practices and social norms related to female genital mutilation and cutting.

Legal frameworks concerning female genital mutilation and cutting (FGM/C)

Article 20 of the Child Law,¹⁵ in conjunction with Article 4 of the Ministerial Decision 125/2019,¹⁶ allow to prosecute FGM/C acts on narrow grounds, namely as a recognised traditional practice that is harmful to children's health.

Question	Answer	Assessment
Does the law criminalise FGM/C on broad or narrow grounds?	Yes	✓
Does the law criminalise FGM/C on narrow grounds only?	Yes	✓
Are there informal laws (customary, traditional or religious laws) that allow or encourage FGM/C?	Yes	!
Does the law take precedence over informal laws (customary, traditional or religious laws) that allow, condone or prescribe FGM?	Yes	✓

Note: The SIGI methodology assesses laws on FGM/C according to two scenarios: (1) criminalisation on narrow grounds includes laws that contain criminal penalties for acts of “female genital mutilation”, “permanent altering/removal of external genitalia”, “female circumcision”, “excision”, “infibulation” and “genital mutilation”; (2) criminalisation on broad grounds includes “mutilation”, “harming of a person's organs”, “serious bodily injury” and “bodily injury/hurt/assault.” The presence of informal laws that allow or encourage FGM/C is proxied by the existence of nationally representative data on FGM/C or the existence of indirect estimates (usually used in countries where FGM/C is mainly practiced by diaspora communities), small-scale studies, or anecdotal evidence and media reports as reported by Equality Now, the End FGM European Network and the US End FGM/C Network in 2020.

Source: OECD Development Centre/OECD (2023), *SIGI 2023 Legal Survey*, <https://oe.cd/sigi-dashboard>, and Equality Now, End FGM European Network and US End FGM/C Network (2020), *Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting: A Call For A Global Response*, <https://www.equalitynow.org/resource/female-genital-mutilation-cutting-a-call-for-a-global-response/>.

Missing women

Practices related to missing women

The “Missing women” indicator captures whether there are any existing imbalances in the natural sex ratio between girls and boys aged 0-4 due to pre- and postnatal gender-biased sex selection. These imbalances can result from sex-selective abortions, female infanticide, and/or inadequate healthcare and nutrition for girls. A natural boy-to-girl sex ratio at birth is generally estimated to be below 105. A ratio exceeding 105 implies the existence of more boys aged 0-4 than one would expect, indicating a potential phenomenon of son preference resulting in the systemic elimination of new-born girls.

In Oman, the “missing women” phenomenon is not an issue. The boy-to-girl sex ratio for children aged 0-4 is estimated at 103.9, which means that there are approximately 103.9 boys aged 0-4 for 100 girls of the same age, which is in line with a natural sex ratio at birth.

¹⁴ Equality Now, End FGM European Network and US End FGM/C Network (2020), *Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting: A Call For A Global Response*, <https://www.equalitynow.org/resource/female-genital-mutilation-cutting-a-call-for-a-global-response/>.

¹⁵ Sultanate of Oman (2014), “Royal Decree No. 22/2014 promulgating the Child Law”, *Official Gazette No. 1058 of 25/05/2014*.

¹⁶ Sultanate of Oman (2019), “Ministerial Decision 125/2019 issuing the Governance Regulation of the Child Law”, *Ministry of Social Development*.

Reproductive autonomy

Practices related to women's reproductive autonomy

Unmet needs for family planning are calculated as the proportion of women of reproductive age (15-49 years), married or in union, who wish to interrupt or delay childbearing but do not use any method of contraception.

In Oman, the gap between women's reproductive intentions and their contraceptive behaviour is substantial, with 26% of women aged 15-49 who declare having an unmet need for family planning, compared to a world average of 12% and an average of 13% in the MENA region – based on countries for which data are available.

Legal frameworks concerning women's reproductive autonomy

Women's reproductive autonomy can be restricted by laws that prohibit the access to safe and legal abortion under essential circumstances (in cases of rape, incest, threats to the life or health of the pregnant woman and severe foetal impairment).¹⁷ Evidence shows that the share of unsafe abortions is higher in countries with restrictive abortion laws. Unsafe abortions are a leading but preventable cause of maternal mortality and millions of girls and women are hospitalised every year following complications of unsafe abortion procedures.¹⁸

Articles 315 to 320 of the Penal Law¹⁹ stipulate distinct penalties for induced abortion when carried out with or without the consent of the pregnant women, regardless of the circumstances. Article 36 of the Law on Medical Practice²⁰ permits medical practitioners to carry out a legal abortion only when necessary to save the pregnant woman's life or if the pregnancy would cause a miscarriage.

Question	Answer	Assessment
Is abortion illegal under any circumstances?	No	✓
Is abortion legally permitted in cases where: it is essential to save the woman's life?	Yes	✓
Is abortion legally permitted in cases where: it is essential to preserve the physical health of the woman?	No	!
Is abortion legally permitted in cases where: it is essential to preserve the mental health of the woman?	No	!
Is abortion legally permitted in cases where: pregnancy is the result of rape or statutory rape?	No	!
Is abortion legally permitted in cases where: pregnancy is the result of incest?	No	!
Is abortion legally permitted in cases where: social and economic reasons do not allow the mother to sustain a pregnancy?	No	!
Is abortion legally permitted in cases where: foetal impairment?	No	!
Does a woman require the approval of a medical practitioner to seek a legal abortion?	Yes	!
Does the law require the approval of the father of the foetus to seek a legal abortion?	No	✓
Is there any national plan or policy that provide universal access to family planning services?	No	!
Is there any law or national policy that provide free or subsidised access to contraception?	No	!
Does the national school curricula include mandatory and comprehensive sexuality education?	No	!

Note: Cut-off date for the legal data is 31 August 2022.

Source: OECD Development Centre/OECD (2023), *SIGI 2023 Legal Survey*, <https://oe.cd/sigi-dashboard>.

¹⁷ CEDAW (2022), *Access to safe and legal abortion: Urgent call for United States to adhere to women's rights convention*, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2022/07/access-safe-and-legal-abortion-urgent-call-united-states-adhere-womens-rights>.

¹⁸ UNFPA (2022), *State of World Population 2022: Seeing the Unseen - The Case for Action in the Neglected Crisis of Unintended Pregnancy*, UNFPA, Geneva, <https://doi.org/10.18356/9789210015004>.

¹⁹ Sultanate of Oman (2018), "Royal Decree 7/2018 promulgating the Penal Law", *Official Gazette No. 1226 of 14/01/2018*.

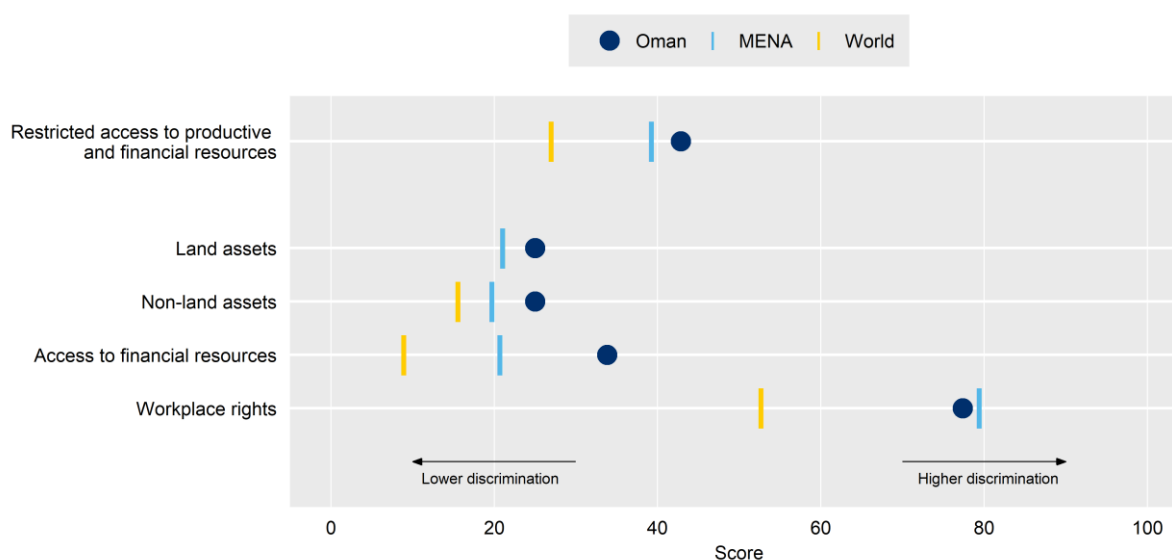
²⁰ Sultanate of Oman (2019), "Royal Decree No. 75/2019 issuing Law Regulating the Practice of Medical Profession and Paramedical Professions", *Official Gazette No. 1317 of 11/11/2019*.

Restricted access to productive and financial resources

Oman exhibits high levels of discrimination within the family with a score of 43, compared to a world average of 27 and an average score of 39 in the MENA region – based on countries for which scores could be calculated.

In this dimension, women and girls in Oman experience the highest levels of discrimination in the “Workplace rights” indicator with a score of 77, followed by the “Access to financial services” indicator, with a score of 34. The lowest levels of discrimination in this dimension are found in the “Access to land assets” and “Access to non-land assets” indicators, with a score of 25 for both.

Figure 5. Restricted access to productive and financial resources scores for Oman, 2023



Note: Scores range from 0 to 100, with 0 indicating no discrimination and 100 indicating absolute discrimination. The MENA region covers Algeria, Bahrain, Djibouti, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates, the West Bank and Gaza Strip and Yemen.

Source: OECD (2023), “Social Institutions and Gender Index (Edition 2023)”, *OECD International Development Statistics* (database), <https://doi.org/10.1787/33beb96e-en>.

Access to land assets

Practices related to women’s access to secure land assets

In Oman, there are no available data that are comparable to other countries on practices related to access to land assets.

Legal frameworks concerning women’s access to land assets

Question	Answer	Assessment
Does the law provide married women with the same rights as married men to own land?	Yes	✓
Does the law provide married women with the same rights as married men to use land?	Yes	✓
Does the law provide unmarried women with the same rights as unmarried men to own land?	Yes	✓
Does the law provide unmarried women with the same rights as unmarried men to use land?	Yes	✓
Regarding land, does the law apply to all groups of women?	Yes	✓

Question	Answer	Assessment
Are there informal laws (customary, religious or traditional laws/rules) that create different rights or abilities between men and women when it comes to the ownership or use of land assets?	Yes	!

Note: Cut-off date for the legal data is 31 August 2022.

Source: OECD Development Centre/OECD (2023), *SIGI 2023 Legal Survey*, <https://oe.cd/sigi-dashboard>.

Access to non-land assets

Practices related to women's secure access to non-land assets

In Oman, there are no available data that are comparable to other countries on practices related to access to non-land assets.

Legal frameworks concerning women's access to non-land assets

Question	Answer	Assessment
Does the law provide married women with the same rights as married men to own property and other non-land assets?	Yes	✓
Does the law provide married women with the same rights as married men to use property and other non-land assets?	Yes	✓
Does the law provide unmarried women with the same rights as unmarried men to own property and other non-land assets?	Yes	✓
Does the law provide unmarried women with the same rights as unmarried men to use property and other non-land assets?	Yes	✓
Regarding property and other non-land assets, does the law apply to all groups of women?	Yes	✓
Are there informal laws (customary, religious or traditional laws/rules) that create different rights or abilities between men and women when it comes to the ownership or use of non-land assets?	Yes	!

Note: Cut-off date for the legal data is 31 August 2022.

Source: OECD Development Centre/OECD (2023), *SIGI 2023 Legal Survey*, <https://oe.cd/sigi-dashboard>.

Access to financial services

Practices related to women's access to formal financial services

Gender imbalances in terms of access to financial services remain a substantial issue in Oman, but the overall access of the population is high. In 2023, 64% of women have a bank account at a financial institution, compared to 84% of men. This translates into women accounting for only 29% of bank account holders. In comparison, at the global level, 67% of women have a bank account, compared to 72% of men. Across the MENA region, on average, 40% of women have a bank account, compared to 54% of men, translating into women accounting for only 39% of bank account holders.

Legal frameworks concerning women's access to financial services

Question	Answer	Assessment
Does the law provide women with the same rights as men to open a bank account at a formal financial institution?	Yes	✓
Does the law require married women to obtain the signature and authority of their husband to open a bank account at a formal financial institution?	No	✓
Does the law provide women with the same rights as men to obtain credit?	Yes	✓
Regarding access to formal financial services, does the law apply to all groups of women (regardless of race, ethnicity caste, etc.)?	Yes	✓
Are there informal laws (customary, religious, or traditional laws/rules) that create different rights or abilities between men and women when it comes to opening a bank account?	No	✓
Are there informal laws (customary, religious, or traditional laws/rules) that create different rights or abilities between men and women when it comes to obtaining credit?	Yes	!

Note: Cut-off date for the legal data is 31 August 2022.

Source: OECD Development Centre/OECD (2023), *SIGI 2023 Legal Survey*, <https://oe.cd/sigi-dashboard>.

Workplace rights

Practices and social norms related to women's workplace rights

Women remain largely excluded from positions with decision-making power in the economic sphere. Women only account for 26% of employees in a managerial position,²¹ compared to a world average of 25% and an average of 14% in the MENA region – based on countries for which data are available.

There are no available data in Oman that are comparable to other countries on attitudes related to women's ability to be business executives or to men's priority to have a job compared to women. In 2023, 45% of the world's population agrees that when jobs are scarce, men should have more right to a job than women. In the MENA region this percentage reaches 73% – based on countries for which data are available.

Legal frameworks concerning women's workplace rights

The legal framework governing workplace and labour rights does not mandate equal pay for work of equal value. Article 82 of the Labour Law²² stipulates that women may not be employed to perform hazardous or arduous work, or any other work as specified by the Ministry, whereas Article 81 restricts women's rights to work during the night.

Question	Answer	Assessment
Does the law prohibit discrimination in employment on the basis of sex?	Yes	✓
Does the law mandate equal remuneration for work of equal value?	No	!
Does the law prohibit women from entering certain professions?	Yes	!
Does the law allow women to work the same night hours as men?	No	!
Does the law mandate paid maternity leave?	Yes	✓
Does the law mandate paid paternity leave?	No	!
Does the law mandate paid parental leave?	No	!
Does the law require women to have permission from their husband or legal guardian to take a paid job?	No	✓
Does the law require women to have permission from their husband or legal guardian to register a business?	No	✓
Regarding women's legal right to take a paid job or work and/or register a business, does the law apply to all groups of women (regardless of race, ethnicity caste, etc.)?	Yes	✓
Are there informal laws (customary, religious, or traditional laws/rules) that create different rights or abilities between men and women when it comes to entering certain professions?	Yes	!
Are there informal laws (customary, religious, or traditional laws/rules) that require women to have the permission from their husband or legal guardian to take a paid job?	Yes	!
Are there informal laws (customary, religious, or traditional laws/rules) that require women to have the permission from their husband or legal guardian to register a business?	Yes	!

Note: Cut-off date for the legal data is 31 August 2022.

Source: OECD Development Centre/OECD (2023), *SIGI 2023 Legal Survey*, <https://oe.cd/sigi-dashboard>.

²¹ This indicator corresponds to SDG indicator 5.2.2

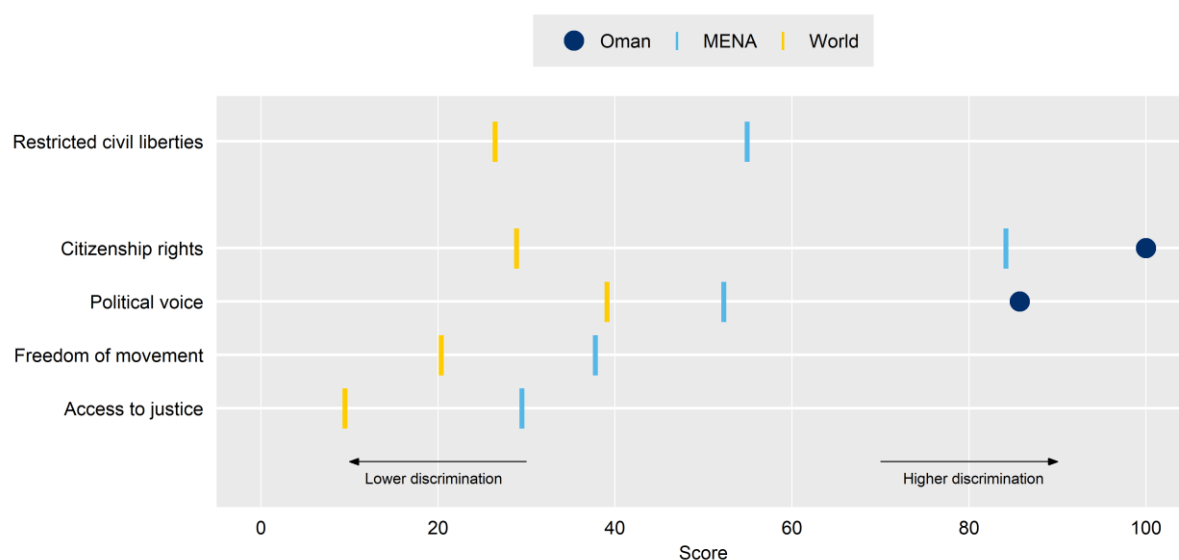
²² Sultanate of Oman (2019), "Royal Decree No. 35/2003 issuing the Labour Law", *Official Gazette No. 742 of 03/05/2003*.

Restricted civil liberties

Oman did not obtain a score in the “Restricted civil liberties” dimension because of missing data points in certain variables – namely (1) the proportion of women among the people not feeling safe walking alone at night in the city or area where they live, and (2) the proportion of women among the people not having confidence in the judicial system and courts of their country.

Nevertheless, scores could be calculated in certain indicators of the dimension. In this dimension, women and girls in Oman experience the highest levels of discrimination in the “Citizenship rights” indicator with a score of 100, followed by the “Political voice” indicator with a score of 86.

Figure 6. Restricted civil liberties scores for Oman, 2023



Note: Scores range from 0 to 100, with 0 indicating no discrimination and 100 indicating absolute discrimination. The MENA region covers Algeria, Bahrain, Djibouti, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates, the West Bank and Gaza Strip and Yemen.

Source: OECD (2023), “Social Institutions and Gender Index (Edition 2023)”, *OECD International Development Statistics* (database), <https://doi.org/10.1787/33beb96e-en>.

Citizenship rights

Legal frameworks concerning women’s citizenship rights

Articles 11 and 18 of the Citizenship Law²³ establish that a father automatically confers the Omani nationality to his children while a mother can only do so in a limited number of cases defined by the Citizenship Law. Moreover, Articles 15 and 16 of the Citizenship Law stipulate the conditions for a foreigner to acquire the Omani citizenship. The same articles grant both Omani women and men the right to confer their nationality to their foreign spouses, but under different conditions.

Question	Answer	Assessment
Does the law provide married women with the same rights as married men to acquire nationality?	No	!
Does the law provide unmarried women with the same rights as unmarried men to acquire nationality?	Yes	✓

²³ Sultanate of Oman (2019), “Royal Decree No. 38/2014 promulgating the Omani Citizenship Law”, *Official Gazette No. 1066 of 17/08/2014*.

Question	Answer	Assessment
Does the law provide married women with the same rights as married men to change their nationality?	Yes	✓
Does the law provide unmarried women with the same rights as unmarried men to change their nationality?	Yes	✓
Does the law provide married women with the same rights as married men to retain their nationality?	Yes	✓
Does the law provide unmarried women with the same rights as unmarried men to retain their nationality?	Yes	✓
Does the law provide married women with the same rights as married men to confer nationality to their spouse?	No	!
Does the law provide married women with the same rights as married men to confer nationality to their children?	No	!
Does the law provide unmarried women with the same rights as unmarried men to confer nationality to their children?	No	!
Regarding women's nationality rights, does the law apply to all groups of women (regardless of race, caste, ethnicity, etc.)?	Yes	✓
Are there informal laws (customary, traditional, or religious laws) that create different rights or abilities between men and women when it comes to acquiring, changing, or retaining their nationality?	No	✓
Are there informal laws (customary, traditional, or religious laws) that create different rights or abilities between men and women when it comes to conferring nationality to their spouse and/or children?	No	✓

Note: Cut-off date for the legal data is 31 August 2022.

Source: OECD Development Centre/OECD (2023), *SIGI 2023 Legal Survey*, <https://oe.cd/sigi-dashboard>.

Freedom of movement

Practices related to women's freedom of movement

Freedom of movement is recognised as a human right and mobility is essential in everyday life, for instance to reach the workplace or healthcare facilities. There are no available data in Oman that are comparable to other countries on practices related to freedom of movement.

Legal frameworks concerning women's freedom of movement

Beyond the challenge of ensuring that everyone feels safe enough to move around in public spaces, laws must guarantee women and men the same rights to obtain identification documents and to travel by themselves within and outside of their country.

Question	Answer	Assessment
Does the government provide national identity cards?	Yes	✓
Can a married woman apply for a national identity card in the same way as a married man? (in terms of rights and procedures)	Yes	✓
Can an unmarried woman apply for a national identity card in the same way as an unmarried man? (in terms of rights and procedures)	Yes	✓
Can a married woman apply for a passport in the same way as a married man (in terms of rights and procedures)?	Yes	✓
Can an unmarried woman apply for a passport in the same way as an unmarried man (in terms of rights and procedures)?	Yes	✓
Regarding identity cards and/or passports, does the law apply to all groups of women (regardless of race, caste, ethnicity, etc.)?	Yes	✓
Does the law provide married women with the same rights as married men to travel outside the country?	Yes	✓
Does the law provide married women with the same rights as married men to travel outside their homes?	Yes	✓
Are there informal laws (customary, religious, or traditional laws/rules) that create different rights or abilities between men and women when it comes to applying for identity cards or passports?	Yes	!

Note: Cut-off date for the legal data is 31 August 2022.

Source: OECD Development Centre/OECD (2023), *SIGI 2023 Legal Survey*, <https://oe.cd/sigi-dashboard>.

Political voice

Practices and social norms related to women's political voice

Women's political representation in the country is very low, with women accounting for only 2% of the members of parliament in 2023, compared to a world average of 27% and an average of 17% in the MENA region.

Regarding attitudes on women's ability to be political leaders, there are no available data in Oman that are comparable to other countries. In 2023, 48% of the world's population thinks that men make better political leaders than women. In the MENA region, this percentage reaches 69% – based on countries for which data are available.

Legal frameworks concerning women's political voice

Article 5 of the Constitution²⁴ establishes that only men born to Omani Muslim parents are eligible to be head of state.

Question	Answer	Assessment
Does the law provide women with the same rights as men to vote?	Yes	✓
Does the law provide women with the same rights as men to hold public and political office in the legislative branch?	Yes	✓
Does the law provide women with the same rights as men to hold public and political office in the executive branch?	No	!
Does the law provide women with the same rights as men to hold public office in the judiciary branch?	Yes	✓
Do constitutional/legislated gender quotas exist to promote women's political representation at the national level?	No	!
Do constitutional/legislated gender quotas exist to promote women's political representation at the local level?	No	!
Does the law provide for special measures other than quotas to promote women's political representation at the national level?	No	!
Does the law provide for special measures other than quotas to promote women's political representation at the local level?	No	!
Are there informal laws (customary, religious or traditional laws/rules) that create different rights or abilities between men and women when it comes to voting?	No	✓
Are there informal laws (customary, religious or traditional laws/rules) that create different rights or abilities between men and women when it comes to holding public office?	Yes	!

Note: Cut-off date for the legal data is 31 August 2022.

Source: OECD Development Centre/OECD (2023), *SIGI 2023 Legal Survey*, <https://oe.cd/sigi-dashboard>.

Access to justice

Practices related to women's access to justice

There are no available data in Oman that are comparable to other countries on practices related to access to access to justice.

Legal frameworks concerning women's access to justice

The Evidence Law²⁵ stipulates that women's and men's testimonies are of equal value in civil and commercial courts. However, in some personal status cases which are administered in family courts, a woman's testimony is equal to half of a man's testimony.²⁶

Question	Answer	Assessment
Does the law provide women with the same rights as men to sue?	Yes	✓

²⁴ Sultanate of Oman (2021), "Royal Decree No. 6/2021 issuing the Basic Law of the State", *Official Gazette No. 1374 of 12/01/2021*.

²⁵ Sultanate of Oman (2008), "Royal Decree 68/2008 promulgating the Law of Evidence in Civil and Commercial Transactions", *Official Gazette No. 864 of 01/06/2008*.

²⁶ United States Department of State (2021), *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2021: Oman*, <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/OMAN-2021-HUMAN-RIGHTS-REPORT.pdf>.

Question	Answer	Assessment
Does a woman's testimony carry the same evidentiary weight as a man's in the civil courts?	Yes	✓
Does a woman's testimony carry the same evidentiary weight as a man's in the criminal courts?	Yes	✓
Does a woman's testimony carry the same evidentiary weight as a man's in the family courts?	No	!
Does a woman's testimony carry the same evidentiary weight as a man's in the tribunals?	Yes	✓
Are there informal laws (customary, religious or traditional laws/rules) that create different rights or abilities between men and women when it comes suing someone?	No	✓
Are there informal laws (customary, religious or traditional laws/rules) that create different rights or abilities between men and women when it comes to providing testimony in court?	Yes	!
Are there informal laws (customary, religious or traditional laws/rules) that create different rights or abilities between men and women when it comes to being judges, advocates or other court officers?	Yes	!

Note: Cut-off date for the legal data is 31 August 2022.

Source: OECD Development Centre/OECD (2023), *SIGI 2023 Legal Survey*, <https://oe.cd/sigi-dashboard>.