

Social Institutions and Gender Index

Timor-Leste

SIGI Country Profile

19 of March 2024

SIGI Country Profiles are produced by the OECD Development Centre

The information and analysis contained in this profile are based on data from the fifth edition of the Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) published in March 2023. The cut-off date for legal data is 31 August 2022; the cut-off date for quantitative data is 1 January 2023.

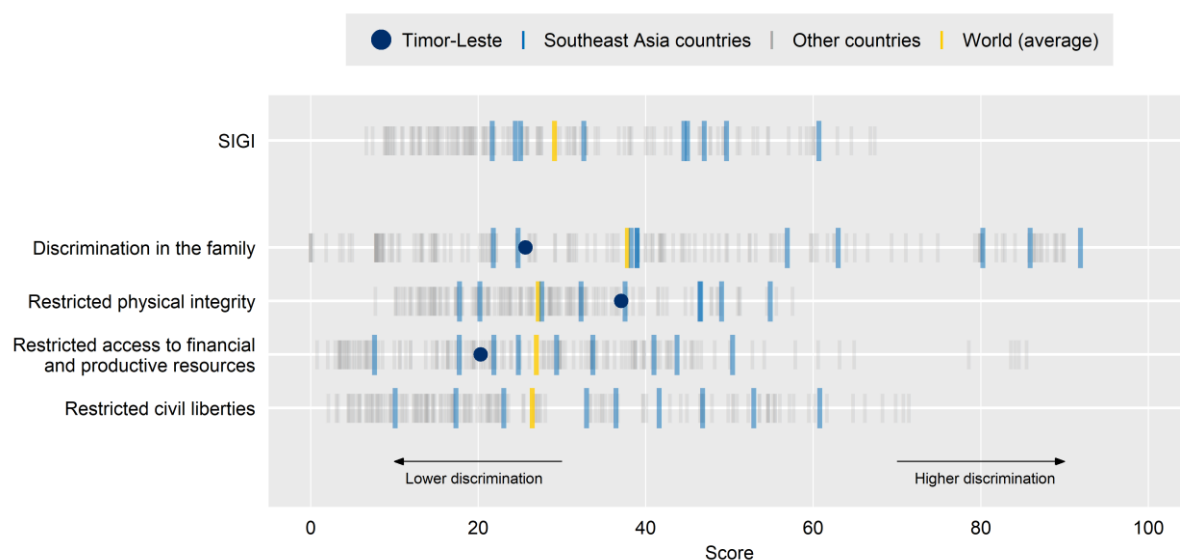
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Social institutions in Timor-Leste

The state of gender equality in Timor-Leste

The SIGI 2023 profile for Timor-Leste 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 Timor-Leste, 2023



Note: Scores range from 0 to 100, with 0 indicating no discrimination and 100 indicating absolute discrimination. The Southeast Asia region covers Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste and Viet Nam.

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

In 2023, Timor-Leste did not obtain a SIGI score due to missing data in the "Restricted civil liberties" dimension (Figure 1). The country is missing data on practices related to freedom of movement and access

to justice – more specifically, (1) the share of women among those declaring not feeling safe walking alone at night in the city or area where they live and (2) the share of women among those declaring not trusting the country’s judicial system and courts. The country obtained a score of 37 in the “Restrictive physical integrity” dimension, followed by “Discrimination in the family” (26) and “Restricted access to productive and financial resources” (20).¹

Legislative framework in Timor-Leste

The legal system is based on civil law. Section 2 of the Constitution² recognises and values the norms and customs of Timor-Leste as long as these remain in accordance with to the Constitution and to any legislation dealing specifically with customary law. However, there is no approved legislation in Timor-Leste that confers legal value to customary justice mechanisms.³

Section 16 of the Constitution recognises and prohibits multiple and intersectional discrimination – an essential provision to enhance gender equality from a legal perspective. Moreover, Timor-Leste ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)⁴ in 2003, without reservations.⁵

Gender-disaggregated, gender-relevant and intersectional data and indicators are essential to better identify policy areas that have strong linkages with gender. In Timor-Leste, there are applicable legal provisions regulating the production and dissemination of gender statistics. Decree-Law No. 17/2019⁶ governs the organisation of the Secretary of State for Equality and Inclusion. Article 10(2) of Decree-Law No. 17/2019 mandates, among others, the statistical production and analysis of sex-disaggregated data.

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

Positive highlights

Timor-Leste has a strong legal framework which guarantees women and men equal rights regarding family and marriage matters, as well as in the economic and political spheres. Yet, in practice, informal laws often undermine this *de jure* equality, for instance by limiting women’s ability to inherit land or property assets. Nonetheless, gender gaps in asset ownership remain very limited. In the political sphere, legal quotas are in place since 2011 and have helped promote women’s political representation. As a result, in 2023, 40% of members of parliament are women, which is substantially higher than the global and regional averages.

Significant challenges

¹ 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 Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste (2002), “Constitution of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste”.

³ Almeida, B. (2017), “The Main Characteristics of the Timorese Legal System – a Practical Guide”, *Verfassung und Recht in Übersee / Law and Politics in Africa, Asia and Latin America*, vol. 50/2, pp. 175-187, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26429316>.

⁴ United Nations (1979), “Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women”, *Treaties Series*, vol. 1249, United Nations, New York, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-elimination-all-forms-discrimination-against-women>.

⁵ 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.

⁶ Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste (2019), “Decree-Law No. 17/2019 of 11 July”, *Jornal da República, Série I, No. 27 A*.

The limited availability of data on practices and social norms restricts the analysis and prevents from having a clear understanding of the state of gender equality in the country. Timor-Leste lacks data that are comparable to other countries in many dimensions covered by the SIGI. For instance, data on the division of domestic responsibilities, attitudes on women's and men's roles in society, as well as feeling of security and trust in the judicial system are not available.

Discriminatory social institutions undermine women's and girls' agency, bodily autonomy and integrity. Child marriage is not prohibited. The minimum legal age of marriage is 17 years for both girls and boys and there are also legal exceptions that allow for minors over 16 to get married. Moreover, the law does not comprehensively protect women from all forms of violence – particularly regarding sexual violence and rape. Prevalence levels of intimate-partner violence remain high and attitudes justifying men's use of physical violence against their spouses are widespread. Moreover, women's reproductive autonomy is restricted. Access to safe and legal abortion is only permitted if necessary to save the pregnant woman's life, safeguard her health or in cases of foetal impairment, whereas nearly one quarter of women report an unmet need for family planning.

Summary of results for Timor-Leste

Discrimination in the family	Unit	Value
Laws on child marriage	Score	75
Girl child marriage rate ¹	%	8.2
Boy child marriage rate ¹	%	0.7
Laws on household responsibilities	Score	25
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	-
Number of hours spent by men on unpaid care and domestic work in a 24-hour period	Hours	-
Number of hours spent by women on unpaid care and domestic work in a 24-hour period	Hours	-
Laws on divorce	Score	0
Laws on inheritance	Score	25
Restricted physical integrity	Unit	Value
Laws on violence against women	Score	50
Share of women who consider a husband to be justified in hitting or beating his wife under certain circumstances	%	69
Lifetime intimate-partner violence rate ²	%	38
12-month intimate-partner violence rate ²	%	24.6
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	106.4
Laws on reproductive autonomy	Score	75
Unmet needs for family planning ⁴	%	23.2
Restricted access to productive and financial resources	Unit	Value
Laws on land assets	Score	25
Share of women among landowners	%	48
Laws on non-land assets	Score	25
Share of women among house owners	%	47.8
Laws on financial assets	Score	0
Share of women among bank account owners	%	53
Laws on workplace rights	Score	0
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	%	24.5
Share of firms with a woman as top manager	%	32.2
Restricted civil liberties	Unit	Value
Laws on citizenship rights	Score	0
Laws on political voice	Score	0
Share of the population declaring that “men make better political leaders than women do”	%	-
Share of women in Parliament (lower chamber)	%	40
Laws on freedom of movement	Score	0
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	0
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.

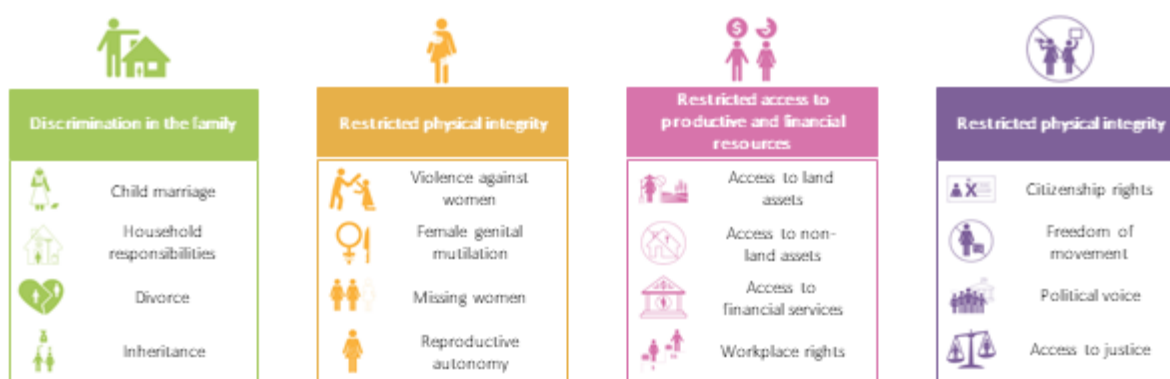
Source: OECD Development Centre/OECD (2023), “Gender, Institutions and Development Database”, <https://doi.org/10.1787/7b0af638-en>.

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.⁷ The CEDAW General Recommendation No. 33 also recognises indigenous laws.⁸ 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.

⁷ 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.

⁸ 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

Timor-Leste exhibits low levels of discrimination within the family with a score of 26, compared to a world average of 38 and an average score of 52 in Southeast Asia – based on countries for which scores could be calculated.

In this dimension, women and girls in Timor-Leste experience the highest levels of discrimination in the “Child marriage” indicator with a score of 47, followed by “Household responsibilities” and “Inheritance,” with scores of 25 for both. No discrimination is found in the “Inheritance” indicator, with a score of 0.

Figure 3. Discrimination in the family scores for Timor-Leste, 2023



Note: Scores range from 0 to 100, with 0 indicating no discrimination and 100 indicating absolute discrimination. The Southeast Asia region covers Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste and Viet Nam.

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 a concern in Timor-Leste, primarily affecting girls. In 2023, 8% of girls aged 15-19 were or are still married, divorced, widowed or in an informal union, compared to 1% of boys. In addition, 15% of women aged 20-24 were married or in a union before the age of 18,⁹ compared to a world average of 26% and an average of 17% in Southeast Asia – based on countries for which data are available.

Legal frameworks concerning child marriage

⁹ This indicator corresponds to SDG indicator 5.3.1

Pursuant to Article 118 of the Civil Code,¹⁰ which defines a minor as any individual under the age of 17, and Article 1485, which authorises the marriage of any individual who has attained the legal age of majority, the minimum legal age of marriage in Timor-Leste is set at 17 years. Articles 1493 and 1500 of the Civil Code also establish that minors aged between 16 and 17 years can get married with the consent of the parents or legal guardians, or of the registrar of the civil registry.

Question	Answer	Assessment
What is the legal age of marriage for men?	17	!
What is the legal age of marriage for women?	17	!
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?	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 judge or court?	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 another person or institution?	Yes	!
Does the legal age of marriage apply to all groups of women?	Yes	✓
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

There are no available data in Timor-Leste that are comparable to other countries on practices and social norms related to the division of household responsibilities. In 2023, across countries with available data, women dedicate 2.6 times more time on unpaid care and domestic work than men¹¹ worldwide, while in Southeast Asia this ratio is 3.1. Moreover, 56% of the world's population believes that when women work, the children will suffer. In Southeast Asia, this percentage reaches 35% – based on countries for which data are available.

Legal frameworks concerning household responsibilities

Question	Answer	Assessment
Does the law provide women with the same rights as men to be “head of household” or “head of family”?	Yes	✓
Does the law provide women with the same rights as men to be the legal guardians of their children during marriage?	Yes	✓
Does the law provide women with the same rights as men to be legal guardians of their children in informal unions?	Yes	✓
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?	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 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?	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>.

¹⁰ Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste (2011), “Law No. 10/2011 of 14 September 14 promulgating the Civil Code”, *Jornal da República, Série I, No. 34 A*.

¹¹ This indicator corresponds to SDG indicator 5.4.1

Divorce

Legal frameworks concerning divorce

Question	Answer	Assessment
Do women and men have the same rights to initiate/file for a divorce?	Yes	✓
Can women and men finalise a divorce or annulment with the same requirements?	Yes	✓
Do women and men have the same rights to child custody following a divorce?	Yes	✓
Regarding divorce, does the law apply to all groups of women?	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 initiating divorce?	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 being the legal guardians of their children after divorce?	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>.

Inheritance

Legal frameworks concerning inheritance rights

Question	Answer	Assessment
Do daughters and sons have the same rights to inherit?	Yes	✓
Do female and male surviving spouses have the same rights to inherit?	Yes	✓
Regarding inheritance rights of daughters, does the law apply to all groups of women?	Yes	✓
Regarding inheritance rights of female surviving spouses, does the law apply to all groups of women?	Yes	✓
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.

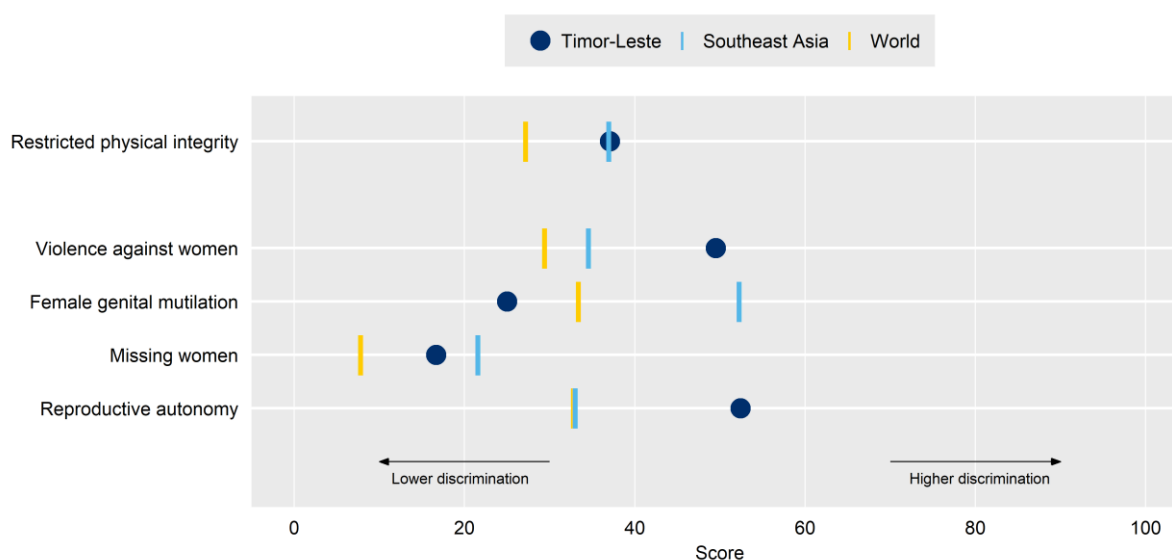
Source: OECD Development Centre/OECD (2023), *SIGI 2023 Legal Survey*, <https://oe.cd/sigi-dashboard>.

Restricted physical integrity

Timor-Leste exhibits medium levels of discrimination within the family with a score of 37, compared to a world average of 27 and an average score of 37 in Southeast Asia – based on countries for which scores could be calculated.

In this dimension, women and girls in Timor-Leste experience the highest levels of discrimination in the “Reproductive autonomy” indicator with a score of 52, followed by “Violence against women” and “Female genital mutilation” with scores of 49 and 25, respectively. The lowest levels of discrimination are found in the “Missing women” indicator, with a score of 17.

Figure 4. Restricted physical integrity scores for Timor-Leste, 2023



Note: Scores range from 0 to 100, with 0 indicating no discrimination and 100 indicating absolute discrimination. The Southeast Asia region covers Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste and Viet Nam.

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

Violence against women remains a major concern in Timor-Leste. In 2023, 38% of women aged 15-49 have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by a current or former partner at least once during their lifetime, and 25% of women aged more than 15 have experienced such violence at least once over the last 12 months.¹²

These levels of intimate-partner violence are rooted in its widespread social acceptance. In 2023, 69% 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,

¹² This indicator corresponds to SDG indicator 5.2.1

or refusing to have sex. In comparison, 30% of women holds these discriminatory attitudes worldwide, and 33% in Southeast Asia – based on countries for which data are available.

Legal frameworks concerning violence against women

Timor-Leste 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. Although Article 172 of the Penal Code¹³ criminalises rape and specifically covers marital rape, it does not ground its definition in the notion of consent. Finally, Article 181 of the Penal Code prohibits sexual harassment but only criminalises it if the act was committed publicly or if it entailed vaginal, anal or oral intercourse, against the victim's will.

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?	Yes	✓
Does domestic violence legislation cover physical abuse?	Yes	✓
Does domestic violence legislation cover sexual abuse?	Yes	✓
Does domestic violence legislation cover psychological abuse?	Yes	✓
Does domestic violence legislation cover economic abuse?	Yes	✓
Are there any exceptions included in informal laws (traditional, religious, and/or customary rules/laws) that reduce penalties for domestic violence?	Yes	!
Rape		
Is rape a criminal offence?	Yes	✓
Is the legal definition of rape based on lack of consent?	No	!
If the legal definition of rape is based on lack of consent, does this require proof of physical force?	n.a.	n.a.
If the legal definition of rape is based on lack of consent, does this require proof of penetration?	n.a.	n.a.
Does the legal definition of rape include marital rape?	Yes	✓
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?	No	!
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

¹³ Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste (2009), "Decree-Law No. 19/2009 of 8 April promulgating the Penal Code", *Jornal da República, Série I, No. 14*.

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. 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 Timor-Leste 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)

Articles 146 and 147 of the Penal Code¹⁵ allow to prosecute FGM/C acts on broad grounds, namely under acts of serious bodily harm such as depriving of an important organ or limb. However, the law does not criminalise FGM/C on narrow grounds.

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?	No	!
Are there informal laws (customary, traditional or religious laws) that allow or encourage FGM/C?	No	✓
Does the law take precedence over informal laws (customary, traditional or religious laws) that allow, condone or prescribe FGM?	n.a.	n.a.

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 Timor-Leste, the “missing women” phenomenon is present. The boy-to-girl sex ratio for children aged 0-4 is estimated at 106.4, which means that there are approximately 106.4 boys aged 0-4 for 100 girls of the same age. This ratio is slightly higher than the 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 Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste (2009), “Decree-Law No. 19/2009 of 8 April promulgating the Penal Code”, *Jornal da República, Série I, No. 14*.

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 Timor-Leste, the gap between women's reproductive intentions and their contraceptive behaviour is substantial, with 23% 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 11% in Southeast Asia – 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).¹⁶ 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.¹⁷

Article 141 of the Penal Code¹⁸, as amended in July 2009,¹⁹ prohibits and criminalises abortion unless it is the only option to save the pregnant woman's life.

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?	Yes	✓
Is there any law or national policy that provide free or subsidised access to contraception?	Yes	✓
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>.

¹⁶ 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>.

¹⁷ 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>.

¹⁸ Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste (2009), "Decree-Law No. 19/2009 of 8 April promulgating the Penal Code", *Jornal da República, Série I, No. 14*.

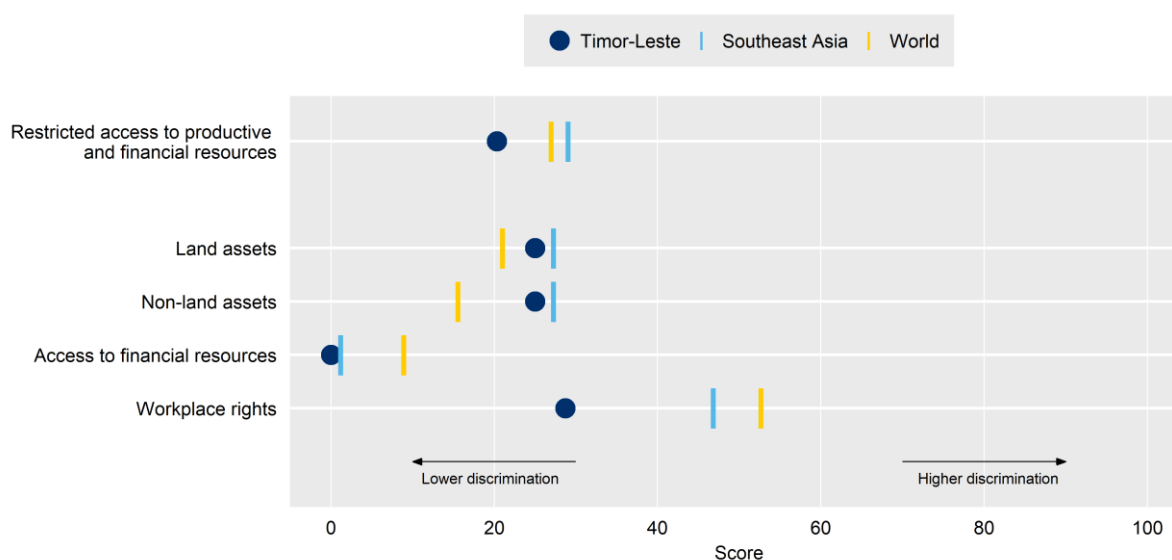
¹⁹ Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste (2009), "Law No. 6/2009 of 15 July (First amendment to the Penal Code approved by the Decree-Law No. 19/2009 of 8 April)", *Jornal da República, Série I, No. 25*.

Restricted access to productive and financial resources

Timor-Leste exhibits low levels of discrimination within the family with a score of 20, compared to a world average of 27 and an average score of 29 in Southeast Asia – based on countries for which scores could be calculated.

In this dimension, women and girls in Timor-Leste experience the highest levels of discrimination in the “Workplace rights” indicator, with a SIGI score of 29, followed by the “Access to land” and “Access to non-land assets” indicators, with a score of 25 for both. Finally, no discrimination is found in the “Access to financial services” indicator, with a score of 0.

Figure 5. Restricted access to productive and financial resources scores for Timor-Leste, 2023



Note: Scores range from 0 to 100, with 0 indicating no discrimination and 100 indicating absolute discrimination. The Southeast Asia region covers Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste and Viet Nam.

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 Timor-Leste, women’s land ownership is not a major concern. In 2023, 70% of women are landowners, compared to 75% of men. This translates in women accounting for 48% of landowners in the country.

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 Timor-Leste, women's access to non-land assets does not seem to be an issue. In 2023, 87% of women own a house, compared to 93% of men. This translates into women accounting for 48% of house owners in the country.

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 are limited in Timor-Leste, but the overall access of the population is relatively high. In 2023, 65% of women have a bank account at a financial institution, compared to 57% of men. This translates into women accounting for 53% of bank account holders. In comparison, at the global level, 67% of women have a bank account, compared to 72% of men. Across Southeast Asia, on average, 52% of women have a bank account, compared to 54% of men.

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?	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>.

Workplace rights

Practices and social norms related to women's workplace rights

Women remain largely excluded from decision-making power positions in the economic sphere: 32% of companies in the country are headed by women, and women only account for 25% of employees in a managerial position.²⁰ This is in line with the world average of 25% but below the average of 36% in Southeast Asia – based on countries for which data are available.

There are no available data in Timor-Leste 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 Southeast Asia this percentage reaches 64% – based on countries for which data are available.

Legal frameworks concerning women's workplace rights

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?	Yes	✓
Does the law prohibit women from entering certain professions?	No	✓
Does the law allow women to work the same night hours as men?	Yes	✓
Does the law mandate paid maternity leave?	Yes	✓
Does the law mandate paid paternity leave?	Yes	✓
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?	No	✓
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?	No	✓
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?	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>.

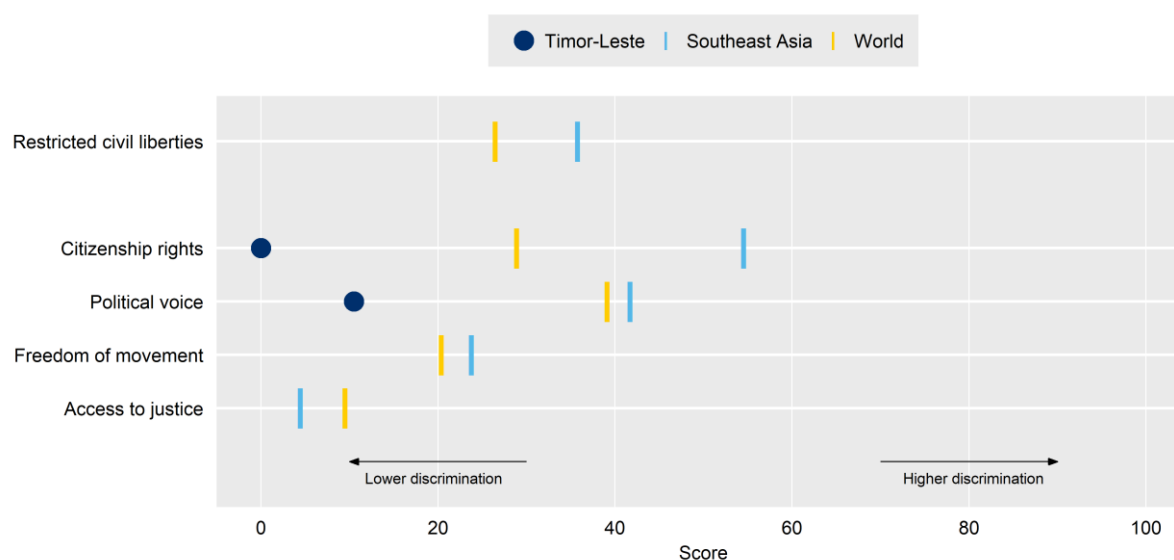
²⁰ This indicator corresponds to SDG indicator 5.2.2

Restricted civil liberties

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

Nevertheless, scores could be calculated in the remaining indicators of the dimension. In this dimension, levels of discrimination are very low in the “Political voice” indicator, with scores of 10, while no discrimination is found in the “Citizenship rights” indicator, with a score of 0.

Figure 6. Restricted civil liberties scores for Timor-Leste, 2023



Note: Scores range from 0 to 100, with 0 indicating no discrimination and 100 indicating absolute discrimination. The Southeast Asia region covers Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste and Viet Nam.

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

Question	Answer	Assessment
Does the law provide married women with the same rights as married men to acquire nationality?	Yes	✓
Does the law provide unmarried women with the same rights as unmarried men to acquire nationality?	Yes	✓
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?	Yes	✓
Does the law provide married women with the same rights as married men to confer nationality to their children?	Yes	✓
Does the law provide unmarried women with the same rights as unmarried men to confer nationality to their children?	Yes	✓
Regarding women’s nationality rights, does the law apply to all groups of women (regardless of race, caste, ethnicity, etc.)?	Yes	✓

Question	Answer	Assessment
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 Timor-Leste 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?	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>.

Political voice

Practices and social norms related to women's political voice

Women's political representation in the country is high, with women accounting for 40% of the members of parliament in 2023, compared to a world average of 27% and an average of 22% in Southeast Asia.

Regarding attitudes on women's ability to be political leaders, there are no available data in Timor-Leste that are comparable to other countries. In 2023, 48% of the world's population thinks that men make better political leaders than women. In Southeast Asia, this percentage reaches 62% – based on countries for which data are available.

Legal frameworks concerning women's political voice

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?	Yes	✓
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?	Yes	✓
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?	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>.

Access to justice

Practices related to women's access to justice

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

Legal frameworks concerning women's access to justice

Question	Answer	Assessment
Does the law provide women with the same rights as men to sue?	Yes	✓
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?	Yes	✓
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?	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 being judges, advocates or other court officers?	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>.