* **Population (disaggregated by sex): 49% male to 51% female[[1]](#endnote-1)**
* **Population (disaggregated by age): <5 years 17.7%; 5-19 years 41.6%; 20-64 years 37.8%; >65 years 2.7%[[2]](#endnote-2)**
* **Total fertility rate per woman (5.9 births) is one of the world’s highest[[3]](#endnote-3) with 146/1,000 pregnancies among girls 15-19 years**
* **Average household size: 4.7[[4]](#endnote-4)**
* **Female-headed households: 24%[[5]](#endnote-5)**
* **Literacy rates 15-24 years: male 87.4%; female 86.6%[[6]](#endnote-6)**
* **Infant mortality rates: 53 per 1000 live births** [[7]](#endnote-7)
* **Maternal mortality rate: 438 per 100,000 live births [[8]](#endnote-8)**
* **Lifetime physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence: 51%[[9]](#endnote-9)**
* **Population (disaggregated by sex) with a disability: male over 2 years 11%; female over 2 years 14.5%[[10]](#endnote-10)**

# Gender in Brief

**Demographics:** By mid-2014, Uganda’s population had reached 38.8 million persons[[11]](#endnote-11) and it is estimated to have reached 40.3 million in 2016[[12]](#endnote-12). With a median age of 15.9 years, Uganda is the second ‘youngest’ country in the world, exceeded only by Niger. More than three-quarters (77 per cent) of the population are under 30 years and nearly one-fifth (18.8 per cent) are youth between the ages of 15 and 24 years. The gender ratio of the population is almost equal except for the oldest age group (65 years and above), where there are more women than men (55/45 per cent).

Uganda remains a very rural-based country with more than 75 per cent of the population living in rural areas, but this is changing rapidly. The annual rate of growth for rural areas (2.85 per cent/year) is less than the national population growth rate (3.2 per cent/year); while the urban growth rate (5.36 per cent/year) is considerably higher than the national population growth rate. Currently, around 6.8 million Ugandans live in urban areas[[13]](#endnote-13), but that number is expected to grow to 33 million people by 2050[[14]](#endnote-14).

Nationally, the fertility rate among girls between 15 and 19 years is 146/1,000. One factor leading to high adolescent fertility is the prevalence of early marriage. Early marriage makes girls vulnerable in a number of ways, including reduced/terminated education, early pregnancy and maternal mortality, HIV/AIDS and STIs and poverty. The median age of marriage for girls (18.1 years) is about four years younger than for male youth (22.3 years). In addition, early marriage is a concern among urban refugees. Congolese refugee women in Kampala say that a village girl in the DRC might get married at 15 years of age but in Kampala, these Congolese girls are not staying in school and often marry at 12-13 years[[15]](#endnote-15).

Uganda has a diverse population encompassing a high number of cultural, traditional, and societal variations, including those of language, traditions, tribes, and religions; linked to the kin-based society and a large number of different ethnicities with their individual norms and customs. These all contribute heavily to differing gender norms, relations and power structures around the country. However, despite significant progress and institutional investment to reduce gender inequalities, across these variations Uganda remains a patriarchal society, in which power relations are inherently unequal and major gender gaps remain. A particular gap remains between rights as legally prescribed and the lived experience, still largely governed by traditions and customs, making Uganda generally policy rich but implementation poor.

**Gender roles and responsibilities:** Rigid gender norms are ascribed to men, women, boys and girls, with women perceived as socially inferior to men, with little decision-making power or capacity to disagree with their husbands, and little access to assets (land, livestock, etc.) or money. Women in Uganda face a range of specific challenges including greater and rising risk of HIV/AIDS infection (e.g. 2011 rates for women between 20 and 24 years was 7.1 per cent and 2.8 per cent for men in the same age bracket)[[16]](#endnote-16); discrimination; low social status; access to education; and lack of economic autonomy. Control of assets, and particularly access to land rights and management is particularly constrained, with only one third of land owned or co-owned by women, and with widespread support for this inequality.[[17]](#endnote-17) Women are responsible for traditional roles including care of the household and children, which involves time consuming and intensive unpaid labour such as collecting water and caring for the ill; as well as playing an important function in agricultural production. Women remain without significant voice or authority over their own bodies or family planning decisions.

**Education and economic empowerment:**Uganda has made particular efforts to continuously improve access to, and close the gender gap in education, to great success. The ratio of girls to boys in primary school now stands at 100 per cent, with secondary education standing at 88.3 per cent.[[18]](#endnote-18) However, female literacy is lagging (49 per cent compared to 69 per cent)[[19]](#endnote-19) and cultural, religious and socioeconomic factors such as women’s burden of care, and the bias for sons to be educated have an impact on improvements in girls’ enrolments at higher levels of education.

Women in Uganda have a high rate of labour force participation, 76 per cent are working, however many work without pay, and whilst more than half of the total labour force, women account for only 37 per cent and 29 per cent of the most lucrative sectors, public and private sector employment respectively.[[20]](#endnote-20) Approximately 70 per cent of women work in agriculture;[[21]](#endnote-21) with 30.2 per cent of non-agricultural wageworkers being women as of 2012.[[22]](#endnote-22) Economically, women appear to be excluded from many of the benefits of improving regional trade agreements, as most women traders continue to do so outside of formal systems and structures, remaining unaware of the benefits of such protocols.[[23]](#endnote-23)

**Participation and policy:** Uganda has achieved important progress in improving women’s rights and reducing the gender gap through the strengthening of women’s participation, and implementation of targeted laws and policies to protect women’s rights. In addition to ratifying CEDAW in 1985, the Ugandan Constitution recognized the equality of women and men in 1995 by making provisions for women’s participation at all decision-making levels, through affirmative action and the establishment of the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development. These important steps have also included the set-up of special courts to handle conflict related crimes, and specifically gender-based violence; the 2010 law on Domestic Violence; the 2011 Domestic Violence regulations; the anti-Female Genital Mutilation Act of 2010; and the anti-human trafficking law in 2009. Whilst the proportion of seats held by women in Parliament is high, at 35 per cent,[[24]](#endnote-24) largely due to established quotas, the operationalization of many of the other legal protections remain questionable, with much of practice remaining governed by customary systems that are highly discriminatory against women, curtailing their rights and freedoms. For example, this is seen in the widely accepted practice of early marriage, despite the Constitution enforcing the legal age of marriage for girls; as it remains in direct contradiction with the 1973 Customary Marriage Act.[[25]](#endnote-25)

**Gender-based violence and protection:** Whilst domestic violence rates have decreased, gender based violence (GBV) remains of significant concern in Uganda. Among women in the 15 to 49-year age bracket, 56 per cent have experienced physical violence since the age of 15 years. For the age group 15 to19 years, the rate is 54 per cent, indicating that physical violence starts at a very young age.[[26]](#endnote-26) Twenty-eight (28) per cent of women report having experienced sexual violence, whilst among men, this is 9 per cent.[[27]](#endnote-27) Early marriage, although diminishing, is still a significant problem: 40 per cent of women between 20 and 24 years were married by the age of 18 years, and 10 per cent were married by the age of 15 years.[[28]](#endnote-28) Early marriage for girls is widely accepted, with 45 per cent of respondents declaring that girls should be married by 18 years, whilst 85 per cent believe that men should be married later.[[29]](#endnote-29) Older women,[[30]](#endnote-30) women with disabilities[[31]](#endnote-31) and the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual and intersex (LGBTI) community are at particular risk of discrimination and violence.[[32]](#endnote-32) The LGBTI community in Uganda is highly stigmatized and face severe protection concerns, with homosexuality still classed as a crime. Organizations working for LGBTI rights are under particular threat, with NGO status often denied, meetings closed and participants sometimes detained.[[33]](#endnote-33)

GBV is pervasive among refugees in Kampala; the causes include discriminatory attitudes and practices toward refugees and lack of access to safe livelihoods[[34]](#endnote-34). Urban refugees consistently link their GBV risks to shelter and livelihoods. Addressing shelter and livelihoods in urban areas will require proactive, targeted strategies that are responsive to local contexts. Some urban refugees encounter heightened risks of GBV due to their intersecting identities as refugees and members of another at-risk group, such as women, adolescent girls, LGBTI individuals, persons with disabilities, sex workers, or male survivors of sexual violence. In addition to shelter, livelihoods and prevention of GBV, the other main protection concerns are[[35]](#endnote-35):

* **Access to health:** health service providers have negative and discriminatory attitudes towards refugees and often charge them more than the real cost of medication
* **Access to education**: government schools in Kampala charge fees. More than 50% of children in age of going to school are not registered in any school
* **Persecution**: Due to the role Uganda played in DRC’s long standing conflict and in Rwanda, many asylum seekers and refugees are afraid of the Ugandan authorities.
* **Xenophobia**against refugees, particularly Somalis

CARE conducted a rapid gender analysis (RGA) during the week of 12 March 2017 in Rhino and the newly-opened Imvepi settlements in the Arua district of the West Nile region of Uganda. Findings related to protection issues including GBV include:

A number of forms of GBV, including sexual exploitation and negative coping strategies, are evident through both the conditions and experiences that the refugees are facing. These include:

* **The lack of livelihood opportunities** compounds the already high level of vulnerability of the refugee population to the risks of exploitation and the emergence of negative coping strategies as a means to provide for families. CARE colleagues working on protection in Imvepi have a lot of evidence of girls using transactional sex to access goods and food mainly;
* **Lighting** is largely absent in a majority of the settlements and of high concern for much of the population, in particular women and girls. GBV ‘hotspots’, such as water points, are not lit and women feel insecure within their shelters at night with no light.
* **Inter-ethnic and host/refugee conflicts** have both been noted as issues. With mounting pressure on resources such as water, firewood, and health services, the likelihood of increasing conflict between host and refugee communities is high, with reports of arguments and violence, including deliberate use of sexual violence against women and girls in South Sudan, already emerging. Likewise, the inter-tribe conflict that contribute to much of the current conflict in South Sudan are also fuelling tension, fear and potential conflict amongst the displaced community.

**Gender in emergencies:** According to the Regional Outlook for the Horn of Africa and Great Lakes Region, January to March 2017, across Uganda, 1.59 million are facing crisis and emergency food insecurity IPC levels 3 and 4, propelled largely by below average harvest, insecurity and livestock/crop diseases.[[36]](#endnote-36) Uganda hosts one of the highest number of refugees in the world and is currently experiencing a large influx of new refugees from South Sudan, further compounding pressure for limited resources. A high proportion (over 86 per cent) of the incoming South Sudanese refugees are women and girls.[[37]](#endnote-37)

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3. Population Reference Bureau (2016) 2016 World Population Data Sheet: With a special focus on human needs and sustainable resources [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Ibid [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Ibid [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. The World Bank Little Book of Gender Statistics, 2016 [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Uganda Bureau of Statistics 2014 Population and Housing Census [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. Ibid [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
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19. Uganda SIGI Country Report, OECD 2015, http://www.oecd.org/dev/development-gender/The%20Uganda%20SIGI%20Country%20Study.pdf [↑](#endnote-ref-19)
20. Gender Equality in Uganda: A situation Analysis and Scoping Report for the Gender Development Partners Group, DIFD and Irish Aid, March 2014 [↑](#endnote-ref-20)
21. Uganda SIGI Country Report, OECD 2015, http://www.oecd.org/dev/development-gender/The%20Uganda%20SIGI%20Country%20Study.pdf [↑](#endnote-ref-21)
22. Millennium Development Goals Report for Uganda 2015 [↑](#endnote-ref-22)
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24. Millennium Development Goals Report for Uganda 2015 [↑](#endnote-ref-24)
25. Uganda SIGI Country Report, OECD 2015, http://www.oecd.org/dev/development-gender/The%20Uganda%20SIGI%20Country%20Study.pdf [↑](#endnote-ref-25)
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28. Ibid [↑](#endnote-ref-28)
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