* **Population: 19.9 million (49% male to 51% female)[[1]](#endnote-2)**
* **Age Disaggregation: <5yrs 22%; 5-19yrs 42%; 20-64yrs 33%; >65yrs 3%[[2]](#endnote-3)**
* **Average household size: 5.9 people/HH[[3]](#endnote-4)**
* **Female headed households: 15.9%[[4]](#endnote-5)**
* **Polygamy rate: 36% (women aged 15-49 years)[[5]](#endnote-6)**
* **Literacy rates: 15-24 years: male 51%; female 21%[[6]](#endnote-7)**
* **Infant mortality rates: 63 per 1000 live births**[[7]](#endnote-8)

# Gender in Brief

Women are slightly more represented in Niger as there are 91 men for 100 women. The population is also very young; over half of Nigeriens are under 15 years of age and only 3% of them are over 63 years old. 4 in 5 inhabitants live in rural areas of Niger. Although the Nigerien Constitution grants equal rights regardless of gender, the 2014 Human Development Report ranked Niger last in the Gender Equality Index, due social factors including a shorter length of education leading to lower literacy rates for women, early marriage, very restricted liberties and resources and discriminatory law and practices that continue to be applied against women. While domestic violence against women is reportedly widespread, there are no reliable statistics as to prevalence rates, however attitudes towards domestic violence suggest that the latter is commonly accepted[[8]](#endnote-9).

**Traditional roles and responsibilities for men and women:** The agricultural sector represents about one third of the GDP of the country and employs almost 85% of the active population, essentially through subsistence crop farming and animal breeding[[9]](#endnote-10). Women have access to the land only during the dry season to cultivate vegetable and crops that are exclusively feminine such as gombo[[10]](#footnote-2), niebe[[11]](#footnote-3), squash, groundnut, etc…Sometimes they have to look for land that is further away, which increases their charges and place them in high risk situations. Land commissions are increasingly established to support local land management initiatives that are managed by groups of men and women[[12]](#endnote-11). When a crisis strikes (drought or flood) and the crop harvests show a deficit, men are forced to leave in exodus to other regions of the country or even outside the borders to look for work. Women go to big cities to work as cleaners or nannies but also practice desperate coping mechanisms including begging or sex for survival.

**Employment and income:** In Niger56% of urban households and 96% of rural households are affected by multidimensional poverty. The labor participation rate of women (aged 15 and over) is only 39.9%, compared to 89.8% for men[[13]](#endnote-12). Traditionally, women in Niger are discriminated against with regards to land security and property[[14]](#endnote-13). Whilst family law is becoming more gender equal, women are very likely to face social difficulties and economic hardship following marriage dissolution. This tends to be the case as divorce often comes about in an informal manner, and is laden with stigma[[15]](#endnote-14).

**Education and literacy:** School enrolment rates show an imbalance between sexes: 65% of boys against 51% of girls are enrolled in primary school, and just 14% of boys and 8% of girls are enrolled in secondary school. This could reflect parental decisions to prioritise boys’ education, and the fact that girls are married off at a much younger age that men[[16]](#endnote-15). The number of years of compulsory education has been increased in order to keep girls longer in schools and thereby combat sources of school drop-out including house chores, sexual harassment, rape, assault, child marriage and family pressure[[17]](#endnote-16). The difference between male and female literacy rates is substantial as less than two women out of ten aged 15 years old and over (11%) are literate, while this rate is twice or three times as high for men according to different sources[[18]](#endnote-17). Literacy rates for women are also much lower in rural areas (7%) that in urban areas (45%)[[19]](#endnote-18). The law on the Orientation of the Nigerien Education System (LOSEN, 1998) is in the process of being amended to establish a school free of charge for children until 16 years old, to allow Nigerien households to lighten their budget in relation to education[[20]](#endnote-19).

**Gender equality, legislation and representation:** Niger’s Constitution grants equal rights regardless of gender. Niger has ratified both the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) (1999), and the Optional Protocol on violence against women (2004). Niger has signed but not ratified the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa. Further, the country has not ratified the Maputo Protocol, which was signed in 2004, and aims at ensuring that the right to health of women, including sexual and reproductive health is respected and promoted[[21]](#endnote-20). Likewise, Niger has not yet adopted a National Action Plan on UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325, an international legal framework that addresses not only the inordinate impact of war on women, but also the pivotal role women should and do play in conflict management, conflict resolution and sustainable peace[[22]](#endnote-21). Niger has very high levels of discrimination against women in social institutions[[23]](#endnote-22), despite a Ministry of Social Development, Population, Advancement of Women and Protection of Children have been in place since 1998[[24]](#endnote-23).

Although quotas on political representation are enshrined in law, these are not widely implemented. Women are underrepresented at decision-making levels; only 13.3% of seats at the parliament are occupied by women[[25]](#endnote-24) and out of the 40 ministers in place, 8 of them are women. It is a similar situation at the local level since 5 municipalities out of 265 are run by women[[26]](#endnote-25).

**Gender-based and domestic violence:**In Niger, the majority of violent acts perpetrated against women are based on traditional practices[[27]](#endnote-26). TheMen Engage Initiative in Niger (which worked in partnership with men for women's empowerment), has recently led to a reduction of violence against women, an increasing awareness of men’s responsibilities as well as changes in perceptions of their role and the role of women[[28]](#endnote-27). Niger has also one of the highest rates of child marriage in the world: the legal age of marriage for girls in the country is 15. 28% of girls are married by 15 and 3 in 4 girls marry before their 18th birthday. A law has been proposed to change the age to 18 for girls but is yet to be adopted[[29]](#endnote-28). Further, more than half of women aged between 20-24 reported a birth before the age of 18. Consequently, after birth complications are frequent and the maternal mortality ratio is high, 590 for 100,000 live births[[30]](#endnote-29).

**Gender in Emergencies**: In times of droughts like the 2015-2016 harvest period in the Tillaberi region, rural women are forced to go to the cities to look for small activities such as house work, while men leave in exodus sometimes to other countries.

The high number of refugees and internally displaced people makes women and girls particularly at risk. Modern forms of slavery still persist and young girls are vulnerable to trafficking to neighboring countries, in particular Nigeria. The terrorist group Boko Haram has been known to operate in Niger, and has consistently targeted women and girls.

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11. Bean [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
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