* **Population Sex Disaggregation: 50.2% male; 49.8% female[[1]](#endnote-2)**
* **Population Age Disaggregation: 0-14yrs 41%; 15-64yrs 56%; >65yrs 3%[[2]](#endnote-3)**
* **Average household size: 5.9[[3]](#endnote-4)**
* **Female headed households: 14.2%[[4]](#endnote-5)**
* **Youth Literacy Rates 15-24 yrs: male 71%;[[5]](#endnote-6) female 59.8%[[6]](#endnote-7)**
* **Infant Mortality rates: 52 per 1000 live births** [[7]](#endnote-8)
* **Maternal Mortality rate: 311 per 100,000 live births [[8]](#endnote-9)**
* **Domestic Violence: 34% of women 15-49 think that a husband/partner can be justified in hitting/beating his wife[[9]](#endnote-10)**

# Gender in Brief

Sudan has a long history of protracted ethnic and rebel militia civil conflict. In January 2011, South Sudan seceded from Sudan, however rebel/government conflict continues in Darfur, and in the Southern Kordofan’s Nuba Mountains and Blue Nile state. Within a highly restrictive and unequal society, women and girls in Sudan are disproportionately affected by the ongoing conflict, with effects ranging from displacement and poverty, to direct violence from both state and non-state actors; with indirect impacts on their rights and access in a variety of other domains, such as education and health. Sudan hosts a diverse wealth of natural resources, but crisis has undermined economic growth, and in 2016 was considered the third largest emergency situation worldwide according to the number of internally displaced persons.[[10]](#endnote-11) Urbanization is limited, with 70.2% of households located in rural areas,[[11]](#endnote-12) and the population is skewed, with 62% of the population less than 25, and a high fertility rate (2.5% per year). Rural women and girls make up over 60% of the country’s most vulnerable poor.[[12]](#endnote-13) This Gender in Brief is challenged by the lack of recent data for Sudan, with the last census held in 2008, and therefore before the secession of South Sudan. Much of the data is therefore based on modelling.

**Gender roles and responsibilities:** Women’s lives in Sudan are highly restricted, governed by a patriarchal set of gender roles that are inhibitive and strictly enforced. This is guided by a traditional, restrictive interpretation of Shari’a law. Law protects and enforces men’s role as the breadwinner, and the requirement for women to obey their husbands.[[13]](#endnote-14) Under Islamic law, women have inheritance rights, but only half of that to which men are entitled. Contradictorily, customary law dictates that women do not have any rights to inheritance. It also prescribes that in the event of becoming a widow, women are commonly required to marry another man in the husband’s family. Forced early child marriage is reportedly a significant problem, however there is no data to support the prevalence. The inequality is highly evident in bodily integrity - women’s movement is governed and controlled by male relatives. Married women cannot travel without the permission of their husbands, and are often denied the right to leave unaccompanied. Only 12% of women 15-49 who are currently married are using any contraceptive method.[[14]](#endnote-15)

**Education and Economic Empowerment:**Less than a third of women in Sudan have had access to any form of education.[[15]](#endnote-16) Of children who are of primary school entry age, 36.1% of boys, and 37.5% of girls, are attending.[[16]](#endnote-17) In secondary school attendance ratios, significant differences exist amongst States for both boys and girls. The highly restricted mobility of women has particular impact on their capacity to join the workforce. Women’s labour force participation is at 31%, compared to 76% for men,[[17]](#endnote-18) and Sudanese youth (15-24) face high levels of unemployment (over 20%).[[18]](#endnote-19) Women have little access to credit (23%), and yet 79% report having to borrow money to be able to feed their families.[[19]](#endnote-20) The burden of unpaid work is large, with 96% of women reporting to spend over 40 hours per week, and 46% spending over 80 hours on unpaid activities.[[20]](#endnote-21)

**Participation and Policy:** Amidst the wider context of gender inequality that permeates Sudanese society, laws institutionalize discrimination against women in various ways. Sudan is one of the few states that have not ratified CEDAW. Governance in the country is non-inclusive, and women have largely been excluded from peace and conflict resolution processes. Whilst women and men’s equal civil, political, social, cultural, and economic rights are officially protected in Sudan’s Interim Constitution of 2005, following the secession of South Sudan in 2011, the Sudanese President announced that a new constitution, based on Sharia law, would be introduced, raising fears that the limited rights of women would face further restrictions.

In reality, cultural custom dictates the freedoms, and rights of women. Sudan’s legal environment reflects their interpretation of Shari’ah law. For example the so-called “public order regime” outlines vague proscriptions that criminalize acts that are “contrary to public morals”,[[21]](#endnote-22) with heavy flogging penalties, often brought against more marginalized communities. Public morality crimes are highly discriminatory against women, limiting both their movement and their freedoms, including their dress. Violent corporal punishments, and entrenched impunity for human rights abuses against women remain. There is a distinct lack of accountability and protection mechanisms, with women in particular facing immense obstacles to accessing justice.

**Gender Based Violence and Protection:** Gender inequalities in society are evident with very severe consequences for women and girls. Harmful cultural practices such as female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C), early marriage, physical domestic violence and other manifestations of sexual gender based violence (SGBV) appear to be prevalent. 89% of Sudanese women have undergone FGM/C: 87% of girls and women 15-49, and 32% of girls aged 0-14 (as reported by their mother).[[22]](#endnote-23) Marital rape is not recognized, nor are there laws protecting against domestic violence of sexual harassment. Legal avenues for protection or legal redress in response to sexual violence are lacking, either for fear of reporting, lack of investigation or persecution, or pressure to step down. The LGBTI community also face particular challenges, reportedly at increasing risk of violence and discrimination.

Sudanese women and girls, particularly those who are internally displaced, refugees, or from rural areas, face particular vulnerability to various forms of exploitation including domestic servitude, and human trafficking. Sudanese children are at particular risk of recruitment as combatants by both government forces and armed groups. Female activists and human rights defenders are regularly targeted in a range of abuses aimed to stifle dissent by the government, including through arbitrary arrest, unlawful detention, surveillance, beatings, and the use of lethal force to dissolve protests or demonstrations. Female activists report high levels of GBV in response to their activism, often perpetrated by police or national security agents.[[23]](#endnote-24)

**Gender in Emergencies:** The situation is Sudan is complex and complicated, with Sudan functioning as a transit, source, and destination country for asylum seekers, refugees and migrants; and with ongoing internal conflict within the country. Sudan currently hosts over 300,000 refugees and asylum seekers from nearby countries, as well as over 3 million internally displaced.[[24]](#endnote-25) In addition, an estimated 350,000 individuals of South Sudanese origin remain in Sudan following the secession in 2011; these people may have difficulties in regards to their nationality entitlements, both in Sudan and South Sudan.[[25]](#endnote-26) At the time of the 2016 Humanitarian Response Plan for Sudan, 5.8 million people were in need of humanitarian assistance,[[26]](#endnote-27) arising largely due to displacement, malnutrition, and food insecurity worsened by El Niño. According to IOM, 80% of single person-headed households in North and South Dafur are headed by women, exposing women and girls to increasing burden and risk, but also opening up areas for adaptation in tradition gender roles. Cases of women working with conflict-affected communities being targeted for abuse, detention, harassment and threats by the State have been recorded.[[27]](#endnote-28)

1. World Bank data, Sudan page [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
2. Ibid [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
3. Sudan MICS 2014, UNICEF [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
4. Ibid [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
5. World Bank data, Sudan page [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
6. Sudan MICS 2014, UNICEF [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
7. Ibid [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
8. UNICEF, *Maternal Mortality Rates 2015 Database*, https://data.unicef.org/topic/maternal-health/maternal-mortality/ [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
9. Sudan MICS 2014, UNICEF [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
10. Norwegian Refugee Council. 2015. Global Overview 2015: People Internally Displaced by Conflict and Violence. [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
11. Sudan MICS 2014, UNICEF [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
12. UNFPA, Population Dynamics of Sudan, 2013, http://countryoffice.unfpa.org/filemanager/files/sudan/facts/population\_fact\_sheet\_final1.pdf [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
13. SIGI Sudan Country Profile, http://www.genderindex.org/country/sudan [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
14. Sudan MICS 2014, UNICEF [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
15. SIGI Sudan Country Profile [↑](#endnote-ref-16)
16. Sudan MICS 2014, UNICEF [↑](#endnote-ref-17)
17. UNDP Human Development Index 2015 [↑](#endnote-ref-18)
18. UNFPA, Population Dynamics of Sudan, 2013 [↑](#endnote-ref-19)
19. 23% of women reported having the opportunity to access credit in the previous six months. UN Women, Supporting Women’s Empowerment and Gender Equality in Fragile States: Sudan, 2016 [↑](#endnote-ref-20)
20. UN Women, Supporting Women’s Empowerment and Gender Equality in Fragile States: Sudan, 2016 [↑](#endnote-ref-21)
21. https://www.hrw.org/report/2016/03/23/good-girls-dont-protest/repression-and-abuse-women-human-rights-defenders [↑](#endnote-ref-22)
22. Sudan MICS 2014, UNICEF [↑](#endnote-ref-23)
23. HRW ‘*Good Girls Don’t Protest’* Report, https://www.hrw.org/report/2016/03/23/good-girls-dont-protest/repression-and-abuse-women-human-rights-defenders [↑](#endnote-ref-24)
24. UNHCR Reporting, *Sudan,* <http://reporting.unhcr.org/node/2535>, accessed 28 February 2017 [↑](#endnote-ref-25)
25. Sudan Humanitarian Response Plan, 2016 http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Sudan\_2016\_Humanitarian\_Response\_Plan.pdf [↑](#endnote-ref-26)
26. Ibid [↑](#endnote-ref-27)
27. HRW ‘*Good Girls Don’t Protest’* Report [↑](#endnote-ref-28)