



**Convention on the Elimination  
of All Forms of Discrimination  
against Women**

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**Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of  
Discrimination against Women**

**Ninth periodic report submitted by Belarus under article 18  
of the Convention, due in 2023\***

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\* The present document is being issued without formal editing.



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## Introduction

1. In accordance with article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Republic of Belarus hereby submits its ninth periodic report on implementation of the Convention.
2. The report is compiled in the form of answers to a list of questions sent to Belarus by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women prior to the submission of the ninth periodic report (CEDAW/C/BLR/QPR/9), and it also takes into account the concluding observations of the Committee (CEDAW/C/BLR/CO/8).
3. The report was prepared by the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the National Statistical Committee, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Justice and other government agencies whose competence includes issues of gender equality and the elimination of discrimination against women.
4. The report contains information on legislative, administrative and other measures adopted in the Republic of Belarus to implement the Convention. It reflects the progress made in the advancement of women in the Republic of Belarus during the period from 2016 to 2021/22, as well as information on the remaining challenges in that area.
5. The report was reviewed and approved on 22 February 2023 by the members of the Sustainable Development Council, under the leadership of the National Coordinator for the Sustainable Development Goals; the Council members include representatives of 38 government agencies and organizations, the parliamentary group, public associations and the programme of youth ambassadors for the Sustainable Development Goals. The United Nations country team in Belarus also participated in the review of the report at a meeting of the Sustainable Development Council.
6. The report was approved on 1 March 2023 at a meeting of the Government's National Council on Gender Policy, which includes representatives of 28 State agencies and organizations, the parliamentary group, the Constitutional Court, the Supreme Court, local executive and administrative bodies, and public associations.

## General

7. Since August 2020, in violation of the United Nations Charter and the core United Nations human rights conventions, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, Belarus has been subject to the illegal, unprecedented sanctions that Western countries have imposed in retaliation for the failure of their attempts to change the current State system of Belarus. Those Western sanction measures have a negative impact on the socioeconomic rights of Belarusian citizens, including women, especially those who are members of vulnerable groups. Furthermore, the sanctions are hindering progress by Belarus in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
8. The Special Rapporteur on the negative impact of unilateral coercive measures on the enjoyment of human rights, Ms. Douhan, has provided practical examples in her reports of how sanctions cannot be selective and always affect economic sectors and citizens directly or indirectly. Humanitarian exceptions to sanctions regimes do not work in practice. In particular, the delivery of drugs and medical supplies to the areas and States where they are most needed is still difficult. The current situation in Belarus as a result of the sanctions imposed therefore also has a negative impact on

women's rights, including in the area of the right to health and access to all forms of health care.

9. In order to improve the systematization and dissemination of quality, accessible, timely and reliable data, the National Statistical Committee of Belarus, with the support of international organizations, has developed subject-specific information systems that can be used to analyse the situation with regard to gender equality.

10. A total of 177 statistical indicators for gender, disaggregated by various attributes and showing trends since 2000, are included in the Gender Statistics web portal, which was developed with support from the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). The national list of statistical indicators for gender includes all country-relevant indicators from the minimum set of gender indicators (recommended by the Statistical Commission for use in all countries for national production and international compilation of gender statistics), gender equality indicators developed by the Economic Commission for Europe and a number of indicators to monitor the country's progress towards achieving the Goals of the 2030 Agenda. The information is provided in Russian, Belarusian and English.

11. The Universal Data Portal for Child-related Statistics was created with the support of UNICEF and is a disaggregated electronic database containing statistical indicators related to the situation of children in key social areas: demography, health, education, justice and social protection. Over 25 percent of the indicators are sex-disaggregated and facilitate national monitoring and evaluation of gender equality among children.

12. The data resources for gender statistics have been significantly expanded as a result of one-time thematic sample surveys conducted by State statistical offices.

13. The time use survey provides disaggregated information for nationally significant parameters on the ratio of women's and men's time spent on paid and unpaid work and other indicators that reflect gender differences in time use (held in 2014–2015 and planned to be held in 2024–2025).

14. The country's sixth round of the one-time Multi-Indicator Cluster Survey to Assess the Status of Children and Women (MICS-6), held in 2018–2019, served to strengthen national statistical capacity to monitor the status of children and women, and to examine women's and men's attitudes towards domestic violence, bullying and discrimination and other factors. The survey also included questions about disability, in accordance with the Washington Group on Disability Statistics criteria.

15. To ensure monitoring of the fulfilment by Belarus of its commitments to take measures to ensure that persons with disabilities have equal access to work and the physical environment and to adapted services that meet their needs, as well as compliance with the main principle of the 2030 Agenda – “leave no one behind”, a sample survey of households was conducted in 2018 for a comprehensive assessment of the situation of persons with disabilities. The statistical data obtained were disaggregated by various categories of disability, place of residence, and sex and age groups.

16. Some forms of systematic household sample surveys are supplemented with questions to obtain data on the living standards and employment of women and men disaggregated by disability in accordance with the Washington Group criteria.

17. A sample household survey to study the prevalence of violence against women (using the adapted World Health Organization methodology) is planned for 2023–2024.

18. The annex to this report provides official statistical information on the current status of women in Belarus (see annex).

## Women and peace and security

19. According to the Global Women, Peace and Security Index 2021/22, which was prepared by the Centre for Gender, Peace and Security of the Peace Research Institute Oslo and the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security, and which provides a measure of the autonomy and empowerment of women at home and in society, focusing on three dimensions – inclusion, justice and security – Belarus ranks thirty-eighth out of 170 countries and ahead of all countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States, as well as a number of European Union countries.

20. The implementation of Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#) takes place as part of general government policy and national strategies on gender equality and the advancement of women.

21. Belarus considers that the Committee has not correctly formulated the question set out in paragraph 2 regarding the allegation that Belarus was involved in an “unlawful use of force” by the Russian Federation against Ukraine. Human Rights Council resolution [49/1](#) of 4 March 2022 and General Assembly resolution [ES-11/1](#) of 2 March 2022 were not adopted by consensus, but were drafted and adopted at the initiative of a group of Western States that have been interfering in the internal affairs of the Republic of Belarus for a long period of time and are attempting to use unconstitutional means to change the country’s government. The results of the voting on those resolutions in the Council and in the Assembly are not evidence of anything, as it is well known that the above-mentioned group of Western states exerted political and other pressure on States Members of the United Nations to achieve the required result. The inclusion of a reference to the Republic of Belarus in those resolutions did not and does not have anything to do with the true situation. Belarus has not deployed its troops into the territory of Ukraine and has not carried out any military actions against that country.

22. It may also be of interest to the Committee to know that the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Moscow Mechanism’s mission of experts in its “Report on Violations of International Humanitarian and Human Rights Law, War Crimes and Crimes Against Humanity committed in Ukraine Since 24 February 2022”, dated 12 April 2022, states, inter alia, that “Although Belarus allows its territory to be used to launch Russian attacks on Ukraine, the Mission considers that as of 1 April it is not a party to the IAC, as long as it does not itself commit acts of violence or other acts that would constitute direct participation in the hostilities by persons attributable to Belarus.”

23. The reality is that from the very beginning of the conflict in Ukraine, the Republic of Belarus has been making deliberate efforts to bring the hostile parties to the negotiating table and thereby stop the bloodshed. It was under the mediatory role of Belarus at the beginning of the conflict that the opposing sides held several productive meetings. In addition, for eight years the Republic of Belarus has acted as a negotiating platform for the trilateral Contact Group on Ukraine in the context of the implementation of the Minsk agreements.

24. Thus, in assessing the role of Belarus in the context of the events in Ukraine, the Committee should not simply look at the content of individual provisions of politically motivated resolutions in the Human Rights Council and in the General Assembly, which offer the audience just one point of view promoted by a Western group of States, but also analyse the entire volume of information, including with

regard to the events that preceded the military operation of the Russian Federation in Ukraine.

## **Women's rights and gender equality in relation to the pandemic and recovery efforts**

25. In order to prevent and deter domestic violence, Act No. 151-Z of 6 January 2022 introduced amendments to Act No. 122-Z of 4 January 2014 on a framework for activities to prevent delinquency and to legal and regulatory instruments, in relation to:

- The establishment of inter-agency councils to assist victims of domestic violence;
- A procedure for implementing a set of measures to assist victims of domestic violence as part of interagency cooperation protocols;
- The implementation of correctional programmes – a set of measures to provide psychological assistance to a citizen who has committed domestic violence, aimed at correcting (adjusting) the citizen's behaviour, teaching non-violent communication skills and preventing the reoccurrence of domestic violence;
- The recording, compilation, systematization and analysis of data on the provision of assistance to victims of domestic violence and on measures taken with regard to citizens who have committed domestic violence.

26. In 2019 the Council of Ministers, in its Decision No. 22 of 15 January 2019 on recognizing children at risk, established an interagency mechanism for identifying a family environment unfavourable for children (including violence against children). Methodological recommendations for its implementation have been approved.

27. The following activities are held every year: the national prevention event "A house without violence!", the information campaign "16 activist days against domestic violence", and the prevention campaigns "Old Age without Violence" and "Old Age is for Wisdom, not for Violence". Information on preventing violence and providing assistance to victims of domestic violence is posted on the official websites of government agencies, local executive and administrative bodies and is updated as necessary.

28. With the support of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), a toolkit was developed in 2022 on how to organize activities to assist various categories of the population in situations of domestic violence, and a booklet in plain language entitled "Stop the Violence!" was prepared in 2020. With the support of the UNICEF office in 2020, a series of videos on violence against children were created for social media ("Don't ignore child abuse", "We never know the whole story", "One courageous act is enough", "Teenager in a photo").

29. The Belarusian State University Institute for the Retraining and Advanced Training of Judges and Employees of the Prosecutor's Office, Courts and Institutions of Justice includes lectures on judicial practice in cases of crimes against sexual inviolability or sexual freedom in the advanced training plans for judges of general jurisdiction courts specializing in criminal cases. The National Institute for Advanced Training and Retraining of Employees of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, a State educational institution, provides further training in support for victims of domestic violence and trafficking in persons. Advanced training in domestic violence prevention, including assistance to victims of such violence, is organized within the Ministry of Internal Affairs network. The Academy of Postgraduate Education, a State educational institution, organizes advanced training

in the following subjects: prevention of violence against children and domestic violence; organization of a friendly environment for underage victims and/or witnesses of violence as part of the psychological counselling in educational institutions; and prevention of aggression and violence in the family”.

30. The Ministry of Internal Affairs, in cooperation with the International Organization for Migration, has continued to conduct the “Teach children to see lies” information campaign, with the dissemination of outdoor public service posters aimed at informing the population about the problems of sexual abuse and exploitation of children. Active support is provided by the information resource “kids.pomogut.by”, which was created by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Ministry of Education with the support of UNICEF, and is designed to provide online advice and useful information on safe behaviour for children on the Internet, as well as the Telegram chat bot @kids\_lawyer\_bot.

31. In May and November 2021, internal affairs agencies carried out a series of activities on safe online behaviour for children. Video clips entitled “How not to become a victim of cybercrime”, “Fishing” and “Cybercrime Prevention” were shown in more than 6,000 labour collectives and to teachers and students at 5,000 educational institutions. “Safe Internet” and awareness-raising events have been organized at schools to inform parents of minors how to restrict access to harmful sites.

32. During the COVID-19 pandemic, women’s representation in political and public life and decision-making remained high. In 2021, women made up the bulk of civil servants – accounting for 70.1 per cent (67.4 per cent in 2017), and among top-level civil servants – 53.7 per cent (48.0 per cent in 2017). Women hold 35.1 per cent of seats in the National Assembly (29.2 per cent in 2016) and 40.4 per cent in the House of Representatives (27.3 per cent in 2016). Women account for 48.1 per cent of managers and their deputies at all levels (48.2 per cent in 2016).

33. Belarus did not impose strict domestic quarantine measures during the COVID-19 pandemic. The interests of both women and men, as well as vulnerable populations, have been taken into account in combating the effects of COVID-19. Benefits and allowances provided by the Government in 2020 made it possible to mitigate the phase of economic recession and prevent a decline in the level of social protection of the population.

34. Support measures for sectors negatively affected by the epidemiological situation were set out in a special Presidential Decree on supporting the economy, adopted in April 2020. Those measures applied to, inter alia, the tourism, retail trade, catering and transportation sectors. The majority of workers in those sectors are women. The measures included granting deferrals on lease payments, reducing tax payments, recalculating of debts for energy services, and so on. They also included a prohibition on wage reductions in the case of changes to basic working conditions, including a transition to remote work.

35. Additional financial resources have been allocated to increase the remuneration of medical workers and employees of social service agencies. In the health and social services sector, women make up more than 85 per cent of the total workforce. Special monthly allowances have been established: for employees of certain State institutions providing social services for working on shifts to reduce the risk of spreading infection; for health care workers of State-funded organizations working in conditions of exposure to infections. As a result, the wages of these categories of employees have increased by a factor of 1.3. No wage reductions were permitted in the public sector. Wages increased by over 19 per cent in 2020 and over 14 per cent in 2021.

36. The State took measures to support the industrial sector of the economy, which made it possible to maintain labour teams during the temporary difficulties caused by the pandemic. Grants from the extra-budgetary social protection fund were provided to supplement incomes to the level of the minimum wage for employees, both women and men, who did not work on account of layoffs or were moved to part-time work by their employer between 1 May and 31 July 2020. Those who applied for the grants included tourism, entertainment and leisure organizations (22 per cent), temporary accommodation and catering organizations (16 per cent), health resort service providers (13 per cent) and the manufacturing sector (18 per cent).

37. The most important trend during the COVID-19 pandemic was the active use in labour relations of new and flexible forms of employment, especially remote work. According to research, 37.9 per cent of organizations made use of remote working in 2020. The COVID-19 pandemic acted as a driver for the increased use of remote work, which contributed to safe working conditions during the pandemic.

38. One positive result was that there were no periods of mass layoffs in Belarus throughout the pandemic period, and the unemployment rate according to the International Labour Organization methodology was 4 per cent in 2020 and 3.9 per cent in 2021 (5.8 per cent in 2016). The unemployment rate for women decreased from 4.2 per cent in 2016 to 3.3 per cent in 2020 and 3.1 per cent in 2021. The unemployment rate for rural women has decreased from 4.6 per cent in 2016 to 2.9 per cent in 2020 and 2.7 per cent in 2021.

39. Additional financial support measures were established for low-income families with many children: the threshold for granting a targeted monthly social benefits was raised from 100 to 115 per cent of the minimum living wage; the period for receipt of monthly social benefits was increased from 6 to 12 months.

40. During the pandemic, the State fulfilled its social obligations to pay birth and parenting benefits, including maternity benefits. Benefit expenditures amounted to 1.6 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) in 2020 and 1.55 per cent of GDP in 2021. The benefits system covers one in four children in the country.

41. Pension payments to women entitled to State pension benefits (in cases of old age, disability or loss of breadwinner) were made in full. In 2020, 99.3 per cent of women aged 60 years and over received a State pension (pension coverage is incomplete on account of the entitlement being linked to permanent residence in the territory of Belarus).

42. To minimize social contact during the COVID-19 pandemic, the validity of documents needed for administrative matters relating to the processing and receipt of pensions and benefits was extended. Those matters included the issuance and replacement of a passport or refugee certificate, issuance of a driver's license, medical certificate on health status, certificates of registration of those in need of better housing conditions, on occupied accommodation and family composition, on place of residence, and the granting of an allowance for care for a child under the age of 18 years with a disability, the issuance of disability certificates, and so on.

43. In response to the unfavourable epidemiological situation, the work of social services was promptly restructured. Social services for citizens unable to work were provided by 146 regional social service centres and 92 residential homes. The residential homes operated in full isolation with shift work to minimize the risk of the introduction and spread of COVID-19. Services were provided at home for citizens unable to work, and assistance was expanded through free home delivery of food, basic supplies and medicines.

44. The restrictive measures taken (Council of Ministers Decision No. 624 of 30 October 2020, and Ministry of Health Decision No. 36 of 10 April 2020) were



designed to ensure the safety, detection and isolation of COVID-19 contacts, both men and women on an equal basis.

45. For women (and girls) infected with SARS-CoV-2 and in need of sexual and reproductive health services, special wards in maternity hospitals and offices in antenatal clinics were allocated to ensure uninterrupted and free access to medical care.

## **Legislative framework**

46. The implementation of gender policy in the Republic of Belarus is based on upholding national interests, taking into account the universally recognized principles of international law and human rights, and supporting the traditional values and cultural principles of Belarusian society.

47. Over the period 2017–2019 the National Centre for Legislation and Legal Research of Belarus reviewed laws and regulations to determine whether more robust regulatory provisions were needed on the inadmissibility of discrimination in any form; it also considered the feasibility of drafting a comprehensive bill to prohibit such discrimination.

48. The study included a review of the provisions of national legislation to check for provisions providing for the prohibition of discrimination on the basis of sex and a study of international experience in regulating similar legal matters; it was concluded that national legislation was neutral in terms of discrimination, since it does not establish any unjustified benefit for any group of individuals on the basis of sex.

49. Legal provisions that protect against discrimination, including on the basis of sex, are mainly set out in laws. As of February 2020, there are 380 laws in force in the Republic of Belarus, of which 12 contain an explicit prohibition of discrimination; 52 provide for the equality of citizens irrespective of any distinguishing factor; 91 provide for the rights of citizens in specific legal matters without restriction; 195 do not provide for protection from discrimination owing to the nature of the legal issues that they cover (for example, budget laws and so on); and 30 do not contain provisions on protection from discrimination.

50. The principle of equality is set out in the Constitution of the Republic of Belarus, which provides for the equality of all before the law and the right, without any discrimination, to equal protection of rights and lawful interests (article 22 of the Constitution). Article 32 of the Constitution establishes that women shall be given equal opportunities in education and vocational training, employment and advancement at work and in socio-political, cultural and other spheres, and in the provision of conditions to protect their labour and health. The provisions of the Constitution are directly applicable and have been developed in the Labour Code and in the following Acts: No. 433-Z of 28 October 2008 on the fundamentals of administrative procedures; No. 305-Z of 18 July 2004 on notaries and notarial activity; and others.

51. Law enforcement legislation establishes liability for violation of the constitutional principle of equality. Accordingly, article 190 of the Criminal Code provides for liability for intentional direct or indirect violation or restriction of rights and freedoms or the establishment of direct or indirect advantages for citizens – on the basis of sex, race, ethnicity, language, origin, wealth or official status, place of residence, attitude towards religion, beliefs or membership in public associations – that result in substantial harm to the rights, liberties and lawful interests of a citizen. That is an indication of the recognition in national legislation of the great danger to

society posed by the violation of the equal rights of citizens, including on the basis of sex.

52. In order to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 5, and in particular indicator 5.c.1 regarding the existence of systems to track and make public allocations for gender equality and women's empowerment, online meetings with international experts for representatives of public administrations and academic institutions and eight online training seminars on budget planning and gender responsive budgeting were conducted in 2022 in cooperation with UN-Women. In February 2023, international experts participated in a seminar held in Belarus.

53. As part of the international technical assistance project entitled "Supporting the efforts of the Republic of Belarus in the nationalization and localization of the Sustainable Development Goals" (approved by Council of Ministers Decision No. 918 of 27 December 2022), there are plans for 2023–2025 to develop a toolkit for gender expertise and to train specialists from national government agencies in applying gender analysis to proposed regulations governing the conditions for entrepreneurial activity.

## **Definition of discrimination**

54. The legislation of Belarus does not provide for a comprehensive definition of discrimination against women. At the same time, universal anti-discrimination provisions to ensure that the principle of equality is established in national legislation are reflected both in the Constitution and in sectoral legislation, the regulatory impact of which is aimed at specific areas of social affairs (labour relations, advertising, issues relating to recruitment to, employment in and separation from the civil service, administrative procedures, and so on). Detailed information is provided in paragraphs 43–45.

55. Under article 28, paragraph 2, of Act No. 175-Z of 1 June 2022 on the civil service, no restrictions or advantages are allowed upon recruitment to the civil service or during employment, on the basis of sex, race, nationality, social origin, property status, place of residence, attitude to religion, beliefs or other factors not related to professional skills and not determined by the specific nature of the professional role or the status of a civil servant, or on the basis of membership in political parties or other public associations, except where stipulated by the Constitution.

56. Under article 4 of Act No. 433-Z of 28 October 2008 on the fundamentals of administrative procedures, citizens are equal before the law in the implementation of administrative procedures, irrespective of sex, race, nationality, language, origin, property and official status, place of residence (place of stay), attitude to religion, beliefs or membership of political parties or other public associations.

57. Article 2 of the Civil Code enshrines the principle of equality of the parties to civil law relations: subjects of civil law participate in civil law relations on an equal footing, are equal before the law, may not enjoy advantages or privileges contrary to the law and are entitled, without discrimination, to equal protection of their rights and lawful interests.

58. The principle of equality of citizens before the law and equality of protection of their rights and lawful interests are defined as fundamental principles of criminal and administrative proceedings (article 20 of the Code of Criminal Procedure and article 2.12 of the Code of Administrative Offences of Belarus).

59. The labour legislation of Belarus upholds gender equality in labour relations and contains a number of norms on maternity and labour protection for women raising

children and in need of special support from the State, which include adherence to generally recognized principles and norms of law, including the prohibition of discrimination in labour relations. Article 14 of the Labour Code of the Republic includes a prohibition of discrimination, that is, restriction of labour rights or the obtaining of an advantage on the basis of sex, or of any factor unrelated to professional skills and unrelated to the nature of an employee's professional role. At the same time, any distinctions, exceptions, preferences and limitations, in particular those resulting from the need for special care by the State for persons in need of increased social and legal protection, shall not be considered discrimination. Women are also included in that category. Individuals who believe that they have been subjected to discrimination in the area of labour relations have the right to petition a court for the elimination of that discrimination. Under the provisions of article 241, third and fourth parts, of the Labour Code, employees are exempt from paying court costs when individual labour disputes are considered in court, including on discriminatory grounds.

60. Discrimination of all kinds has thus been prohibited by national legislation and its various manifestations have been criminalized. Since the constitutionally enshrined principle of equality of all persons before the law is universal, there are no grounds for adopting special anti-discrimination legislation for women.

## Access to justice

61. The legislation of the Republic of Belarus does not contain norms restricting women's (or girls') access to justice. The Constitution provides for the right of all citizens of Belarus without discrimination to equal protection of their rights and lawful interests (art. 22); protection of rights and freedoms by a competent, independent and impartial court of law (art. 60, first part); legal assistance for the exercise and protection of rights and freedoms, including the right to be assisted at any time by lawyers and other representatives before the courts, other State bodies, other organizations and in relations with officials and citizens (art. 62, first part).

62. Information on the types of legal assistance, including that provided at the expense of bar associations and national or local budgets, is available on the websites of the bar associations and on the information boards of legal aid clinics, and free online consultations are provided to citizens through the Internet resource on the website of the Belarusian National Bar Association. By a decision of that Association, lawyers organize annual campaigns to provide free legal aid to citizens.

63. Act No. 113-Z of 27 May 2021 on amending the laws on advocacy issues provided for an expansion of citizens' access to free legal aid. Such assistance is currently being provided to:

(1) Plaintiffs – when preparing applications and conducting cases in courts of first instance related to labour relations, alimony enforcement or deprivation of parental rights;

(2) Veterans and persons with disabilities from the Great Patriotic War, veterans with disabilities from combat operations on the territory of other States – when providing an oral consultation on issues not related to business activities;

(3) Citizens – when preparing applications to establish evidence of the receipt of wages for a specific period in a certain amount for the award of pensions, or to recognize a citizen as having a disability or being incapacitated;

(4) Persons with disabilities from groups I and II – when providing an oral consultation that does not require the review of documents;

(5) Single parents raising a child under the age of eighteen, and parents (or adoptive parents) of large families – when providing an oral consultation that does not require the review of documents;

(6) Minors – in their interests;

(7) Parents (adoptive parents, guardians, trustees) of minors – in the interests of their minor children;

(8) Pensioners and persons with disabilities staying (residing) in social service institutions providing inpatient social services, as well as legal representatives of citizens recognized by a court as legally incapacitated – when giving advice on issues related to the exercise and protection of the rights and lawful interests of those citizens;

(9) Pregnant women – when providing an oral consultation on issues related to the birth of a child;

(10) Other categories of citizens – by decision of the bar association.

64. Legal assistance on social protection and rehabilitation issues for victims of trafficking in persons – and if they are under 14 years of age, for their legal representatives – and for persons harmed as a result of an act of terrorism, is funded by the national budget (article 28, paragraph 2, of the Bar and Advocacy Act).

65. Legal assistance for a suspect or defendant is funded by the local budget if the defence counsel participates in the inquiry, preliminary investigation or court proceedings by appointment through the regional bar association at the request of the authority conducting the criminal proceedings (article 28, paragraph 3, of the Bar and Advocacy Act).

66. The norms of the Code of Criminal Procedure of the Republic safeguard the right of every citizen to a defence in criminal proceedings. Act No. 171-Z of 9 January 2019 on amending and supplementing certain codes of the Republic of Belarus amended article 44, part four, and a number of other provisions of the Code of Criminal Procedure to exclude the possibility of a criminal prosecution body preventing a defence counsel from participating in a case.

67. Act No. 93-Z of 8 January 2018 on amending the Code of Criminal Procedure establishes the right of a witness to invite a defence counsel to provide legal assistance with the preparation of procedural actions with his or her participation.

68. The Code of Criminal Procedure governs the right of citizens to a legal defence. In the event of detention or application of a preventive measure in the form of remand in custody before the first hearing, every suspect is entitled to receive legal advice from a counsel, funded by the local budget (art. 41, para. 2 (5), of the Code of Criminal Procedure). Under the Code, it is not permitted for a defendant (or suspect) to refuse legal representation by invoking a lack of funds to pay for legal assistance or other circumstances indicating that they have been forced to forgo counsel. In this case, the appointment of a defence counsel is made through the regional bar association at the request of the authority conducting the criminal proceedings. Remuneration for the work of an advocate participating in criminal proceedings by appointment shall be funded by the local budget.

69. The fairness of a trial is safeguarded by the independence of the judiciary and by a trial procedure that is clearly regulated by the law on criminal procedure, which is based on the principles of the presumption of innocence and the right of the suspect or accused to a defence.

70. Information on legal remedies and the procedure for appealing against court decisions in criminal cases is publicly available and is posted on the websites of State

agencies, legal Internet portals and on information stands at the premises of courts, prosecution authorities and other State bodies.

71. The Code of Civil Procedure provides for the possible exemption of any citizen, based on his property status, from the payment of State fees when applying to the court and from the payment of court costs to the State.

72. Act No. 277-Z of 18 December 2019 on amending acts has introduced an addition to the Tax Code, by which applicants are exempt from paying State fees when filing applications with a court for the return of a child wrongfully removed to the Republic of Belarus or wrongfully detained in the Republic of Belarus or for the exercise of access rights in respect of such a child on the basis of the Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction of 25 October 1980.

73. Act No. 72-Z of 29 December 2020 on amendments to the tax code exempts individuals from paying State fees for the consideration of complaints concerning: detention, including administrative detention; rulings issued as a result of a review of the lawfulness and validity of detention, remand in custody, house arrest or extension of a period of remand in custody or house arrest; and orders imposing an administrative penalty in the form of administrative arrest that have not entered into force.

74. The court (or judge) has the right to fully or partially exempt individuals in difficult circumstances who are applying to the court from State fees for filing or services that are subject to State fees and not related to the exercise of business activity.

75. Under article 291, paragraph 3, of the Tax Code, a prosecutor who has the right to file a supervisory review may fully or partially exempt a natural person in a difficult life situation from State fees when such a person appeals to the prosecution authorities with a supervisory appeal against a court ruling in a case not related to the exercise of business activity.

76. Judges of the general courts receive advanced training on a regular basis from the Institute for the Retraining and Further Training of Judges and Officials of the Prosecutor's Office, the Courts and Other Institutions in the System of Justice at the Belarusian State University at least once every five years. The curricula include lectures on judicial practice in cases of crimes against sexual inviolability or sexual freedom.

## **National machinery for the advancement of women**

77. The National Council on Gender Policy of the Council of Ministers is a standing body on issues of State policy on gender equality. It coordinates gender policy in Belarus and develops coordinated action to ensure implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and its optional protocol.

78. Regional expert working groups on the implementation of gender policy operate at the regional level and in the city of Minsk.

79. The National Council is formed of representatives of the National Assembly, the Office of the President, the Supreme Court, heads of national government agencies and/or their deputies, employees of the Office of the Council of Ministers, national government agencies, local executive and regulatory agencies, non-governmental organizations and experts working on gender equality issues. The current composition of the National Council includes representatives of the Belarusian Women's Union (a public association) and the Federation of Trade Unions of Belarus.

80. The National Council organizes its work according to an annually approved plan. Council meetings are held as necessary, but at least once every six months. The National Council communicates its decisions, which are advisory in nature, to State agencies and organizations and other organizations.

81. The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection provides technical and informational support for the activities of the National Council. The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection has a Department of Population and Gender and Family Policy. The Department performs the tasks assigned to the Ministry regarding the implementation of the priority areas of State policy for ensuring equal rights and opportunities for men and women and provides technical and informational support for the activities of the National Council.

82. Gender equality issues fall within the competence of various national government authorities. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, the Ministry of Economics, the National Statistical Committee, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Information, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Justice and other government authorities carry out tasks within their competence to ensure gender equality in various spheres of life.

83. Belarus is implementing its sixth national gender equality action plan, which covers the period 2021–2025. The following are involved in the implementation: the Federation of Trade Unions of Belarus, United Nations agencies and public associations, including women’s associations, such as the Belarusian Union of Women (public association), the Pokrov charitable foundation for family, motherhood and childhood support, the Matulya Centre for Families and Motherhood (public charitable association), the Lions Club (national public charitable association), the Belarusian National Union of Youth (public association), the Belarusian Association of Parents with Large Families (public association), the Belarusian Association of Parents of Large Families (public association), the Fathers’ Guild (public association) and the international charitable organization UNIHHELP.

84. Gender equality issues are on the agenda of the National Coordinator and the Sustainable Development Council. Within the Council, the National Coordinator coordinates consideration of various aspects of progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals, including gender issues and the achievement of Goal 5 by Belarus. The Council submits annual progress reports to the President and the Government and makes recommendations to improve the effectiveness of that work. The efforts of the Sustainable Development Council and the National Gender Policy Council are aligned, coordinated and complementary.

85. Two landmark international events were held under the auspices of the National Coordinator in Minsk: the Regional SDG Coordinators Forum in February 2018 and the National Forum for Sustainable Development in January 2019. In 2017, Belarus joined the Group of Friends for Gender Parity, which was established at the United Nations to promote gender parity and women’s leadership. The country’s efforts are facilitating progress on equal rights and opportunities within the country and on the world stage.

86. According to the Human Development Report 2021/2022, Belarus ranks sixtieth among 191 countries on the Human Development Index and is included in the group of countries with a high level of development. Belarus ranks twenty-ninth among 170 countries on the Gender Inequality Index (the level of gender equality in three main categories: reproductive health, empowerment and the labour market).

87. In the Global Gender Gap Report 2022, Belarus ranked thirty-sixth among 146 countries on the Global Gender Gap Index (gender differences in access to resources

and opportunities in four key dimensions: economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment). Moreover, Belarus ranked fourth out of 146 countries by the criterion "economic participation and opportunity". On a positive note, the report also notes the high proportion of women among parliamentarians in Belarus – 40 per cent – which is the highest among the 26 States of the Commonwealth of Independent States and of Central and Eastern Europe.

88. Belarus has established systematic collection and analysis of sex-disaggregated statistics, including for vulnerable groups in rural areas and persons with disabilities (details in paragraphs 3–11 and the annex).

89. Statistics are used in the planning, implementation and evaluation of policies affecting the interests of girls and women and members of vulnerable groups. Those policies include State programmes on social protection, public health and demographic security, the labour market and employment promotion, small and medium-sized enterprises, and education and youth policy for the period 2021–2025; the National Action Plan for Gender Equality; the Active Longevity – 2030 national strategy; and others.

90. As part of the National Plan of Action for the Implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in the Republic of Belarus for 2017–2025, approved by Council of Ministers Decision No. 451 of 13 June 2017, in 2023 statistical data disaggregated by gender and disability was used to assess the effectiveness of efforts to implement the Convention

91. As a result, a number of new measures have been formulated for the National Plan of Action for the period from 2022 to 2025, adopted by Council of Ministers Decision No. 701 of 18 October 2022. The measures are focused on creating and supporting appropriate conditions for the full and equal participation of persons with disabilities in the life of society by making medical care and social services more accessible for persons with disabilities, improving regulatory provisions and practice in the field of social rehabilitation and habilitation, raising awareness of inclusive employment principles among employers and developing State standards on design requirements for workplaces for persons with disabilities of various categories, improving the skills of employees who provide services to persons with disabilities of various categories, monitoring the implementation of State policy on the rights of persons with disabilities and their social integration, and so on.

## **National human rights institution**

92. Belarus took note of the Committee's recommendation to establish an independent national human rights institution.

93. Regarding the universal periodic review recommendations accepted previously, Belarus did not make any commitments or statements regarding a specific time frame for the establishment of a national human rights institution, but agreed to study the issue, which was done as part of the relevant national consultations, including interagency consultations. Belarus is continuing to study this issue, including with regard to the experience of similar institutions in other countries, including Western States, and their specific contribution to promoting and protecting human rights and strengthening national legal systems.

94. Taking into account the human rights dialogue with the Republic of Belarus, which was suspended on the initiative of the West and which was supposed to provide expert and advisory assistance on the subject of establishing a national human rights institution, Belarus would welcome such assistance from the Office of the United

Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, taking into account the specificity of the legal systems of the countries of the region.

95. The Republic of Belarus has a well-developed system of specialized bodies bringing together the State and civil society to protect and promote various categories of human rights, including the National Commission on the Rights of the Child, the National Council on Gender Policy, the National Interdepartmental Council on Disability, the Inter-Ethnic Advisory Council, the Interfaith Advisory Council, the National Council on Labour and Social Affairs, the Public Coordinating Council on the Mass Media, the Public Coordinating Council on the Environment and others.

96. Act No. 300-Z of 18 July 2011, the Citizens' and Legal Entities' Appeals Act, plays an important role in the protection of human rights in Belarus. It regulates the procedure enabling citizens and legal persons to exercise their right to complain to State bodies and other organizations in order to protect rights and freedoms and/or lawful interests. The Act sets out the rights and obligations of petitioners, the procedure for submitting written, electronic and oral communications, the procedure for making a personal appointment, arrangements for the representation of petitioners, the time frames for reviewing communications and the process for the review of different types of communication.

## **Women human rights defenders and civil society**

97. In terms of taking measures to prevent discriminatory activities against women representatives of human rights organizations, the following should be taken into account:

- (1) The Constitution of Belarus provides for the protection of human life against any unlawful endangerment and provides for the freedom, inviolability and dignity of the person. Freedom of opinion, belief and expression is guaranteed for all.
- (2) The rights and freedoms of citizens of Belarus are specifically protected by a range of State bodies (courts, the prosecution service, internal affairs agencies, the bar association, and so on), whose activities are strictly regulated by law.
- (3) The legal term "human rights defender" is not used in the legislation of Belarus. Accordingly, no additional legal or institutional measures have been established in Belarus to protect the legal status and ensure the safety of individuals engaged in defending human rights in a personal capacity or as part of the activities of community organizations.
- (4) Based on the general principles of law, citizens carrying out activities that they deem to be in defence of human rights enjoy the same rights to State protection and support as other citizens of Belarus; If such activities are in breach of the law (in that they constitute an administrative or criminal offence), those persons will be held accountable on an equal basis with other citizens, in accordance with the law.
- (5) The Office of the Prosecutor General has not received any reports or other information on confirmed cases of physical or psychological violence against or other measures of harassment of women human rights defenders.
- (6) The Office of the Prosecutor General has no information on applications by women human rights defenders to the general courts for compensation for harm caused to them in connection with their human rights work.



98. According to article 10, paragraph 6, of the Code of Criminal Procedure, compensation for harm suffered shall be payable according to the procedure provided for by law to persons whose rights and freedoms have been violated during criminal proceedings.

99. According to the Civil Code, article 939 (liability for harm caused by unlawful actions of law enforcement authorities and the courts), harm caused to a citizen as a result of unlawful conviction, application of compulsory measures of protection or medical treatment, prosecution, detention, custody, house arrest, recognisance not to leave or to behave properly, temporary suspension from office, placement in a psychiatric (psychoneurological) institution or the unlawful imposition of an administrative penalty in the form of administrative arrest or correctional labour shall be compensated at the expense of the public treasury of the Belarus or, in cases specified by law, fully at the expense of the public treasury of the administrative-territorial unit, irrespective of the guilt of officials of the law enforcement authorities or the courts, in accordance with the procedure established by law.

100. Harm caused to a citizen or legal entity as a result of unlawful activities of law enforcement authorities that did not entail the above consequences shall be compensated on the grounds and in accordance with the procedure stipulated in article 938 of the Civil Code (liability for harm caused by State authorities and local government and self-government bodies, and also by their officials). Harm caused in the exercise of justice shall be compensated if the judge's guilt is established by a court verdict that has entered into legal force.

101. According to article 80 of the Marriage and Family Code, parents or one parent may be deprived of parental rights if they neglect their parental responsibilities; abuse their parental rights and/or mistreat a child; lead an immoral lifestyle, which has a harmful effect on a child; have relinquished a child and filed a written application for consent to adoption upon their separation from the child; or if, within six months after a child was taken from them by decision of the commission on minors' affairs of the district or city executive committee or the local authority of the city district where the child is located, the reasons that served as grounds for the child's removal from them are still valid.

102. Parents may be deprived of their rights only through the courts. Cases involving the deprivation of parental rights are heard with the mandatory participation of a prosecutor and a representative of the guardianship and custody agency (article 80, second part, of the Marriage and Family Code). When both parents are deprived of parental rights, or in the case of one parent when it is inexpedient or impossible to transfer the child to the other parent, the court shall decide to place the child in the care of a guardianship and custody agency (art. 80, fourth part, of the Marriage and Family Code).

103. Termination of parental rights is a last resort. Therefore, in exceptional cases, the court, even when there is proof of a parent's culpable behaviour, has the right to refuse to satisfy a claim for deprivation of parental rights, taking into account the conduct of the parent, his or her personality and other specific circumstances, while warning the defendant about the need to change his or her attitude to the upbringing of children and entrusting the guardianship and custody agencies to monitor the fulfilment of parental duties (Decision No. 7 of the Plenum of the Supreme Court dated 26 September 2002 on judicial practice in cases of deprivation of parental rights, paragraph 17, first paragraph).

104. According to article 399, part one, of the Code of Civil Procedure of the Republic of Belarus, a court decision that has not entered into legal force may be appealed by the parties and other persons with a lawful interest in the outcome of the

case, as well as by other persons, if the court has ruled on their rights and obligations. Final court decisions may be reviewed under the supervisory procedure (art. 435).

105. Women's social and political activities do not constitute grounds for considering the deprivation of parental rights.

106. The Office of the Prosecutor General does not have any information concerning the deprivation of parental rights of women activists in connection with their political or social activities.

107. Laws on public associations are drafted in a way that serves to simplify as far as possible the relations between public associations and State bodies in order to ensure that the vast majority of public associations that apply to the registration authorities successfully complete the State registration procedure.

108. On 4 March 2023, the Amendments to Laws on the Activities of Political Parties and Other Public Associations Act came into force, providing for a number of changes concerning the establishment and activities of associations and parties: expansion of the sphere of activities for local public associations, provision for electronic submission of documents, the option of having the legal address of public associations at the place of work of their leaders, and so on. The bill was discussed with representatives of public associations and political parties, and a public discussion of the bill was organized.

109. Judicial bodies may decide to refuse State registration of a public association only on the grounds specified in the Public Associations Act. Under article 15 of the law, once such violations and shortcomings have been remedied, the founders of the public association have the right to resubmit documents to the registering body for State registration.

110. As at 1 January 2023, 15 political parties, 20 trade unions, 2,544 public associations (including 31 women's associations), 44 unions (associations) of public associations, 209 foundations, and 7 national State and civil society associations were registered in Belarus. In 2022, 24 new public associations (4 national and 20 local) and 3 new foundations were registered.

111. A strategy to protect and enhance the safety of the professional work of journalists is being implemented in Belarus through the joint efforts of the Ministry of Information, the Belarusian Union of Journalists (with the active participation of members of Parliament, local councils of deputies, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Investigative Committee and the Office of the Prosecutor General) in accordance with the Criminal Code and Act No. 427-Z of 17 July 2008 on the mass media.

112. The strategy and practical steps to implement it provide equal protection for women journalists and media workers irrespective of age, political preferences, length of service in journalism and mass media, affiliation with a particular media outlet, or region of residence or work.

113. The Criminal Code provides for liability for obstructing in any way the lawful professional activities of journalists or for forcing them to disseminate or refuse to disseminate information, committed with the use or threat of violence, destruction of or damage to property or infringement of the rights and lawful interests of journalists (art. 198).

114. Cases of threats or verbal or physical violence are recorded by the Secretariat and the leadership of the regional organizations of the Belarusian Union of Journalists and are referred to the law enforcement agencies. The strategy for the protection of journalists provides for strict punishment for all those involved in such crimes.

## Temporary special measures

115. Pursuant to the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the 2017–2025 National Plan of Action to Implement the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in the Republic of Belarus, which provides for measures to ensure the fundamental rights and freedoms of persons with disabilities, was adopted and is being implemented. The Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Their Social Integration Act was adopted in 2022, whereby:

- All civil, political, economic and other rights and freedoms are conferred upon persons with disabilities, and discrimination on the basis of disability is prohibited.
- Means of communication for different categories of persons with disabilities are defined depending on their disabilities.
- Sign language is recognized as a full-fledged linguistic system of cognition, development, education and access to information. A new concept – Belarusian sign language – has been established.
- Provisions have been made to establish rehabilitation and habilitation centres (units) for persons with disabilities at the national and local levels.
- The process of collecting information on social support measures for persons with disabilities is being automated.
- The principle of inclusion in education – ensuring equal access to education for all students, taking into account the diversity of their special individual educational needs and individual capabilities – is being reinforced as a concept.
- Job quotas for persons with disabilities are being introduced as a mechanism.
- Provisions are being made to establish a new information resource: an automated information system to record the accessibility of social infrastructure facilities.

116. Fourteen community organizations representing the interests of various categories of persons with disabilities were involved in the preparation of the draft law.

117. The “Active longevity–2030” national strategy was adopted in 2020 to establish conditions to effectively realize the potential of senior citizens and improve their quality of life. It provides for measures to include citizens of retirement age in the workforce.

118. Decision No. 475 of 20 July 2022 of the Council of Ministers introduced quotas for hiring citizens in special need of social protection and unable to compete on equal terms in the labour market. Citizens in special need of social protection include women with disabilities, women of pre-retirement age (two years before the age of eligibility for a retirement pension on general grounds), parents in large and single-parent families, and parents raising children with disabilities.

119. Similar measures are included in the 2021–2025 State programme on the labour market and the promotion of employment. Annually, employers are given quotas to hire more than 20,000 persons in need of additional job security. From 2016 to 2022, 151,000 jobs were reserved to hire citizens who had been granted additional safeguards in the area of employment assistance.

120. Women’s participation in decision-making at the local level is quite widespread. The percentage of women representatives in local government was 48.2 per cent in 2018. Among heads of rural, settlement and urban (cities under district jurisdiction)

executive committees and their deputies, the percentage of women was 68.8 per cent in 2017, 69.9 per cent in 2019 and 69.7 per cent in 2021. This trend indicates a positive practice of women's representation at the local level, which does not require the introduction of special measures.

## **Gender stereotypes**

121. The national action plans on gender equality for 2017–2020 and 2021–2025 developed ways of introducing a gender perspective into the formulation and implementation of State policy measures in various areas. The existence of national gender equality plans is one of the indicators of Sustainable Development Goal 5: “Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls”.

122. In 2022, the National Statistical Committee conducted a survey of urban and rural women and men aged 18 and over who were married or in an unregistered relationship, as part of a sample household survey on living standards, exploring their views on gender roles in family life and on gender stereotypes. Gender stereotypes were mostly not supported by the respondents. The majority of the women and men interviewed noted that making all important decisions in the family was the task of both partners, and that it was equally important for both partners to receive a higher education. Nevertheless, stereotypical views on gender roles persisted on caring for the home and childcare, providing material support for the family and the importance of having a paid job. For the most part, household decisions regarding financial management, major purchases and the upbringing and education of children are made jointly by partners. Most women decide for themselves on everyday purchases, on the duration and nature of their own work, and on their education and personal social activity (see statistical data in the annex).

123. The Advertising Act contains general requirements for advertising regardless of whether an advertisement contains images of men or women. There are no norms on gender stereotypes in this Act. In accordance with this Act, an advertisement is recognized as unethical if it contains text, visual or sound information that violates the generally accepted standards of morality and ethics, including offensive words, comparisons and images with respect to race, nationality, appearance, age group, gender, language, profession, social category, family and the religious, political or other beliefs of citizens.

124. In cases involving advertising containing information and (or) images negatively representing women, the advertisement is recognized as inappropriate and prohibited from distribution. Cases of inappropriate advertising on the topic in question are isolated.

125. Advertisements in the Republic of Belarus contain various images of women, reflecting the diversity of their interests, inner world and participation in professional and public life (for example, in their personal and family relations, in their relationships with children, in their sports and creative activities, and in building a successful career and taking vacations).

126. Gender equality and ensuring equal rights and opportunities for men and women are issues regularly covered on special television programmes, in special columns in the printed media and during thematic press conferences on such issues as: “Measures to prevent and combat domestic violence”; national preventive action for “A house without violence!”; “Women's entrepreneurship in Belarus: empowerment and self-employment”; and “Key considerations related to preparing future parents for the birth of children”.

127. The following campaigns are carried out every year to eliminate gender stereotypes as one of the causes of gender-based violence against women: the national preventive campaign “A house without violence!”; the information campaign “16 activist days against violence”; and the regional awareness-raising and prevention campaigns “Violence – an educational tool used by uneducated parents”, “Family is an island of safety” and “Stop violence in the family”.

## Gender-based violence against women

128. The Criminal Code provides for a number of norms aimed at protection against various forms of violence. Criminal liability is established for intentional infliction of less serious bodily harm (article 149), intentional infliction of minor bodily harm (article 153), torture (article 154), causing serious or less serious bodily harm by negligence (article 155), rape (article 166), violent acts of a sexual nature (article 167), sexual intercourse and other acts of a sexual nature with a person under 16 years of age (article 168), indecent assault (article 169) and coercion to perform sexual acts (article 170).

129. Aggravating circumstances include, in particular, the commission of crimes against a person known to be a minor, an older person or a person in a helpless state, a pregnant woman, or a person who is dependent on the perpetrator in a material, official or other way (article 64 of the Criminal Code).

130. Criminal prosecution is possible at the victim’s request. A prosecutor also has the right to initiate criminal proceedings in the absence of a complaint from the victim if the offences affect essential interests of the State and society, or have been perpetrated against a victim who is professionally or otherwise dependent on the accused or if, for any other reason, the victim is himself or herself unable defend his or her rights and lawful interests.

131. As explained in the Decision No.7 of 27 September 2012 of the Plenum of the Supreme Court on judicial practice in cases involving crimes against sexual inviolability or sexual freedom, covered in articles 166 to 170 of the Criminal Code, a woman can be considered a victim in such cases regardless of prior conduct, way of life, the existence of marital relations with the accused or other personal circumstances.

132. Information on the number of convictions as a result of the courts’ handling of criminal cases under articles 149, 153 to 155 and 166 to 169 of the Criminal Code in 2020 and 2021:

| <i>Number of convicted persons under articles of the Criminal Code</i>                                 | <i>Years</i> |             |
|--|--------------|-------------|
|  | <i>2020</i>  | <i>2021</i> |
| Intentional infliction of less serious bodily harm (article 149)                                       | 315          | 369         |
| Intentional infliction of minor bodily harm (article 153)  | 460          | 516         |
| Torture (article 154)  | 489          | 655         |
| Causing serious or less serious bodily harm through negligence (article 155)                           | 93           | 90          |
| Rape (article 166)   | 48           | 33          |
| Violent acts of a sexual nature (article 167)  | 79           | 91          |
| Sexual intercourse and other acts of a sexual nature with a person under 16 years of age (article 168) | 165          | 201         |
| Indecent assault (article 169)   | 6            | 20          |

133. Civil claims for compensation for physical, property or moral damage caused directly by an offence may be considered in civil proceedings (articles 10 and 148 of the Code of Criminal Procedure).

134. Amendments and additions have been made to the Principles of Crime Prevention Act:

- Simplifying the use of restraining orders against perpetrators of domestic violence. A restraining order continues to be applied without the need for the victim's oral consent, and issuance of such an order no longer requires the perpetrator of domestic violence to have previously been held administratively liable, given an official warning or placed on a preventive register;
- The term "violence in the family" has been replaced by "domestic violence", which now means violence not only against another family member, but also against former spouses and persons with whom there is a common child or with whom there is (was) cohabitation and common household management. Thus, the scope of application of the restraining order has been significantly expanded.

135. A restraining order is applied by the head of the internal affairs agency or his or her deputy in coordination with the prosecutor in the absence of the written consent of the victim of domestic violence, if she is dependent on the citizen who committed the domestic violence or for other reasons is unable to independently protect her rights and lawful interests, and if the risk of domestic violence is high.

136. Administrative liability has been established for the violation of a restraining order. The category of persons who may be held administratively liable for domestic violence has been expanded to include citizens who have committed violent acts against not only close relatives and family members, but also against former family members (article 10.1 of the Code of Administrative Offences). Administrative proceedings may be initiated either at the request of the victim, the prosecutor or an official of the internal affairs agency (upon written instructions from the prosecutor).

137. The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection conducts annual random monitoring of the organization of work related to domestic violence prevention, social services for families where violence has occurred and the identification of family environments unfavourable for children. Based on the results, recommendations on improving this work are sent to the regions.

138. Legislation is continuously being refined based on the needs of victims. For example, from 2017 to 2021, the following amendments and additions were made to the legislation governing assistance to victims of domestic violence:

- Requirements for the content and quality of social services, including temporary shelter, were approved.
- Forms to identify victims of family violence and their requirements and forms for foster care support for an individual or family were approved.
- The procedure for providing temporary shelter services was significantly simplified – accommodation in a crisis room may be provided at the place of application, regardless of the place of registration (place of residence) and in the absence of an identity document on the basis of a written application, and the crisis rooms operate around the clock.

139. Every year, about 12,000 citizens who have suffered from domestic violence seek help from local social services centres. A mechanism has been established for collaboration among all structures (health-care, education, internal affairs and social protection agencies and public associations).

140. A network of crisis rooms is being developed to provide temporary shelter for victims of domestic violence. The stay of citizens in a crisis room and their living and other conditions are based on the principles of self-care. Citizens pay for their own food and for the purchase of medicines, personal hygiene products and other items necessary during their stay in a crisis room, but, if necessary, these are paid for by local budgets, donations (sponsorships) and other sources not prohibited by law.

141. In addition to temporary shelter services, psychological and information and advisory services are also provided to all applicants. If necessary, assistance is provided with employment, finding housing and establishing family ties, as well as other kinds of assistance. There are no restrictions on the amount of time that can be spent in a crisis room. The duration of the stay is determined in the contract for temporary shelter services, taking into account the specific situation.

142. The number of crisis rooms increased from 105 in 2015 to 136 in 2022. The crisis rooms have a total of 435 beds, including 129 for children. There were 591 people living in crisis rooms in 2022, including 330 domestic violence survivors, of whom 244 were women and 86 were men, including 70 families with 130 children. More than 2,500 domestic violence survivors lived in crisis rooms from 2015 to 2022.

143. The skills of specialists in gender-based and domestic violence issues are regularly upgraded (detailed information is provided in paragraph 24).

144. Work on combating gender-based violence against women and providing assistance to victims in the Republic of Belarus is carried out by the Belarusian Red Cross, the Matulya Centre for Families and Motherhood (a public charitable association), the Pokrov Charitable Foundation for Family, Motherhood and Childhood Support, and SOS Children's Villages (an international non-profit organization), as well as others.

145. Subprogramme 5, the prevention of HIV infection, is being implemented under the 2021–2025 State programme for public health and demographic security. The prevalence of HIV infection among the population of the Republic of Belarus is stable at 0.2 per cent. The spread of HIV infection in the country is predominantly sexual (more than 80 per cent of newly detected cases). HIV-positive citizens, including women, are provided with free medicines. Health-care institutions provide HIV/AIDS counselling and hotlines.

146. Since 2004, the Belarusian public association "Positive Movement" has been involved in implementing grants from the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, in conjunction with the United Nations Development Programme and the Ministry of Health (organizing the work of mobile service delivery units for people living with HIV, including women, implementing projects aimed at prevention, treatment, care and support for people with HIV, conducting counselling and social support, and providing training sessions and other activities).

147. In 2021, the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection introduced an electronic data collection form entitled "Information on the work of local social services centres in providing social services to families with children experiencing hardship", which contains data by district and includes a section entitled "Information on social services provided to citizens affected by violence" (number of persons seeking assistance, types of services provided and interdepartmental cooperation). The data were disaggregated by sex, age and disability, and families with minor children were identified separately.

148. There were 12,568 domestic violence survivors who applied to local social services centres in 2022. The vast majority – 10,955 (87 per cent) – were women, of whom 2,534 were of retirement age and 307 had disabilities; 1,613 men applied, of whom 380 were of retirement age and 78 had disabilities.

## Trafficking and exploitation of prostitution

149. The legal and institutional framework for combating trafficking in persons and the system of measures to protect and rehabilitate victims of trafficking in persons are set out in the Trafficking in Persons Act. Offences related to trafficking in persons include not only the offences under article 181 of the Criminal Code (trafficking in persons), but also the use of prostitution or the creation of conditions for prostitution (article 171); inducement into, or coercion to continue engaging in, prostitution (article 171-1) use of slave labour (article 181-1); abduction (article 182); unlawful acts related to the employment of Belarusian citizens abroad (article 187); and the production and distribution of pornographic material or items of a pornographic nature containing images of minors (article 343-1).

150. Information on the courts' handling of criminal cases under articles 170 to 171-1 of the Criminal Code in 2020 and 2021:

| <i>Number of convicted persons under articles of the Criminal Code</i>             | <i>Years</i> |             |
|--|--------------|-------------|
|  | <i>2020</i>  | <i>2021</i> |
| Coercion to perform sexual acts (article 170)                                      | 0            | 2           |
| Use of prostitution or the creation of conditions for prostitution (article 171)   | 27           | 35          |
| Inducement into, or coercion to continue engaging in, prostitution (article 171-1) | 0            | 2           |

151. In 2022, the internal affairs agencies identified and registered 1,610 trafficking in persons offences. The number of grave and especially grave offences amounted to 726 incidents (45.41 per cent of the total number) and 1,540 suspects were identified.

152. In total, 91 trafficking in persons offences were detected under the Palermo Protocol and 89 suspected traffickers were identified. Incidents of domestic sexual exploitation continued to prevail during the reporting period: there were 86 such offences. Six trafficking channels to such countries as China, Egypt, Ghana, the Russian Federation and Türkiye were blocked.

153. A total of 210 victims of trafficking in persons were identified, including 131 minors. One hundred and fifteen (83 of them minors) were sent for rehabilitation in accordance with Decision No. 485 of the Council of Ministers.

154. To strengthen the national referral mechanism for victims of trafficking in persons, activities are being implemented under an international technical assistance project entitled "Strengthening the national referral mechanism for victims of trafficking in persons in the Republic of Belarus" (completed on 1 July 2021).

155. Outreach materials and printed and video materials on trafficking in persons, child sexual abuse and safe travel abroad (such as public service videos, booklets, leaflets and brochures) are updated on a regular basis.

156. Pursuant to article 8.8 of the Code of Administrative Offences, a natural person is exempt from administrative liability for an administrative offence committed as a result of circumstances arising from the commission of acts provided for under article 181 (trafficking in persons) of the Criminal Code; or acts aimed at using him or her for the purposes of sexual or other exploitation, liability for the commission of which is provided for in article 171 (organization and (or) the use of prostitution or the creation of conditions for prostitution), article 171-1 (inducement into, or coercion to continue engaging in, prostitution), article 181-1 (use of slave labour), article 182



(abduction) and article 187 (unlawful acts related to the employment of Belarusian citizens abroad).

157. Thus, the Republic of Belarus has legal mechanisms to exempt victims of trafficking in persons from administrative and criminal liability for offences and crimes resulting from coercion.

158. A number of measures are being implemented to improve the situation of women in the labour market, including measures under the 2021–2025 State programme on the labour market and the promotion of employment. Over the period from 2016 to 2022, with the assistance of the labour, employment and social protection agencies, 964,700 people were employed on a permanent basis, of whom 376,600 were women or 39 per cent, including 508,300 unemployed persons, of whom 170,700 or 33.6 per cent were unemployed women.

159. To increase competitiveness in the labour market, all unemployed citizens without a profession, including women, and those who are unable to find employment in their existing profession or those who have lost the ability to work in previously acquired professions are offered vocational training, retraining or advanced training as well as educational programmes on training courses. The unemployed are trained in 100 professions, primarily working professions (such as cooks, sellers, hairdressers, manicurists and seamstresses). From 2016 to 2022, 16,400 unemployed women were sent for training.

160. In 2016, amendments were made to Employment Act. Citizens caring for a child under the age of 3 (except for citizens on parental leave to care for a child under the age of 3) were given the opportunity to receive free training and a stipend. A total of 378 women caring for a child under 3 years of age were sent for training from 2016 to 2022.

161. Labour, employment and social protection agencies conduct nationwide job fairs and open houses in which women can find suitable work and learn more about the available vacancies and working conditions at a particular enterprise.

162. Assistance to women in developing entrepreneurship, including in rural areas, is one of the priority areas of employment policy. Over the period from 2016 to 2022, 11,400 unemployed persons received subsidies for organizing entrepreneurial activities, agro-ecotourism services and handicraft activities, among them 5,000 women or 43.8 per cent. Of the total number of unemployed persons who received financial support, 7,400 received training in the fundamentals of entrepreneurship upon referral by labour, employment and social protection agencies, including 3,300 women.

## **Participation in political and public life**

163. The number of women in political and public life at all levels increased from 2016 to 2021. Women's representation in the National Assembly increased from 29.2 per cent in 2016 to 35.1 per cent in 2021, and from 27.3 per cent to 40.4 per cent in the House of Representatives.

164. Women accounted for 70 per cent of civil servants in 2021 (67.4 per cent in 2017) and 53.7 per cent of top-level civil servants (48 per cent in 2017). The proportion of female managers at all levels and their deputies remained high (around 48 per cent) over the period from 2016 to 2021.

165. The National Assembly has a Youth Parliament which aims is to promote the legal regulation of the rights and lawful interests of young people. Youth Ambassadors for the Sustainable Development Goals have been established to engage

young people in sustainable development issues through public, scientific and other socially significant work.

166. Given the positive practice of gender parity for women in political and public life at all levels, no special measures are required.

## Education

167. One of the areas of the 2021–2025 programme for the continuing education of children and young people is family and gender education, which is aimed at establishing a responsible attitude to marriage, family and child-rearing as well as informed ideas about the role of men and women in modern society.

168. The general secondary education curriculum has been improved by taking into account gender equality issues: “labour training” for grades V-IX includes a new section on the “basics of home economics” for boys and a section on “common home repairs” for girls.

169. The curricula of a number of academic disciplines have incorporated gender issues: “feminist literature” under “axiology of foreign literature”; “feminism” under “methodological approaches and schools of the nineteenth to twenty-first centuries”; and “feminist criticism” under “contemporary foreign literary studies”.

170. Additional topics in the curricula of various higher education disciplines during the reporting period include the following:

- “Gender identity, gender roles and gender stereotyping”, “gender differences and similarities”, “gender socialization”, “gender relations” and “methods of gender studies: methods for diagnosing gender-related personality traits” under “gender psychology”
- “Family history research and the diagnosis of family structure” and “the diagnosis of marital relations in the family” under “diagnosis of family relations”
- “Violence in the family: psychological support for women who are victims of domestic violence” under “psychological assistance to the family”
- “The counselling process: gender issues and sexual orientations in counselling practice” under “key issues related to counselling psychology and early intervention” on the theme
- “Organizational leadership: gender stereotypes” under “organizational psychology”
- “Gender education for preschool children” under “theory and methodology for the education and upbringing of preschool children”
- “The development of identity at preschool age: gender socialization” under “child psychology”
- “Social behaviour of the individual: gender differences in aggressive behaviour” and “small groups: the family as a small group and gender social roles” under “social psychology”

171. Equal rights for men and women are included in the curricula for the retraining and advanced training of teaching staff and civil servants:

- “Establishing gender culture among students”; “A family-centred approach to the work of social, pedagogical and psychological service specialists”; “The provision of psychological assistance to the legal representatives of minors in

an educational institution”; “Practical psychology”; “The psychology of personality”; and “The psychology of family relations” (State educational institution Academy of Postgraduate Studies).

- “Women’s leadership in the innovative development of modern Belarusian society” (Academy of Management under the President of the Republic of Belarus).

172. Modern educational publication requirements that meet gender equality aspects for general secondary education institutions were discussed during the following events held by the National Institute for Vocational Training:

- National videoconference: “Organizing educational work and the socialization of students requiring special educational conditions” (1 March 2022).
- National educational and methodological association: “Cooperation between vocational and specialized secondary school educational institutions and families: current strategies and forms” (20 April 2022).
- Training seminar: “Key issues related to updating programme-planning documentation and the content of educational work” (21 June 2022).
- Instructional and guidance meeting: “Key aspects of social, educational and outreach work at institutions implementing vocational and specialized secondary education curricula in the 2022–2023 academic year” (30 August 2022).

173. In 2022, with the support of UNICEF, the draft national strategy for the development of inclusive education until 2035 was examined in Belarus for compliance with gender equality requirements.

174. The Constitution of the Republic of Belarus ensures equal opportunities for women and men to receive education, including higher education (article 32). These constitutional provisions were adopted in the new version of the Education Code, which came into force on 1 September 2022.

175. The representation of women (girls) among students at higher education institutions in the 2022–2023 academic year remains at 52.5 per cent, which indicates a high level of accessibility to higher education, including science-oriented education, for females.

176. The Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Their Social Integration Act was adopted in 2022. Its provisions aim to increase educational safeguards for persons with disabilities, including women and girls. The principle of inclusion in education, which ensures equal access to education for all students, taking into account the diversity of special individual educational needs and the individual capabilities of each student, is enshrined in the Act.

177. General secondary education is compulsory in the Republic of Belarus. In accordance with the Instruction on the procedure for registering children for general secondary and special education, all children under 18 years of age living in the country are registered. Twice a year (from 1 to 20 September and from 1 to 20 January), general secondary education institutions verify that children are receiving an education. If children are identified who are not receiving education, assistance is provided for their education.

## Employment

178. The Constitution of the Republic of Belarus prohibits forced labour, except for work or service on the basis of a court order or in accordance with the laws on states of emergency and martial law (art. 41). The use of slave labour is prosecuted under criminal law (article 181-1 of the Criminal Code). Belarusian law also does not contain a requirement for mandatory participation in voluntary community service. This type of work is purely voluntary and is a tradition that has been passed down from generation to generation for a century.

179. At the legislative level in the Republic of Belarus, the issue of equal labour rights, including the right to equal pay for women and men for work of equal value, is regulated by article 42 of the Constitution and articles 14 and 57 of the Labour Code. The labour of any employee is evaluated only by quantitative and qualitative parameters, irrespective of the gender, age, national and social origin and other personal characteristics of the employee.

180. There is a gender pay gap in the Republic of Belarus, as in other countries. Nominal average monthly wages for women were 71.9 per cent of those for men in December 2021. First of all, this gap is explained by the high proportion of men employed in industry, construction and heavy engineering, where there are more jobs with harmful and dangerous conditions, the work is high-pressure and, therefore, better paid. Women, as a rule, are employed in jobs that do not involve heavy, harmful and (or) hazardous working conditions.

181. Nominal average monthly wages by types of occupation had the following ratios in December 2021: 97.6 per cent in transport, warehousing, postal and courier activities; 94 per cent in public administration; 91.8 per cent in education; 86.5 per cent in agriculture, forestry and fishery; 84.3 in construction; 78.7 per cent in health care and social services; and 73.8 per cent in industry.

182. Since 2017, the Republic of Belarus has been implementing a pension reform that provides for a gradual increase in the retirement age. Thus, in 2022, the retirement age was 63 years for men and 58 years for women.

183. The Pension Act provides for cases where the generally established retirement age for various categories of citizens may be lowered. This applies, for example, to women who are mothers to many children, women operating machinery and working as milkmaids. Socioeconomic and physiological reasons related to maternity explain the difference between the eligibility age of men and women for a retirement benefit.

184. The list of physically demanding work and work with harmful and (or) hazardous conditions, in which it is prohibited to employ women, was established by Ministry of Labour and Social Protection Decision No. 35 of 12 June 2014. Given the adverse effects of harmful working conditions on women's bodies, especially at the fertile age, the complete abolition of the list is inappropriate in the context of the current demographic landscape.

185. The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection worked in cooperation with the Ministry of Health in 2022 to reduce the list. As a result, 93 positions were excluded and the new edition of the list contains 88 positions.

186. Consequently, women are allowed to work as car drivers for intercity passenger transport on buses with more than 14 seats and on trucks with a carrying capacity of more than 5 tons (dump trucks of 2.5 tons), as well as in foundry work as caster assemblers; as casters of vacuum, centrifugal-vacuum and centrifugal casting; as epoxy resin modelers, manufacturers of fuel blocks, in work involving harvesting fruit and medicinal raw materials from bushes and standing trees (climbing to a height

above 1.3 m) and in climbing work, as such work does not pose a threat to women's reproductive health.

187. Taking full mechanization into account, women are now permitted to work in a number of occupations in the manufacture of pulp, paper, paperboard and paper products, with the exception of "mixer".

188. The ban on the use of women's labour is no longer in force in certain professions in the following industries: oil and gas production (mobile compressor operator and hoist operator); peat extraction and processing (in the professions of ditcher, uprooter and peat excavator); working with powders from non-ferrous metals (in the professions of blower and condenser operator); and in alcohol, vegetable oil and other industries (alcohol distillation and purification).

189. Labour legislation contains a number of safeguards when recruiting women. For example, article 16 of the Labour Code prohibits the groundless refusal to conclude an employment contract with a woman because she is pregnant or because of the existence of a child under the age of 3 or, in the case of a single mother, the existence of a child under the age of 14 (or a child with disabilities under the age of 18). The refusal to conclude an employment contract may be challenged in court.

190. Safeguards for contracting women are set out in article 261–5 of the Labour Code, whereby contracts with pregnant women and women with children under the age of 3 (or children with disabilities under the age of 18), whose employment contracts have been concluded for an indefinite period, are not concluded without the women's consent.

191. The term of a contract with a pregnant woman may, with her consent, be extended for the period of the pregnancy or another period of time by agreement of the parties.

192. For a female employee who is on maternity leave or a mother who is on parental leave to care for a child under the age of 3, the employer is obliged to extend the term of the contract at least until the end of such leave. For a working mother who returns to work either before or after completing childcare leave for a child under the age of 3, the employer is obliged to extend the term of the contract at least until the child reaches the age of 5.

193. In order to ensure the equal participation of both parents in the upbringing of children, the following innovations were introduced into the Labour Code in 2020:

- The right of fathers (stepfathers) raising children with disabilities under the age of 18 to choose their annual vacation during the summer period.
- A father (stepfather) raising two or more children under the age of 14 (or a child with disabilities under the age of 18) was granted the right to use his leave prior to working six months for the employer.
- The safeguards for working mothers were extended to working single parents.
- Paternity leave was established upon the birth of a child. The employer is obliged, at the request of the child's father (stepfather), to grant him unpaid leave of not more than 14 calendar days within six months of the child's birth. Another duration and (or) payment for paternity leave may be stipulated by collective agreement with the employer.

194. A norm on remote work was introduced into the Labour Code, whereby work may be performed outside the employer's location using information and communications technologies to perform such work and interact with the employer. The implementation of this norm during 2020–2021 showed the active interest of employers and employees in this form of labour relations. It also revealed the need to

improve it in terms of defining the type of labour relations that would provide for the possibility of working both at the workplace and remotely, including at home.

195. A project to promote responsible fatherhood was implemented, entitled “Development and introduction of a nationwide system to involve fathers in the upbringing and care of their children in the Republic of Belarus” (the L’vov Club national charitable public association). In 2021, as part of the project:

- (1) The 2021 national forum of fathers was held on the theme “being a dad now!”, in which more than 300 people participated;
- (2) 204 meetings of “dad groups” were held in all regions (covering 1,500 people), and 31 moderators were trained to support the activities of “dad schools”;
- (3) Social advertising on responsible fatherhood was created and placed on billboards in 20 cities.

196. A draft framework was developed for a “parent-friendly company” with support from UNFPA. The draft framework was approved at a meeting of the National Council on Gender Policy of the Council of Ministers in 2021. During 2022, a series of round tables were held for employers and representatives of the Federation of Trade Unions of Belarus, sectoral trade unions and the Union of Employers. About 100 people took part in the round tables. The results of the “parent-friendly company” initiative were presented at a meeting of the National Council on Labour and Social Affairs in February 2022. In 2023, work is planned with the pool of organizations that have joined the initiative (training activities for management, human resources specialists and parent employees).

197. The Presidential Decree on the promotion of employment does not provide for penalties against able-bodied citizens who are not employed in the economy, but only abolishes State subsidies to pay for housing and communal services.

198. In accordance with the regulations on the procedure for classifying able-bodied citizens as not employed in the economy and the creation and maintenance of a database of able-bodied citizens not employed in the economy, including the cooperation of State bodies and organizations for these purposes (approved by Decision No. 239 of 31 March 2018 of the Council of Ministers), citizens who are employed in the economy include mothers (stepmothers) or fathers (stepfathers), adoptive parents, guardians and those raising a child with disabilities under the age of 18 years; and mothers (stepmothers), adoptive parents or guardians among women raising a child under 7 years of age, or three or more minor children.

199. Able-bodied citizens who are not employed in the economy do not include citizens who are entitled to a disability pension or a survivor’s pension owing to an industrial accident or an occupational disease and who receive monthly insurance payments in accordance with the legislation on compulsory insurance against industrial accidents and occupational diseases.

200. Under article 2 of the Employment Act, citizens are considered employed who care for a child under the age of 3, a child with disabilities under the age of 18, a group I person with disabilities or a person who has reached the age of 80, or a child under the age of 18 infected with HIV or suffering from AIDS.

201. Since 2018, a new version of the Presidential Decree on the promotion of employment has been adopted which provides for a conceptually different approach. It is aimed at providing maximum employment assistance to citizens who want to work, and, in the absence of such interest, at establishing conditions that stimulate their employment, including through limiting certain public services provided to them on preferential terms. The new version of this Decree did not include norms on levying a fee on able-bodied non-working citizens to finance public expenditures. At

the same time, persons previously recognized as payers of this fee are exempt from paying it.

## **Sexual harassment in the workplace**

202. In accordance with the Constitution of the Republic of Belarus, everyone has the right to liberty and security of person. The dignity of the individual is protected by the State. Nothing may serve as a basis to diminish it (article 25). Women are ensured equal opportunities in all spheres of life, including in creating conditions for the protection of their labour and health (article 31, sixth part).

203. The Criminal Code establishes liability for coercion to commit acts of a sexual nature using the victim's professional, material or other dependence (article 170).

204. The Labour Code recognizes non-interference in private life and respect for personal dignity as one of the basic rights of an employee (article 11), and establishes the obligation for employees not to allow actions that prevent other employees from performing their work duties (article 53, paragraph 3).

## **Health**

205. According to the *UNFPA State of World Population 2022* report, Belarus is well positioned in the area of sexual and reproductive health, which includes having a record low maternal mortality rate and making progress towards achieving human rights goals and demographic targets. Belarus scored 87 per cent on the indicator "The extent to which countries have national laws and regulations that guarantee full and equal access to women and men to sexual and reproductive health care, information and education", ranking among the top 25 countries.

206. Reproductive health care aims to ensure equal access to quality reproductive health-care services. It includes a set of measures to ensure the birth of healthy children, an informed choice by citizens about when and how frequently to have children, the prevention of unwanted pregnancies and pregnancy-related risks to women's health and a reduction in the number of pregnancies among adolescent girls.

207. The number of women of reproductive age using various types of contraception has recently increased: from 39.9 per cent in 2010 to 53.2 per cent in 2021. In particular, 16 per cent of women use intrauterine devices, 15.6 per cent use hormonal contraception and 21.6 per cent use other types of contraception.

208. Among women aged 15 to 49 who are married or in an unmarried relationship, the proportion using a modern method of contraception is higher. According to MICS data for 2019, this category accounts for 65.5 per cent of women countrywide and for 62.7 per cent of rural women.

209. The 2021–2025 State programme for public health and demographic security defines the development of measures to improve reproductive health, foster a culture of healthy lifestyles and promote health-saving as a priority in the area of health care and demographic security. The family and childhood subprogramme includes measures to expand reproductive health counselling services for adolescents at adolescent-friendly centres, introduce interactive methods and hold events and contests to promote healthy lifestyles.

210. Adolescent- and youth-friendly centres, which have been established in each administrative centre at outpatient health-care institutions (there are 56 such centres in the country), provide ongoing assistance to adolescents and youth in addressing issues related to health promotion, including reproductive health and family planning.

In 2022, 83,000 adolescents applied to the centres, including almost 26,000 for reproductive health issues. The centres have also undertaken the following initiatives:

- (1) A project entitled “Expanding the access of at-risk adolescents and vulnerable groups to the services of adolescent-friendly centres” is being implemented. Under the project, health professionals (paediatricians, gynaecologists, dermatovenerologists, drug therapists, psychologists and valeologists) and representatives of community organizations worked together to provide comprehensive assistance to adolescents and young people;
- (2) The document entitled “Road map for the promotion of mental health and the psychological well-being of children and adolescents” was introduced. In 2022, six national training seminars were held on the mental health and psychological state of adolescents; on preventing bullying and suicidal behaviour among adolescents; and on Internet security (130 specialists from the centres were trained).

211. Information and educational work with young people and adolescents on the promotion of reproductive health is carried out by specialists from health-care institutions under the following projects: “School of fatherhood”, “Preserve life...” and “Abortion is happiness aborted”.

212. The national action plan on gender equality for 2021–2025 includes a number of measures aimed at raising awareness among the population, including adolescents and young people, about sexual and reproductive health and rights.

213. Supported by UNICEF, in March and April 2021 during the “Let’s Talk About Us” online discussion on sexual and reproductive health and women’s rights in the Republic of Belarus, work was done to identify possible limitations and determine steps to ensure the quality and confidentiality of the sexual and reproductive health services provided to adolescents and young people.

214. The sexual awareness of adolescents and protecting them from unwanted pregnancies were issues covered by the project “Marathon of women’s (family) health” in February 2021 (streamed online on YouTube).

215. Individual phone and online counselling services were provided (via digital business space websites, the Jivo platform, Skype, Viber communities, VK social networks and Instagram).

216. Maternal mortality is one of the main indicators of women’s reproductive health. In recent years, Belarus has registered isolated cases of women’s deaths during pregnancy, childbirth and the postpartum period. According to the CIA World Factbook, as at 1 January 2018, Belarus was one of the countries with the lowest maternal mortality rates in the world.

217. Complex medical, social and ethical issues related to abortion in Belarus have been addressed in recent years through a framework for implementing the right to reproductive choice, reproductive health and family planning, as defined by human rights documents and World Health Organization documents.

218. National legislation defines the legal basis for medical activity in family planning and in regulating human reproductive functions. In accordance with Act No. 2435-XII of 18 June 1993 (Health Care Act), a woman has the right to make her own decision regarding maternity (article 27, first paragraph). An artificial termination of pregnancy is performed with the woman’s consent and, in the case of a minor, also with the written consent of her legal representative.

219. In 2021, 16,861 terminations of pregnancy were performed up to 22 weeks in Belarusian health-care organizations (28,628 in 2012), of which 140 abortions were



performed on adolescent girls (503 abortions in 2012). The abortion rate per 1,000 women of fertile age has decreased over the past 10 years, falling to 7.8 in 2021 (12 per cent in 2012), and among adolescent girls it has decreased to 0.76 per cent (2.7 per cent in 2012). The number of abortions per 100 live and still births was 21.6 per cent in 2021 (24.6 per cent in 2012). Currently, induced abortions are the predominant form (81.2 per cent), while miscarriages account for 18.8 per cent.

220. No cases of unsafe abortions have been reported in the country since 2011.

221. Measures are being taken to further reduce abortions: medical measures include improving women's and men's reproductive health awareness; and social measures include conducting family psychological pre-abortion counselling.

222. The Health Care Act obliges health-care organizations to establish the conditions for women seeking an induced abortion and ensure that pre-abortion psychological counselling is provided to them (article 27, second part). The system of pre-abortion psychological counselling has been in place since 2017. Every year, health-care organizations hold an event entitled "For Life!". As a result of the work carried out, the proportion of women who decided to continue with their pregnancy increased.

223. Pre-abortion counselling must be carried out in compliance with the requirements of the law on psychological assistance, namely, with the consent of the woman (article 18, first part, of the Psychological Assistance Act (Act No. 153-Z of 1 July 2010)). If psychological assistance is provided to a minor under the age of 14, in addition to the consent of the minor, it is also necessary to obtain the consent of one of her legal representatives (except in certain cases when the consent of the legal representatives is not required).

224. According to the instructions on family pre-abortion counselling, approved by Order No. 1409 of 9 November 2021 of the Ministry of Health, pre-abortion counselling is not carried out if a woman who has applied for an induced termination of pregnancy wishes to independently resolve the issue of maternity in accordance with article 27, paragraph 1, of the Health Care Act.

225. In 2021, 98.8 per cent of pregnant women who wished to terminate their pregnancy received pre-abortion psychological counselling (99.5 per cent in 2017). Of these, 30 per cent decided to continue with their pregnancy (13.8 per cent in 2017). Pre-abortion psychological counselling was provided to 100 per cent of adolescent girls, allowing 30.1 per cent of pregnancies to be saved (12 per cent in 2017).

226. Information about women's reproductive health decision-making according to MICS (2019); as a percentage of the total number of married or unmarried women from the respective group):

|                       | <i>Percentage of women aged 15 to 49 who independently make informed decisions</i> |                                |                              |   |
|-----------------------|--|--------------------------------|------------------------------|---|
|                       | <i>about sexual relations</i>  | <i>about contraceptive use</i> | <i>about health coverage</i> | <i>about all three reproductive health issues</i> |
| Women (total)         | 70.6   | 81.8                           | 99.5                         | 68.0  |
| including rural women | 67.2   | 78.6                           | 99.4                         | 64.8  |

227. Belarus has adopted legal and regulatory instruments that form the basis of a system of measures for cancer screening and early diagnosis at all levels of health care. Order No. 1505 of 30 November 2021 of the Ministry of Health amended Order No. 830 of 28 July 2017 on the organization of cancer screening and early diagnosis and approved a number of instructions and regulations.

228. The instructions on the procedure for cancer screening and early diagnosis set out continuity arrangements for the work of health-care organizations in conducting cancer screening and early diagnosis activities at all levels.

229. In 2019, an automated information system was brought into operation for the national breast cancer screening programme.

230. In 2017, the Ministry of Health developed a training programme at the training centre of the N.N. Alexandrov Applied Research Centre of Oncology and Medical Radiology. The programme is for radiologists, X-ray laboratory technicians, endoscopists, urologists, gynaecologists, cytotechnologist physicians and health-care organizers involved in cancer screening.

231. From September to November 2018, all health-care institutions and the Health Care Committee of the Minsk municipal executive committee held retreats, with the participation of district chief physicians, on the wider implementation of screening at the regional level, and 16 presentations were made for the heads of district health-care institutions.

232. In April 2018, a national seminar entitled “Epidemiological principles (features) of breast cancer screening” was held with international participation and 29 specialists were trained.

233. Promotional activities are being carried out at various locations on the need for screening tests (through conferences, seminars and round tables on cancer screening):

- (1) In order to popularize public screening measures, staff from the multidisciplinary team at the N.N. Alexandrov Applied Research Centre of Oncology and Medical Radiology gave 24 lectures and two seminars in 2017, 21 lectures in 2018 and 13 lectures and three seminars in 2019, and articles were published in the media;
- (2) A research project entitled “Preferences of Belarusian women in breast cancer screening methods” was launched jointly with the International Agency for Research on Cancer;
- (3) In 2018, the Ministry of Health approved informational materials for women participating in breast cancer screening, entitled “Mammography screening (helping women decide whether to participate in breast cancer screening)”.

234. Comprehensive psychological assistance and rehabilitation measures for women with breast cancer are provided through the joint efforts of all stakeholders: oncologists, obstetricians-gynaecologists and psychologists. Particular attention is given to providing psychological assistance to women in the preoperative and postoperative periods. About 30 per cent of operations on women with breast cancer are performed to preserve organs or reconstruct components using artificial implants or autografts.

235. Since September 2018, The N.N. Alexandrov Applied Research Centre of Oncology and Medical Radiology has been running a medical and psychological department that specializes in providing psychological and psychotherapeutic assistance to the Centre’s patients and their relatives.

236. Subprogramme 1 (on family and childhood) of the 2021–2025 State programme for public health and demographic security includes activities to develop, prepare and implement a national vaccination programme against infection caused by the human papillomavirus (paragraph 4.9), and subprogramme 2 (on the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases) includes activities aimed at preventing malignant neoplasms, including breast and cervical cancer screening (paragraph 73).

237. The number of obstetricians/gynaecologists increased from 2,817 in 2017 to 2,980 at the end of 2021. The number of birth attendants (obstetricians) with specialized secondary medical education at the end of 2021 was 4,584, or 9.2 health workers per 10,000 women.

238. General practitioners are systematically improving their competence in reproductive and sexual health. In 2022, the Belarusian Medical Academy for Postgraduate Studies conducted:

- Seven seminars entitled “Key elements for family counselling by health workers: identifying and preventing violence, overcoming psychological trauma and having the skills for effective communication with the family”.
- Three seminars entitled “The principles of effective communication and key elements for counselling adolescents on reproductive health, vaccinations and violence prevention”.
- An educational seminar entitled “Key elements for family counselling by health workers: identifying and preventing violence, overcoming psychological trauma and having the skills for effective communication with the family”.

239. Information on women’s antenatal care coverage according to MICS (2019), as a percentage of the total number of women from the respective group with a live birth in the last two years:

| <i>Distribution of women aged 15 to 49 years by type of staff who provided antenatal care during their last pregnancy (percentage)</i> |               |                                    |                  |                                   |
|--|---------------|------------------------------------|------------------|-----------------------------------|
|  | <i>Doctor</i> | <i>Staff nurse/birth attendant</i> | <i>Paramedic</i> | <i>No antenatal care provided</i> |
| Women (total)  | 99.6          | 0.3                                | 0.0              | 0.1                               |
| including rural women  | 98.7          | 1.0                                | 0.1              | 0.2                               |

240. Information on the number of antenatal visits according to MICS (2019; as a percentage of the total number of women from the respective group who gave birth to a living child in the last two years):

| <i>Percentage of women aged 15 to 49 years by number of visits to any health-care provider during antenatal care</i> |                                 |                            |                             |
|--|---------------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
|  | <i>No antenatal care visits</i> | <i>Four or more visits</i> | <i>Eight or more visits</i> |
| Women (total)  | 0.1                             | 99.9                       | 99.4                        |
| including rural women  | 0.2                             | 99.8                       | 99.0                        |

241. The Ministry of Health has developed and approved instructions on the organization of a multilevel system of obstetric, gynaecological and perinatal care in the Republic of Belarus (Order No. 966 of 9 August 2019 of the Minister of Health). It did so in order to increase the efficiency and improve the quality of medical treatment for pregnant women, women in labour, women in childbirth, gynaecological patients and newborn children; to stabilize maternal, perinatal and infant mortality rates; and to preserve and restore the reproductive health of the population.

## Economic and social benefits

242. In 2020, Presidential Decree No. 171 of 18 May 2020 regarding social support for certain categories of citizens was adopted; its purposes include strengthening pension guarantees for women who have given birth to and raised children.

243. In particular, this Decree provides:

- (1) for an increase in the duration of childcare leave periods to be counted in employment history from 9 years to 12 years;
- (2) for a reduction in the minimum insurance period required for entitlement to a retirement pension to 10 years for women who have given birth to 4 children and raised them up to the age of 8.

244. Subsequently, similar provisions were enshrined in the Pension Act of Belarus (No. 1596-XII of 17 April 1992).

245. One of the conditions for awarding women an old-age insurance pension is fulfilment of the required insurance period (payment of contributions) – from 17 years and 6 months in 2020 to 20 years in 2025. For women with long periods of caring for young children, disabled children, adults with group 1 disabilities and for the elderly, the required insurance period has been reduced to 10 years (Presidential Decrees No. 233 of 29 June 2017 and No. 171 of 18 May 2020).

246. The five-year retirement age difference between the genders is still in place. A lower retirement age for women does not entail a corresponding decrease in the amount of women's pensions relative to men's pensions (due to the parameters of the pension formula: women need a shorter total length of service than men to increase their pensions).

247. In order to guarantee pension benefits for older women, there is a programme of work-related pensions (insurance-based, contributory) and social pensions (non-contributory). From 2021, the coverage of women under the insurance-based old-age pension programme will increase through the introduction of an old-age pension for instances of insurance periods which are not of the full duration, with payments of a higher amount than that provided for in the social pension programme (Presidential Decree No. 171 of 18 May 2020).

248. Older women are in fact fully covered by State pension provisions: the share of women over working age who receive a pension in the total number of women in this age group is 98.9 per cent, while the coverage for men is 97.7 per cent.

249. The coverage of older women with public pensions is monitored on an ongoing basis as one of the indicators for Sustainable Development Goal target 1.3 (“Implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, and by 2030 achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable”).

250. The problem of feminization of poverty in old age in the context of Belarus has no relevance. Women receiving pensions have actually been removed from the category of the poor: while the overall share of pensioners (men and women) with pensions below the pensioner's subsistence minimum is consistently less than 1 per cent, there are more men (54.5 per cent) among the recipients of such minimum pensions.

251. In general, there is virtually no gender gap in the level of pension provision in Belarus: the average amount of pension payments to women compared to the average amount of pension payments to men since 2014 is about 98 per cent (99.5 per cent at the end of 2019). The country's efforts to eliminate gender differences in employment

and wages will further contribute to levelling out even minimal differences in pensions.

252. Since 2018, there has been a decline in the level of poverty in Belarus. In 2021, it stood at 4.1 per cent of the population (5.7 per cent in 2016). The poverty rate among women was 3.7 per cent; 2.9 per cent among urban women and 6.2 per cent among rural women.

253. In order to provide social support to low-income families and individuals in difficult life situations, including women, a system of targeted State social assistance is in place. The criterion for categorizing families or individuals as low-income is the per capita average minimum subsistence budget.

254. The targeted social assistance system provides social payments: monthly and lump-sum social benefits; provision of food for children in the first two years of life; and a social allowance to reimburse the costs of purchasing hygiene items. The main purpose of these social payments is to support low-income population, including women, for the purchase of food, medicines, clothing, footwear and other needs to ensure normal life activity.

255. The development of women's entrepreneurship is provided for in the State Programme for Small and Medium Entrepreneurship for 2021–2025 (Decision of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus No. 56 of 29 January 2021). There is a set of measures intended to provide financial support to those running small businesses, including women:

- (1) financing by the Development Bank of the Republic of Belarus OJSC of projects of small and medium-sized businesses using a separate product, "Support for Women's Entrepreneurship". Financing is provided to business entities in which women hold at least a 50 per cent share of the authorized capital and which are managed by a woman, as well as to individual women entrepreneurs;
- (2) subsidies for partial payment of interest on loans provided by banks;
- (3) funds for reimbursement (full or partial) of actually incurred expenses for lease payments under financing (leasing) agreements in terms of payment of the dues (income) to the lessor, and other investment expenses; participation in, or organization of, exhibitions and fairs;
- (4) guarantees (sureties) to banks in connection with obligations when obtaining loans;
- (5) assistance in obtaining financial and technical resources, information, methodological and consulting services for organizing and conducting business by the Belinvestbank OJSC Centre for Support and Development of Women's Entrepreneurship.

256. In order to expand opportunities to support women's entrepreneurship projects and develop women's businesses, a trilateral agreement was concluded in 2022 between the Ministry of Economic Affairs, Belinvestbank OJSC and the Belarusian Union of Women regarding cooperation and interaction to stimulate women's entrepreneurial initiatives. The action plan for the implementation of the trilateral agreement includes a number of activities aimed at publicizing women's business; Stimulating the entrepreneurial initiative of women planning to start a business; developing and supporting existing women's businesses; providing information on topical issues connected with the organization, and support and development of women's business.

257. Promoting entrepreneurial initiative and supporting women's self-employment is one of the priority areas of employment policy. In 2018, the Government adopted

the Strategy for the Development of Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises for the period up to 2030. It contains measures to widen economic opportunities for women.

258. A number of projects to support women's entrepreneurship have been implemented: in 2017–2020, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development implemented the Women in Business programme; within that programme it worked closely with partner banks in Belarus to provide financial support to women executives; in 2020, the Development Bank of the Republic of Belarus OJSC financed 73 women's entrepreneurship projects to a value of 9.5 million Belarusian roubles.

259. Measures taken by labour, employment and social protection agencies to employ women, retrain and improve their qualifications, provide support in organizing entrepreneurial activities, and provide advisory services to women entrepreneurs (see paras. 153–156) have as a focus the provision of economic and social support to women.

260. In 2023, Economic Research Institute of the Ministry of Economic Affairs of the Republic of Belarus, a State scientific institution, plans to conduct a study entitled "The current situation with regard to women's entrepreneurship in the Republic of Belarus: Issues and solutions".

261. As part of the international technical assistance project entitled "Supporting the efforts of the Republic of Belarus in the nationalization and localization of the Sustainable Development Goals" (approved by Decision No. 918 of 27 December 2022 of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus), the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, together with UNFPA, plans:

- to develop approaches to a gender assessment of draft normative legal acts regulating the conditions of entrepreneurial activity in 2023;
- to include elements of gender analysis in the regulatory impact assessment conducted during the process of drafting regulatory legal acts regarding the conditions of entrepreneurial activity in 2024.

## **Women in detention**

262. Amendments have been made to Act No. 215-Z of 16 June 2003 on procedures and conditions of detention, which established the right of persons in custody to receive and use technical means of social rehabilitation.

263. The Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Their Social Integration Act, No. 215-Z, has been supplemented as follows:

- Article 241 "Specific considerations for the detention of persons with disabilities";
- Article 28, with regard to the section providing for training for staff of detention facilities to ensure respect for the rights, freedoms and lawful interests of suspects and accused persons with disabilities.

264. In addition, the Penalties Enforcement Code of the Republic of Belarus has been amended to include the need to provide training for the staff of bodies and institutions carrying out sentences and other penal measures.

265. The Penalties Enforcement Code enshrines the right of prisoners to undergo medical and social assessment, if indicated, in accordance with the procedure established by the Ministry of Health, and also establishes the obligation of the administration of correctional institutions to provide conditions for the rehabilitation and habilitation of prisoners with disabilities.

266. Amendments to the Penalties Enforcement Code introduced by Act No. 112-Z of 26 May 2021 amending the Penalties Enforcement Code:

- provide for the direct participation of the Ministry of Health in establishing, together with the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the procedure for the provision of medical care and sanitary and anti-epidemic measures in correctional institutions;
- enshrine the right of prisoners to use video link systems in telephone conversations with close relatives, as well as the possibility of telephone conversations with other persons, including by video link.

267. Article 61 of the Penalties Enforcement Code introduces as an incentive the right of those sentenced to arrest to spend additional money to purchase food and basic necessities.

268. Article 89 of the Penalties Enforcement Code emphasizes the right of prisoners to receive textbooks and teaching aids.

269. Article 92 of the Penalties Enforcement Code establishes the right of prisoners serving their sentences in an open prison to obtain permission for short-term examination-related leave when receiving basic education in correspondence form.

270. Act No. 171-Z on amending and supplementing certain codes of the Republic of Belarus

- established that correctional facilities must not just provide prisoners sentenced to deprivation of liberty with access to general secondary and vocational education and vocational training, but must also establish the conditions for the provision of specialized secondary and higher education by distance learning and for additional education (the necessary amendments were made to article 109 of the Penalties Enforcement Code);
- A provision was incorporated into article 114 of the Penalties Enforcement Code to allow, in exceptional circumstances, for a short-term visit to be granted to a prisoner placed in a punitive isolation cell or transferred to a cell-type room or solitary confinement in a special-regime correctional prison settlement.

271. In the period from 2016 to 2022, the conditions of custodial sentences served in young offenders' institutions were made less severe:

- (1) prisoners are allowed to spend six basic units instead of three basic units per month (and prisoners transferred to improved conditions of detention are allowed to spend an additional four basic units instead of two) for the purchase of food and basic necessities;
- (2) they may have eight short-term and four long-term visits per year instead of four short-term visits (prisoners transferred to improved conditions of detention can have two additional short-term and two additional visits per year instead of two short-term visits);
- (3) they may receive eight parcels or packages per year instead of six (prisoners transferred to improved conditions of detention can receive an additional four instead of two).

272. These changes apply as a general rule to women prisoners, in particular women with disabilities.

273. In accordance with the Penalties Enforcement Code, prisoners have the right to use the services of lawyers to obtain legal assistance. Prisoners are provided on request with visits from lawyers to obtain legal assistance.

274. Act No. 334-Z of 30 December 2011, the Bar and Advocacy Act, provides that lawyers must not be prevented from holding meetings with their clients in private and in conditions ensuring the confidentiality of such meetings, and provides that limits must not be placed on the number or duration of those meetings.

275. In Belarus, there is a mechanism for public oversight of the rights of prisoners, including women prisoners. This oversight is carried out by public monitoring commissions. Membership of public monitoring commissions is confined to representatives of public associations assigned to those functions by the governing bodies of those public associations. The public monitoring conducted by these commissions is intended to identify any violations of prisoners' rights and problems related to the serving of their sentences. Public monitoring commissions overseeing penal correction institutions are fully independent. The activities of the public monitoring commissions are independent from State authorities. The State authorities merely facilitate their activities by providing meeting rooms, transport and office supplies.

276. The members of the public monitoring commissions are representatives of over 50 Belarusian public associations. Their membership is periodically renewed, giving different public associations the opportunity to participate in their activities.

277. On a systematic basis, public monitoring commissions visit the penal correctional system institution (correctional colony No. 4) where female prisoners are held. During the visits, the commissions have viewed women prisoners' living conditions and observed recreational activities, working conditions and medical care, held interviews with prisoners and conducted surveys among the prisoners held at the facility. The public monitoring commissions have confirmed that conditions of women prisoners' accommodation, food, medical treatment, leisure activities and employment at that facility meet all of the established requirements for penal correction institutions. No complaints or criticisms about the work of the administration of the correctional institution or accommodation conditions have been received during the interviews with the women prisoners.

278. The public monitoring commissions have commended the work of the administration of the correctional institution and the Penal Correction Department in organizing medical care for women prisoners, organizing opportunities for additional higher, specialized secondary and vocational education, and the work of psychologists, as well as work regarding living conditions and recreation for mothers with children. The public monitoring commissions have noted the work carried out by the administration of the correctional institution to provide prisoners with the opportunity to make calls via video link and the opportunity for prisoners and their relatives, in the interests of the prisoners, to make online purchases in the Internet store operating in the institution.

279. Information on visits by public monitoring commissions to bodies and institutions of the penal and correctional system is published on the official websites of the relevant State bodies providing support for the activities of public supervisory commissions and exercising control over bodies and institutions carrying out sentences and other penal measures. Such information is constantly posted on those websites, and is in the public domain.

## **Refugee, asylum-seeking and migrant women**

280. Refugee status, additional protection, asylum and temporary protection in Belarus are granted on the basis of Act No. 354-Z of 23 June 2008 on providing foreign citizens and persons without citizenship with refugee status, additional



protection, asylum and temporary protection, regardless of the gender of the person applying for protection.

281. Pursuant to the Act on providing foreign citizens and persons without citizenship with refugee status, additional protection, asylum and temporary protection, in the absence of the possibility to settle in the territory of Belarus independently:

- (1) persons who have been granted refugee status or additional protection, as well as applicants for protection, have the right to reside in places of temporary settlement and in special accommodation, subject to availability (Article 20(8), first section of article 23(6), first section of article 34(5));
- (2) persons who have been granted asylum have the right to reside in places of temporary settlement, subject to availability (article 26(7));
- (3) persons granted temporary protection have the right to be accommodated in settlement locations and to live in special accommodation, subject to availability (article 29(4) and 29(5)).

282. Pursuant to article 20(9) and article 26(8) of the Act, persons who have been granted refugee status or asylum have the right to medical care on an equal footing with citizens of Belarus.

283. Pursuant to article 29(3) and the first section of article 34(7) of the Act, persons granted temporary protection and persons applying for protection are entitled to free emergency medical assistance in State health-care organizations.

284. Pursuant to article 3(6) of the Healthcare Act, one of the basic principles of the State health policy of Belarus is to prioritize medical care, including the provision of medicines, for minors; women during pregnancy, childbirth and the post-natal period; disabled persons, and veterans.

285. Pursuant to article 20(17), the first part of article 23(15), article 26(15) and the first part of article 34(11) of the Act, persons who have been granted refugee status, additional protection or asylum, as well as persons applying for protection, have the right to judicial protection on an equal footing with citizens of Belarus. Foreigners and persons granted temporary protection have the right to judicial protection on an equal footing with citizens of Belarus by virtue of the first part of article 4 of the Act and the first part of article 10 of the Code on the Judicial System and the Status of Judges.

286. Foreigners have the right to move freely and choose a place of stay (place of residence) within the territory of Belarus by virtue of the first part of article 8 of the Legal Status of Foreign Nationals and Stateless Persons in Belarus; pursuant to the third part of article 8, exception is made for locations and facilities in the territory of Belarus which cannot be visited without the required special permit.

287. In order to ensure respect for the rights and freedoms of asylum-seekers, the border guard agencies have since 2008 been implementing the Memorandum of Understanding on monitoring the borders of the Republic of Belarus and access to the asylum procedure in the territory of the Republic of Belarus between the State Border Committee, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the International Organization for Migration, the Belarusian Red Cross Society and the Belarusian Movement of Medical Workers.

288. The purpose of the Memorandum of Understanding is to allow employees of the Parties to monitor the situation of foreigners detained by the border guard authorities, as well as to ensure that the Parties have all the conditions to provide detainees with information on the procedure for granting refugee status, their legal situation in the

territory of Belarus, to provide detainees needing it with emergency assistance (food, clothing, medicines), medical consultations, the opportunity to return home voluntarily, and other possible assistance.

289. Between November 2016 and 30 March 2023, a total of 132 foreigners, of whom 50 were women, including 17 under the age of 18, applied to the Border Guard authorities for refugee status, additional protection or asylum.

290. No violations of legislation on forced migration, the rights and freedoms of refugees who have applied to the border guard authorities, or cases of violence against them have been detected by the supervisory authorities of Belarus or by non-governmental and international organizations.

291. In a spirit of goodwill, Belarus accepted the proposal to organize a visit of the United Nations Human Rights Council Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants, Felipe González Morales. That visit demonstrated the openness of Belarus to dialogue and its readiness to create all conditions for maintaining interaction with international organizations on the situation on the Belarusian-Polish border.

292. On 28 July 2022, the final briefing of the Special Rapporteur on the results of his visit to Belarus and Poland was held online. During the briefing, the Special Rapporteur called on Belarus, Poland and the European Union to establish communication and dialogue regarding the situation on the common border. This message fully resonates with the approaches that Belarus insisted on during the development of the situation on the border.

## **Disadvantaged groups of women**

293. Achieving equality between women and men is a prerequisite for sustainable agricultural production and rural development, and for ensuring food security in Belarus.

294. The gender distribution of the number of employees in agriculture is as follows: 148,000 men (60.8 per cent of the total number employed in agriculture), and just over 95,000 women (39.2 per cent). Rural women have a higher level of education than rural men: among working women 14 per cent have higher education, with the level among men being 10 per cent.

295. The ratio of women's to men's nominal accrued wages in agriculture in 2021 was 86.5 per cent, while the Belarus average was 71.9 per cent.

296. Under current legislation, women are entitled to a retirement pension on general grounds earlier than men. The right to an early retirement pension for women in agriculture is granted for work as a milking machine operator, work in calf or pig husbandry, and work as a tractor driver/mechanic.

297. Women who have given birth to five or more children and brought them up to the age of 16 are entitled to a pension regardless of age if they have worked on collective farms, state farms and other agricultural enterprises directly in the production of agricultural products for at least 10 years (without counting the time spent caring for children incorporated into their length of service).

298. The agrarian complex of Belarus includes small and medium-sized enterprises along with large commodity organizations of various organizational and legal forms. The most typical representative of a small business is a peasant farmer. Currently, there are about 3,642 farms in the country. Land plots are allocated to a farm for lifetime use or lease. Farming is predominantly a family business; both men and women can head a farm.

299. Information on access to land for rural women aged 18 years and older from the sample household survey by standard of living (percentage):

| <i>Share of rural women who own or have a guaranteed right to use agricultural land:</i>                              | <i>Year</i> |             |
|---|-------------|-------------|
|   | <i>2019</i> | <i>2020</i> |
| women engaged in agriculture as a share of all rural women  | 80.5        | 83.9        |
| number owning agricultural land or having a guaranteed right to use such land, as a share of all the rural population | 60.4        | 62.8        |

300. Women have equal access with men to leadership positions at all levels of administration. The predominant areas of professional activity of women managers are human resources, financial and economic and accounting services. As a rule, deputy managers for economics, finance, and ideological functions are women. Of the total number of women working in agriculture, about 30 per cent are managers and specialists.

301. Of the total number of women employed in agriculture, more than 40 per cent work in the livestock sector. The predominantly female specializations of the livestock industry include milking machine operator, mechanized farm operator and cattle breeder.

302. The unemployment rate for rural women ages 15–74 decreased from 4.6 per cent in 2016 to 2.7 per cent in 2021. Unemployment rate information from the sample survey of households undertaken for the purpose of studying employment issues among the population (in percent):

|                                     | <i>Year</i> |             |             |             |             |             |
|-------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
|                                     | <i>2016</i> | <i>2017</i> | <i>2018</i> | <i>2019</i> | <i>2020</i> | <i>2021</i> |
| Population aged 15–74 years – total | 5.8         | 5.6         | 4.8         | 4.2         | 4.0         | 3.9         |
| Women                               | 4.2         | 4.0         | 3.6         | 3.2         | 3.3         | 3.1         |
| of which rural women constitute     | 4.6         | 3.5         | 2.9         | 2.4         | 2.9         | 2.7         |
| Men                                 | 7.5         | 7.2         | 5.9         | 5.1         | 4.8         | 4.7         |
| Total working-age population        | 6.0         | 5.6         | 4.7         | 4.2         | 4.0         | 3.8         |
| Women                               | 4.2         | 4.0         | 3.4         | 3.1         | 3.2         | 2.9         |
| Men                                 | 7.6         | 7.2         | 5.9         | 5.1         | 4.8         | 4.6         |

303. The employment rate among rural women aged 15–74 increased from 59.9 per cent in 2016 to 62.4 per cent in 2021. Employment rate information from the sample survey of households undertaken for the purpose of studying employment issues among the population (in percent):

|                                     | <i>Year</i> |             |             |             |             |             |
|-------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
|                                     | <i>2016</i> | <i>2017</i> | <i>2018</i> | <i>2019</i> | <i>2020</i> | <i>2021</i> |
| Population aged 15–74 years – total | 66.7        | 67.2        | 67.5        | 67.7        | 67.5        | 67.3        |
| Women                               | 64.1        | 64.4        | 63.9        | 64.2        | 63.5        | 63.8        |
| of which rural women constitute     | 59.9        | 62.5        | 62.7        | 63.0        | 63.0        | 62.4        |
| Men                                 | 69.6        | 70.4        | 71.6        | 71.6        | 71.9        | 71.4        |
| Total working-age population        | 80.9        | 82.0        | 83.0        | 83.4        | 83.0        | 83.3        |
| Women                               | 82.7        | 83.7        | 84.0        | 84.7        | 83.8        | 84.5        |
| Men                                 | 79.3        | 80.4        | 82.0        | 82.1        | 82.3        | 82.3        |

304. In 2022, the first national forum of rural women agricultural workers was held. The participants included agricultural and processing workers from all regions of the country (more than 1,000 women). The main purpose of the event was to honour women who contribute to the country's food security through their creative activities.

305. In 2018–2022, 6 pre-school education institutions, with 1,165 places, were put into operation in rural areas. In 2022, there were 1,591 educational institutions in rural areas implementing the preschool education programme for 51,532 children of early childhood and preschool age. There is one “family kindergarten” (home day-care facility) with 10 children in Minsk province.

306. Taking into account the needs of parents (legal representatives) of pupils in rural areas, there are 1,090 short-stay groups (from 2 to 7 hours) for 6,552 pupils (adaptation, walking and evening groups, weekend and school preparation groups, “mothers’ schools”, seasonal and play spaces, etc.). In order to improve accessibility, transportation of 8,197 pupils to pre-school education institutions has been arranged.

307. The measures taken in rural areas have ensured accessibility of preschool education and coverage of children aged 1 to 6 years with preschool education at the following overall levels: 2022 – 58.9 per cent (2018 – 50.8 per cent).

308. The standard for coverage of five-year-olds by preparation for education in general secondary education institutions has been met to 100 per cent in all provinces, through institutions providing preschool education and through other means of providing preschool education.

309. In the interests of achieving in the country the empowerment of persons with disabilities, including women and girls with disabilities, the 2017–2025 National Plan of Action to Implement the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in the Republic of Belarus, approved by Decision No. 451 of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus of 13 June 2017, has been adopted and is being implemented. In 2022, the National Plan was supplemented with new activities for the period 2022–2025 affecting women and girls with disabilities, taking into account the proposals of the United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in connection with the initial report of Belarus.

310. Act No. 183-Z on the rights of persons with disabilities and their social integration, adopted in 2022, establishes the rights of persons with disabilities, including children with disabilities; defines guarantees for the realization of those persons’ rights, equality and non-discrimination on the basis of disability; and is aimed at improving their quality of life, at creating and ensuring appropriate conditions for the full and equal participation of persons with disabilities in the life of society, and at preventing disability. The provisions of the Act on the rights of persons with disabilities are gender-neutral and aim to achieve and protect the rights of all persons with disabilities, including women and girls, on an equal basis.

311. According to MICS data, the percentage of women aged 15–49 who felt discriminated against or harassed in the last 12 months prior to the survey is 4.8 per cent (2.4 per cent among rural women), gender discrimination or harassment is 1.2 per cent, and sexual orientation discrimination or harassment is 0.1 per cent. Information on discrimination and harassment of women and men aged 15–49 years according to MICS (2019; as a percentage of the total population of the relevant group):

|                                 | <i>Proportion of women and men aged 15–49 who in the last 12 months have experienced discrimination or harassment on the following grounds:</i> |               |                            |             |                           |                   |                      | <i>Proportion of women and men who in the last 12 months:</i>                         |   |
|---------------------------------|---|---------------|----------------------------|-------------|---------------------------|-------------------|----------------------|---|---|
|                                 | <i>immigration</i>  | <i>gender</i> | <i>sexual orientation;</i> | <i>age;</i> | <i>religion or belief</i> | <i>disability</i> | <i>other grounds</i> | <i>have experienced discrimination or harassment on at least one of those grounds</i> | <i>did not feel discriminated against or harassed</i> |
| Women (total)                   | 0.3   | 1.2           | 0.1                        | 1.8         | 0.6                       | 0.6               | 1.2                  | 4.8   | 95.2  |
| of which rural women constitute | 0.1   | 0.5           | 0.0                        | 0.8         | 0.5                       | 0.5               | 0.7                  | 2.4   | 97.6  |
| Men (total)                     | 0.1   | 0.6           | 0.1                        | 1.6         | 0.4                       | 1.3               | 0.4                  | 4.0   | 96.0  |
| of which rural men constitute   | 0.2   | 0.3           | 0.0                        | 1.3         | 0.7                       | 1.8               | 0.5                  | 4.7   | 95.3  |

## Marriage and family relations

312. Under article 23 of the Marriage and Family Code, property acquired by the spouses during the marriage is their common joint property. The spouses have equal rights of possession, use and disposal of this property, unless otherwise provided in the marriage contract.

313. Spouses also enjoy equal rights to jointly acquired property in the event that one of them has been engaged during the marriage in keeping the home or in childcare, or for other valid reasons has not had independent earnings (income), unless otherwise provided in the marriage contract.

314. Pursuant to article 24 of the Marriage and Family Code, in the event of division of property that is the common joint property of the spouses, their shares shall be recognized as equal, unless otherwise provided in the marriage contract. The courts have the right to deviate from the recognition of the shares as equal, taking into account the interests of minors and disabled adult children in need of assistance or the interests of one of the spouses that deserve attention. The share of one spouse in particular may be increased if the other spouse has avoided work or has expended the common property to the detriment of the interests of the family.

315. Issues of possession, use and disposal of jointly owned property, including that of persons who are not in a registered marriage, as well as the division of the property of these persons, should be resolved through civil proceedings.

316. Pursuant to paragraphs 1-3 of Article 256 of the Civil Code, joint owners, unless otherwise provided by agreement between them, jointly own and use common property. Disposal of jointly owned property is carried out with the consent of all the owners, which is presumed regardless of which of the owners has undertaken the transaction for disposal of the property. This rule does not apply to immovable property, the disposal of which requires the written consent of all the joint owners. Each of the joint owners has the right to undertake transactions for the disposal of common property, unless the agreement between the owners envisages otherwise. A transaction undertaken by one of the joint owners related to the disposal of common property may be recognized invalid at the request of the other joint owners on the grounds that the joint owner who undertook the transaction lacked the necessary powers only if it is proved that the other party to the transaction knew or should have known about it (article 175).

317. Pursuant to Article 257, paragraphs 1 and 2, of the Civil Code, the division of common property between joint owners, as well as the allocation of the share of one of them, may be carried out on condition of preliminary determination of the share of each of the joint owners in the right to common property. When dividing common property and separating a share from it, shares are recognized as equal unless otherwise provided for by law or by agreement between the joint owners.

318. Pursuant to article 50, paragraphs 4 and 5, of the Marriage and Family Code, mutual rights and obligations between father and child, if the child's father and mother are unmarried, arise from the date on which the father is duly identified as the father in the child's birth record or from the date on which the court decision establishing paternity enters into force, unless otherwise provided for in the Code. Children whose parents are unmarried have the same rights and duties towards their parents and their relatives as children of persons who are married to each other.

319. Under article 91, sections 1-3, 5, 6 and 8, of the Marriage and Family Code, parents are obliged to support their minor and disabled adult children in need of assistance. If parents fail to provide maintenance for their minor and disabled adult children in need of assistance, the funds for their maintenance (alimony) will be recovered from the parents through the courts.

320. According to the Marriage and Family Code, marriage is a voluntary union between a woman and a man which aims to create a family and gives rise to mutual rights and obligations for the parties. The age for marriage has been set at eighteen years. In exceptional cases arising from pregnancy, the birth of a child, or in the case of a minor acquiring full legal capacity before reaching the age of majority, the civil registry may lower the age of marriage, but not by more than three years.

321. There has been a steady decline in the number of girls married before the age of 18. In 2021, the number stood at 357 (589 in 2016). Information on the number of women married before the age of 18 (persons):

|                                 | <i>Year</i> |             |             |             |             |             |
|---------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
|                                 | <i>2016</i> | <i>2017</i> | <i>2018</i> | <i>2019</i> | <i>2020</i> | <i>2021</i> |
| Total                           | 589         | 492         | 443         | 429         | 396         | 357         |
| broken down by<br>age in years: |             |             |             |             |             |             |
| 14                              | –           | –           | 1           | –           | –           | –           |
| 15                              | 50          | 33          | 31          | 27          | 25          | 32          |
| 16                              | 162         | 137         | 125         | 114         | 112         | 111         |
| 17                              | 377         | 322         | 286         | 288         | 259         | 214         |

### **Additional information**

322. In accordance with paragraph 4 of the National Action Plan for Gender Equality for 2021–2025, it was proposed to improve the conditions of detention of detained foreign nationals through the construction and commissioning of gender-sensitive temporary detention centres for foreigners.

323. The construction of the migrant accommodation centre on the territory of military unit 2034 in the village of Farinovo, Polotsk district, Vitebsk province, was carried out within the framework of the international technical assistance project entitled “Helping Belarus address the phenomenon of increasing numbers of irregular migrants” funded by the European Union.

324. Due to the suspension of the project implementation by the European Union, the construction was stopped and the facility was mothballed (15.08.2022). The facility was transferred to the ownership of the State Border Committee. The construction of the centre will continue if it becomes possible to raise international technical assistance funding.

325. In 2017, the first wave of sociological research was conducted using the methodology of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe international programme entitled “Generations and Gender”. The second wave of the study was planned to be conducted in 2022 as part of the international technical assistance project entitled “Strengthening the scientific and educational capacity of the republic of Belarus to collect, analyse and use demographic data to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals”. The preparatory stage of the research was completed (interviewers were trained, the dedicated project approach was developed, two presentation videos and branded products were produced to provide information support for the project). The fieldwork was delayed due to the refusal to cooperate of the Netherlands Interdisciplinary Demographic Institute (NIDI), coordinator of the international Generations and Gender Programme.

326. Taking into account the absence of the possibility of cooperation with NIDI in the near future, a decision was made to conduct an alternative study, which will be carried out by the Centre for Sociological and Political Research of the Belarusian State University in 2023.

327. In 2022, a new holiday “Father’s Day” (21 October) was established by Presidential Decree No. 198 of 9 June 2022.

328. A number of events aimed at raising the prestige of fatherhood and celebrating Father’s Day are held in the country. In 2022, the following took place:

- The “Papa Hall” national project (Belarusian Youth Union);
- The 2021 national forum of Fathers was held on the theme of “Being a papa now” (Minsk City Executive Committee jointly with the Lions Club);
- Fathers’ Congress 2022 “Being a father is about more than just appearances” (Fathers’ Guild);
- “Following in your father’s footsteps” contest among Armed Forces units, formations and organizations to find the best story about military (or professional) family dynasties (Ministry of Defence);
- Regional activities:
  - The following contests: “Super Dads!”, “Come on, dads!”, “Nowhere without Dad”, a “Together with Dad!” quest game;
  - The following campaigns: “Visit the Museum with Dad”, “Visit Mir Castle with Dad”, “Send Dad a card”;
  - The following photo exhibitions: “Identical”, “Dad in the Lens”, “I am proud of you, Dad!”, “Dad’s job”, a “Together with Dad” and others.

329. With UNICEF support, three public service announcement videos were produced on the theme of committed fatherhood, “Fatherhood – Birth”, “Fatherhood – Parenting”, “Fatherhood – Inclusion”; they have run since September 2022 on national and regional television channels and subway information monitors.

*Annex 1***Women leaders**

(percentage of the total)

|  | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 |
|--|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Share of seats held by women in the National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus <sup>1</sup>                    | 29.2 | 32.9 | 32.9 | 32.5 | 34.7 | 35.1 |
| Share of seats held by women in the House of Representatives of the National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus | 27.3 | 34.5 | 34.5 | 34.5 | 40.0 | 40.4 |
| Proportion of women among civil servants   | –    | 67.4 | –    | 68.6 | –    | 70.1 |
| Proportion of women among senior civil servants  | –    | 48.0 | –    | 50.8 | –    | 53.7 |
| Proportion of women among managers and deputies at all levels <sup>2</sup>                                       | 48.2 | 49.0 | 44.7 | 45.8 | 47.8 | 48.1 |

**Comparison of women's and men's nominal average wage in December<sup>3</sup>**

(per cent)

|                                   | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 |
|-----------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Republic of Belarus               | 78.5 | 74.6 | 72.7 | 73.1 | 73.3 | 71.9 |
| Agriculture, forestry and fishing | 93.7 | 88.7 | 90.7 | 89.6 | 88.8 | 86.5 |

**Comparison of women's and men's nominal average wage by occupation group in October<sup>4</sup>**

(per cent)

|  | 2016  | 2019  | 2021  |
|--|-------|-------|-------|
| Employees engaged in providing office administrative and support services, consumer services, preparing, processing information and record keeping           | 69.8  | 72.2  | 73.4  |
| Employees in services, trade and other related activities  | 92.5  | 97.6  | 106.5 |
| Skilled workers in the agriculture, forestry, fisheries and aquaculture sectors  | 100.4 | 106.8 | 109.4 |
| Skilled workers in industry, construction and similar occupations  | 81.5  | 80.7  | 84.9  |
| Technicians, equipment and machine operators, and other workers engaged in the control, operation and maintenance of plants and machines, product assemblers | 81.0  | 77.6  | 79.8  |
| Unskilled workers  | 66.6  | 65.0  | 65.4  |

<sup>1</sup> As at 1 January.<sup>2</sup> Data from the sample survey of households undertaken for the purpose of studying employment issues among the population. For 2016–2017, the management category is defined under the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO-88) as major group 1 excluding sub-major group 13; for 2018–2021, it is defined under ISCO-08 as major group 1 excluding sub-major group 14.<sup>3</sup> Excluding peasant farms; housing, house-building and garage cooperatives; other consumer cooperatives; gardening associations; proprietors' associations; religious organizations (associations).<sup>4</sup> 2016 – in accordance with national classifier of the Republic of Belarus 014–2007 “Occupations”; 2019 and 2021 – in accordance with the national classifier of the Republic of Belarus 014–2017 “Occupations”. Based on a sample survey of organizations.



### Early learning and preparation for school

(2019, as a percentage of the total number of children of the relevant group):

|                                   | <i>Share of children aged 3–4 years<br/>who attend an early childhood<br/>education programme</i> | <i>Share of children in the first grade<br/>who attended a preschool education<br/>institution in the previous year</i> |
|-----------------------------------|---|---|
| Total                             | 91.0  | 93.9  |
| of which:                         |   |   |
| girls                             | 91.0  | 95.4  |
| boys                              | 91.0  | 92.6  |
| Living in:                        |   |   |
| cities and urban-type settlements | 92.8  | 94.5  |
| rural settlements                 | 84.8  | 92.1  |

### Unemployment rate

(per cent)

|                                 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 |
|---------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Population aged 15–74 (total)   | 5.8  | 5.6  | 4.8  | 4.2  | 4.0  | 3.9  |
| Women                           | 4.2  | 4.0  | 3.6  | 3.2  | 3.3  | 3.1  |
| of which rural women constitute | 4.6  | 3.5  | 2.9  | 2.4  | 2.9  | 2.7  |
| Men                             | 7.5  | 7.2  | 5.9  | 5.1  | 4.8  | 4.7  |
| Total working-age population    | 6.0  | 5.6  | 4.7  | 4.2  | 4.0  | 3.8  |
| Women                           | 4.2  | 4.0  | 3.4  | 3.1  | 3.2  | 2.9  |
| Men                             | 7.6  | 7.2  | 5.9  | 5.1  | 4.8  | 4.6  |

*According to the multi-indicator cluster survey to assess the situation of children and women*

### Coverage of antenatal care

(2019, as a percentage of the total number of women in the relevant group who gave birth to a living child in the last two years):

|                                 | <i>Percentage of women aged 15 to 49 years by type of personnel who provided antenatal care during the last pregnancy</i> |                              |                  |                                   |
|---------------------------------|---|------------------------------|------------------|-----------------------------------|
|                                 | <i>Medical Doctor</i>   | <i>Nurse/birth attendant</i> | <i>Paramedic</i> | <i>No antenatal care provided</i> |
| Women (total)                   | 99.6  | 0.3                          | 0.0              | 0.1                               |
| of which rural women constitute | 98.7  | 1.0                          | 0.1              | 0.2                               |

### Reproductive health decision-making

(2019, as a percentage of the total number of women in the relevant group who are married or in unregistered relationships)

|                                 | <i>Share of women aged 15 to 49 years who have taken considered and independent decisions</i> |                                    |   |  |
|---------------------------------|---|------------------------------------|---|--|
|                                 | <i>Regarding sexual relations</i>   | <i>Regarding contraceptive use</i> | <i>Regarding use of healthcare services</i> | <i>Regarding reproductive health<sup>5</sup></i> |
| Women (total)                   | 70.6  | 81.8                               | 99.5  | 68.0   |
| of which rural women constitute | 67.2  | 78.6                               | 99.4  | 64.8   |

### Discrimination and harassment

(2019, as a percentage of the total number in the relevant group)

|                                 | <i>Proportion of women and men aged 15–49 who in the last 12 months have experienced discrimination or harassment on the following grounds:</i> |               |                            |            |                           |                   |                      | <i>Proportion of women and men who in the last 12 months:</i>                         |  |
|---------------------------------|---|---------------|----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|-------------------|----------------------|---|--|
|                                 | <i>Immigration</i>  | <i>Gender</i> | <i>Sexual orientation;</i> | <i>Age</i> | <i>Religion or belief</i> | <i>Disability</i> | <i>Other grounds</i> | <i>Have experienced discrimination or harassment on at least one of those grounds</i> | <i>Have not experienced discrimination or harassment</i> |
| Women (total)                   | 0.3   | 1.2           | 0.1                        | 1.8        | 0.6                       | 0.6               | 1.2                  | 4.8   | 95.2   |
| of which rural women constitute | 0.1   | 0.5           | 0.0                        | 0.8        | 0.5                       | 0.5               | 0.7                  | 2.4   | 97.6   |
| Men (total)                     | 0.1   | 0.6           | 0.1                        | 1.6        | 0.4                       | 1.3               | 0.4                  | 4.0   | 96.0   |
| of which rural men constitute   | 0.2   | 0.3           | 0.0                        | 1.3        | 0.7                       | 1.8               | 0.5                  | 4.7   | 95.3   |

### Early learning and preparation for school

(2019 as a percentage of the total number of children of the relevant group)

|                                   | <i>Share of children aged 3–4 years who attend an early childhood education programme</i> | <i>Share of children in the first grade who attended a preschool education institution in the previous year</i> |
|-----------------------------------|---|---|
|                                   | Total   | 91.0  |
| Of which:                         |   |   |
| girls                             | 91.0  | 95.4  |
| boys                              | 91.0  | 92.6  |
| Living in:                        |   |   |
| cities and urban-type settlements | 92.8  | 94.5  |
| rural settlements                 | 84.8  | 92.1  |

<sup>5</sup> Decisions regarding sexual relations, contraceptive use and use of healthcare services.

According to data from the sample household survey by standard of living

### Access to land for rural women aged 18 years and older

(per cent)

|   | 2019 | 2020 |
|---|------|------|
| Proportion of rural women who own or have a guaranteed right to use agricultural land:                                |      |      |
| women engaged in agriculture as a share of all rural women  | 80.5 | 83.9 |
| number owning agricultural land or having a guaranteed right to use such land, as a share of all the rural population | 60.4 | 62.8 |

### Views and impressions of gender roles in family life

(2022, as a percentage of the total)

| Assertions   | of which rural women constitute |      | of which rural men constitute |      |
|--|---------------------------------|------|-------------------------------|------|
|  | Women                           | Men  | Women                         | Men  |
| Share of women and men 18 years and older who are married or in unregistered relationships who believe that: |                                 |      |                               |      |
| All important family decisions fall to   |                                 |      |                               |      |
| men  | 14.0                            | 12.4 | 28.1                          | 29.6 |
| men and women equally  | 82.8                            | 82.5 | 70.5                          | 68.4 |
| women  | 3.2                             | 5.1  | 1.4                           | 2.0  |
| Taking care of children and the home falls to  |                                 |      |                               |      |
| men  | 0.5                             | 0.9  | 0.7                           | 0.5  |
| men and women equally  | 56.4                            | 53.5 | 47.5                          | 46.8 |
| women  | 43.1                            | 45.6 | 51.8                          | 52.7 |
| Providing for the family falls to  |                                 |      |                               |      |
| men  | 65.1                            | 64.3 | 74.0                          | 73.1 |
| men and women equally  | 34.6                            | 35.3 | 25.7                          | 26.9 |
| women  | 0.3                             | 0.4  | 0.3                           | 0.0  |
| Higher education is more important for   |                                 |      |                               |      |
| men  | 9.2                             | 10.4 | 11.2                          | 15.1 |
| men and women equally  | 78.4                            | 73.7 | 73.3                          | 68.4 |
| women  | 12.4                            | 15.9 | 15.5                          | 16.5 |
| Being in paid work is more important for   |                                 |      |                               |      |
| men  | 49.4                            | 47.3 | 60.8                          | 60.4 |
| Men and women equally  | 49.6                            | 51.4 | 38.7                          | 38.9 |
| women  | 1.0                             | 1.3  | 0.5                           | 0.7  |