* **Population Disaggregation: 51% male to 49% female**[[1]](#endnote-1)
* **Population Age & Sex Disaggregation: <5yrs 15% (7% female and 8% male); 5-19yrs 35.5% (17% female and 18.5% male); 20-**64yrs **46% (23% female and 23% male); >65yrs 3.5% (1.5% female and 2% male)[[2]](#endnote-2)**
* **Household Size: 5(Urban – 6; Rural - 5)[[3]](#endnote-3)**
* **Female headed households: 18%[[4]](#endnote-4)**
* **Literacy Rates 15-24yrs: male 91%; female 88%[[5]](#endnote-5)**
* **Under 5 Mortality Rate: 24 per 1000 live births[[6]](#endnote-6)**
* **Maternal Health: Maternal mortality 114 per 100,000 live births[[7]](#endnote-7)**
* **Rate of Domestic Violence: 63.5%[[8]](#endnote-8)**
* **Proportion of People with Disability: 14% (15% women, 13% men) [[9]](#endnote-9)**

# Gender in Brief

The Solomon Islands (SI) comprises 6 main islands and numerous smaller islands stretching across 1300 sq km ocean. The population of SI was estimated at 639157 as of 2016[[10]](#endnote-10), spread across 9 provinces and is culturally and linguistically diverse with 87 different languages[[11]](#endnote-11). Ethnically the population is made up of 94% Melanesians; 4% Polynesians; and 2% Asians, Caucasians and Micronesians[[12]](#endnote-12). SI can be characterised as a patriarchal society with both patrilineal and matrilineal lineages, in which women continue to face, inequalities, in all spheres of life: social, cultural, economic and political. Internal migration for economic opportunities has existed since colonization and has been the source of considerable tension between islanders. Inter-provincial marriages, mixing patrilineal and matrilineal traditions, has complicated land ownership, community relations and gender relationships. An estimated 80% live in rural areas, many in remote islands and mountainous terrain, and poverty is largely a rural phenomenon. A report on poverty and household incomes indicates 12.7% of the population of SI lives below the poverty line.[[13]](#endnote-13) SI has a 2016 Human Development Index (HDI) of 156/188 countries in comparison with Federated States of Micronesia at 126, Timor-Leste at 133, Vanuatu at 134, and PNG at 153[[14]](#endnote-14). There is no Gender Development Index or Gender Inequality Index data available for SI.

**Traditional roles and responsibilities for men and women:** Women and men generally have gendered community and household roles, influenced by traditional customs, and religious and colonial systems, which have normalized men as decision makers and women as subordinate citizens in the public and private sphere.[[15]](#endnote-15) Male dominance has also been exacerbated by recent conflicts where the population was subjected to militarisation and violence that promoted hyper-masculine behaviors, including violence toward women and children.[[16]](#endnote-16) In both urban and rural households, women and girls perform the majority of unpaid household work, which in rural areas includes collecting drinking water, walking to a water source to do laundry, and collecting fuel wood.[[17]](#endnote-17) In many rural areas, there is inadequate water, sanitation, and energy infrastructure to support women in their household and caregiving work. 55% of households have access to electricity (68% of these in urban areas), 91% of households use solid fuels for cooking, and many in rural areas tend to use shared facilities or have no toilet at all[[18]](#endnote-18). In decision making, women are influential in ‘behind the scenes’ negotiations, but this is more prevalent in matrilineal rather than patrilineal groups. 65% of women are involved in household decision making with findings suggesting positive changes in attitudes with women gaining influence and power over time.[[19]](#endnote-19)

**Education & Economic Empowerment:** Literacy rates in SI are reasonably high: 89% of men and 79% of women.[[20]](#endnote-20) Lack of literacy isolates women, preventing them from seeking services in case of domestic violence, and restricting their participation in community decision making. Literacy rates across age groups indicate a narrowing of the gender gap, but 25% of rural females still have no schooling compared with 10% urban females.[[21]](#endnote-21) Whilst SI has achieved gender parity in primary school enrolments, inequalities prevail in secondary schooling (female 20%, male 29%)[[22]](#endnote-22) because of economic viability of families, distances to schools and lack of safe transport and inadequate schooling infrastructure.

Men are much more likely than women to hold a wage job, particularly in the private sector. 75% of women and 54% of men are in vulnerable employment such as subsistence work, self-employment, and unpaid family work.[[23]](#endnote-23) Vulnerable employment is significantly less in urban areas, but still has a gender gap (41% of urban women, 21% of urban men)[[24]](#endnote-24). The unpaid nature of women’s work is particularly striking in rural areas: 81% of women compared to 58% of men[[25]](#endnote-25). Women produce the majority of subsistence food (76.2% compared to 58.1% of men)[[26]](#endnote-26), while men are more involved in the production, sale and marketing of more lucrative cash crops.[[27]](#endnote-27) Women are highly active in agriculture and small-scale income generation, but their economic participation and control of productive resources are constrained by lack of education, sociocultural discrimination, and lack of access to key resources such as transport and market infrastructure and distance from government offices.[[28]](#endnote-28) Youth unemployment is reported at 46%.[[29]](#endnote-29)

**Participation and Policy:** Despite human rights being articulated in the SI Constitution and the ratification of human rights treaties, legal and political structures perpetuate the unequal representation of women. Major obstruction to the realisation of full participation of women in judicial and parliamentary arenas is their lack of strategic resources including cash, social status and material wealth, as physical assets considered to be of high value by monetary and cultural definition. Presently, there are no quotas for women’s participation in national parliament though women’s groups have fought for this.[[30]](#endnote-30) Since Independence (1978), SI has only had 3 female Members of Parliament of the 50 available seats[[31]](#endnote-31). Women make up approximately 12.8% of positions to Honiara City Council and the 9 provincial councils[[32]](#endnote-32). The Constitution recognises customary as well as modern law. Informal village courts and customary law exist in parallel with the formal system and form a primary source of justice for rural populations. Customary norms may be invoked in relation to issues such as men’s and women’s control over family decisions, land rights, marriage and bride-price, division of labor, and the custody of children. Custom is often used to justify the notion that women are inferior to men, and that men’s oppressive behavior and violence is acceptable.[[33]](#endnote-33)

**Gender Based Violence and Protection:** Reports show that 90% of women who reported violence experienced it from an intimate partner, while 64% of ever partnered women aged 15-49 years reported physical, sexual or emotional violence, by their husband or partner in their lifetime[[34]](#endnote-34). Sexual partner violence was experienced by 55% of women and physical partner violence was experienced by 45% of women.[[35]](#endnote-35) One third of women reported being sexually abused before the age of 15[[36]](#endnote-36). Rural survivors are more disadvantaged than urban survivors because they have less access to trained care providers and rural police are less likely to be trained to handle domestic disputes and there are few formal justice options which are largely urban based. 73 % of men and women believe violence against women is justifiable, especially for infidelity and disobedience.[[37]](#endnote-37) The Government of SI developed a 10 year national action plan to eliminate violence against women[[38]](#endnote-38), but there are gaps in legislation with no laws to criminalize domestic violence, sexual harassment and marital rape.[[39]](#endnote-39). Inadequate representation of women at all levels of decision making is seen as a major obstacle to the collective action to tackle the prevalence and impact of violence within families and communities. There is a high level of stigma and prejudice against people in the basis of their (actual or perceived) sexual orientation with laws criminalizing consensual same-sex sexual activity. Men and women report discriminatory violence based on their sexual orientation and discrimination in employment and education.[[40]](#endnote-40)

**Gender in Emergencies**: SI is vulnerable to a variety of natural disasters including cyclones, floods, tsunamis and geological activity with frequent earthquakes, tremors and volcanic activity[[41]](#endnote-41). During emergencies, time becomes a precious resource and tensions often arise from women having to support family needs almost single-handedly while men concentrate on activities such as house building and wider community work. Women and girls in areas affected by disasters usually face greater challenges related to WASH, protection, shelter and food security and livelihood. Uncertain financial security often follows in after math of emergencies.

1. 2009 Population and Housing Census <http://www.mof.gov.sb/Libraries/Statistics/2011_06_-_Report_on_2009_Population_Housing_Census.sflb.ashx> [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. 2009 Population and Housing Census <http://www.mof.gov.sb/Libraries/Statistics/2011_06_-_Report_on_2009_Population_Housing_Census.sflb.ashx> [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. 2015 SI Demographic and Health Survey <http://www.statistics.gov.sb/images/SolomonFiles/Survey_Statistics/DHS_2015/Final-Report_SI-Demographic-and-Health-Survey-2015.pdf> [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. 2015 SI Demographic and Health Survey <http://www.statistics.gov.sb/images/SolomonFiles/Survey_Statistics/DHS_2015/Final-Report_SI-Demographic-and-Health-Survey-2015.pdf> [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. SI Poverty Profile based upon the 2012/2013 Household Income and Expenditure Survey <http://www.statistics.gov.sb/images/SolomonFiles/Social-and-Demography-Statistics/SI_Report_on_Poverty_2012-13_HIES_FINAL/Solomon_Islands_Report_on_Poverty_2012-13_HIES_FINAL.pdf> [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. 2015 SI Demographic and Health Survey [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. 2016 UNDP Human Development Report [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. 2016 UNDP Human Development Report [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. 2009 Population and Housing Census [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. National Statistics Office Solomon Islands <http://www.statistics.gov.sb/> [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. National Statistics Office Solomon Islands <http://www.statistics.gov.sb/> [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. 2016 UNDP Human Development Report [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. SI Poverty Profile based upon the 2012/2013 Household Income and Expenditure Survey [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. 2016 UNDP Human Development Report [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
15. 2015 ADB Solomon Islands Country Gender Assessment [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
16. <http://pacificpolicy.org/files/2013/04/Solomon-Islands-TRC-Final-Report-Vol-3.pdf> [↑](#endnote-ref-16)
17. 2015 SI Demographic and Health Survey [↑](#endnote-ref-17)
18. 2015 SI Demographic and Health Survey [↑](#endnote-ref-18)
19. 2015 SI Demographic and Health Survey [↑](#endnote-ref-19)
20. 2015 ADB Solomon Islands Country Gender Assessment [↑](#endnote-ref-20)
21. 2015 ADB Solomon Islands Country Gender Assessment [↑](#endnote-ref-21)
22. 2015 ADB Solomon Islands Country Gender Assessment [↑](#endnote-ref-22)
23. 2015 ADB Solomon Islands Country Gender Assessment [↑](#endnote-ref-23)
24. 2015 ADB Solomon Islands Country Gender Assessment [↑](#endnote-ref-24)
25. 2009 Population and Housing Census [↑](#endnote-ref-25)
26. 2009 Population and Housing Census: Report on Economic Activity and Labour Force [↑](#endnote-ref-26)
27. 2015 SI Demographic and Health Survey [↑](#endnote-ref-27)
28. 2015 ADB Solomon Islands Country Gender Assessment [↑](#endnote-ref-28)
29. 2016 UNDP Human Development Report [↑](#endnote-ref-29)
30. 2015 ADB Solomon Islands Country Gender Assessment [↑](#endnote-ref-30)
31. 2015 ADB Solomon Islands Country Gender Assessment [↑](#endnote-ref-31)
32. [www.pacwip.org](http://www.pacwip.org) [↑](#endnote-ref-32)
33. 2015 ADB Solomon Islands Country Gender Assessment [↑](#endnote-ref-33)
34. 2016 UNDP Human Development Report [↑](#endnote-ref-34)
35. 2015 ADB Solomon Islands Country Gender Assessment [↑](#endnote-ref-35)
36. 2015 ADB Solomon Islands Country Gender Assessment [↑](#endnote-ref-36)
37. WHO 2013 Violence against women in Solomon Islands: translating research into policy and action on the social determinants of health. [↑](#endnote-ref-37)
38. WHO 2013 Violence against women in Solomon Islands: translating research into policy and action on the social determinants of health. [↑](#endnote-ref-38)
39. 2015 ADB Solomon Islands Country Gender Assessment [↑](#endnote-ref-39)
40. 2016 Equal Rights Trust Country Report: Solomon Islands. Stand Up and Fight <http://www.equalrightstrust.org/ertdocumentbank/SI%20report.pdf> [↑](#endnote-ref-40)
41. <http://www.preventionweb.net/english/countries/oceania/slb/> [↑](#endnote-ref-41)