

Report

# Gender equality, disability and social inclusion analysis in Latin America: Uruguay 2025

Guadalupe Goyeneche, Isabel Pérez de Sierra and Belén Villegas Plá (CIEDUR),  
Carmen Leon-Himmelstine and Rachel Marcus (ODI Global)

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ODI Global

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Front cover image: Women march on International Women's Day in Montevideo City, Uruguay (2019). ©DFLC Prints | Shutterstock ID: 1334971580.

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## About this report

The UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) has commissioned ODI Global to conduct a gender equality, disability and social inclusion (GEDSI) analysis in Latin America, with a view to inform FCDO's efforts to support women, girls and other minority groups across the region. Focuses on four countries: **Uruguay, Chile, Guatemala** and **Panama**, the analysis provides the latest high-quality evidence on the state of a number of GEDSI dimensions at national levels. The research also spotlights a range of salient issues including: gender-based violence, women's participation in politics, women's economic autonomy, feminist foreign policy, LGBTQ+ rights, children in alternative care, online violence and bioeconomy. For each country, the analysis provides:

- an overview of up-to-date data on gender equality, disability and social inclusion
- an analytical 'deep dive' into two/three topics of national relevance
- recommendations for relevant stakeholders to support national-level action and/or collaborate with potential international partners.

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# Acronyms

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<b>CAIF</b>	Centros de Atención a la Infancia y la Familia (Child and Family Care Centres)
<b>ECH</b>	Encuesta Continua de Hogares (Continuous Household Survey)
<b>FCDO</b>	Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
<b>GBV</b>	gender-based violence
<b>GEDSI</b>	gender equality, disability and social inclusion
<b>HDI</b>	Human Development Index
<b>INE</b>	Instituto Nacional de Estadística (National Institute of Statistics)
<b>INMUJERES</b>	Instituto Nacional de las Mujeres (National Institute for Women's Affairs)
<b>IOM</b>	International Organization for Migration
<b>LAC</b>	Latin America and the Caribbean
<b>LGBT+</b>	lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, intersex, queer and other non-normative sexual orientations and identities
<b>MIDES</b>	Ministerio de Desarrollo Social (Ministry of Social Development)
<b>NGO</b>	non-governmental organisation
<b>OVBG</b>	Observatorio sobre Violencia Basada en Género hacia las Mujeres (Observatory on Gender-Based Violence)
<b>SDGs</b>	Sustainable Development Goals
<b>SIEMPRE</b>	sindicatos y empresas (trade unions and companies)
<b>SIPIAV</b>	Sistema Integral de Protección a la Infancia y Adolescencia contra la Violencia (Comprehensive System for the Protection of Children and Adolescents against Violence)
<b>SNIC</b>	Sistema Nacional Integrado de Cuidados (National Integrated Care System)
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nation Development Programme
<b>UNFPA</b>	United Nations Population Fund
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children's Fund
<b>UTU</b>	Universidad del Trabajo del Uruguay (University of Work of Uruguay)

# 1 Introduction

Uruguay has shown a strong commitment to gender equality and women's rights by ratifying several key international agreements, including the Beijing Platform for Action and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), alongside regional initiatives, such as the Montevideo Strategy 2030 (MIDES, 2016a). The country has made significant progress through various legal, programmatic, institutional and budgetary measures that aim to promote gender equality.

Notably, the National Institute for Women's Affairs (Instituto Nacional de las Mujeres, INMUJERES), established in 2005, has spearheaded gender equality initiatives, including the National Plan for Equal Opportunities and Rights 2007–2011 (Plan Nacional de Igualdad de Oportunidades y Derechos 2007-2011) and the National Strategy for Gender Equality 2020–2023 (Estrategia Nacional de Igualdad de Género 2020-2023). These initiatives have integrated a gender-based perspective into government policies.

Legislative advances have also been significant, with the introduction of the Domestic Work Law (Law 18,065, 2006), the Consensual Union Law (Law 18,246, 2008), the Reproductive and Sexual Health Law (Law 18,426, 2008), the Law on Quotas (Law 18,476, 2009) and the Parental Licence Law (Law 19,161, 2013), among others. Furthermore, Uruguay in 2015 established the National Integrated Care System (*Sistema Nacional Integrado de Cuidados* (SNIC)) and

has implemented an Action Plan for a Life Free from Gender-Based Violence 2016–2019 (*Plan de Acción para Una Vida Libre de Violencia de Género*). The Government also established a gender unit in each ministry to ensure gender mainstreaming across sectors. Yet, despite this notable progress, challenges remain – particularly around issues such as gender-based violence (GBV), women's representation in politics, and economic independence for women in the workplace.

This study provided the UK's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) with updated, high-quality evidence to support its initiatives focused on gender equality, disability and social inclusion (GEDSI) in Uruguay. After presenting an overview of the latest GEDSI data in the country, the study will delve into three critical areas:

- GBV
- women in politics, and
- women's workplace participation and economic independence.

This research is based on a desk review of academic and grey literature, data from statistical databases and 11 in-depth key informant interviews (KIIs) with stakeholders from the Government, civil society, international organisations and political parties (see Annex 1 for further details).

## 2 Statistical profile: Gender equality, disability and social inclusion in Uruguay

This chapter presents a statistical overview of gender equality, disability and social inclusion (GEDSI) in Uruguay, making comparisons where possible with other countries in the region. It includes socio-demographic, gender and social inclusion data deemed essential for an understanding of the broader context of inequalities in the country. Statistics on GBV, women's participation in politics and women's economic empowerment will be discussed in detail in Chapters 3–5.

In recent years, there have been fewer regular official statistical surveys in Uruguay (partly as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic) relating to public policy issues. This poses an important challenge for informed and evidence-based decision-making in public policy.

### 2.1 Overview: Uruguay's key development indices

The World Bank has classified Uruguay as a high-income country since 2013, based on its per capita income. Its high Human Development Index (HDI) of 0.883, ranking 52nd globally out of 189 countries, reinforces this status (UNDP, 2024). However, historical HDI fluctuations reveal ongoing challenges in improving social welfare and making progress towards achieving the SDGs.

While Uruguay surpasses the regional average for Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) in life expectancy, literacy and gross income, significant disparities remain. On the Global Gender Gap Index for 2023, for example, Uruguay scored 0.7150, ranking 71st out of 148 countries and lagging behind many regional peers, including Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Honduras, Panama, Colombia, Peru, Jamaica, Mexico and Argentina, in terms of gender equality (WEF, 2024). Furthermore, in the Gender Inequality Index, Uruguay ranks 60th globally, with a score of 0.24 as of 2022, indicating that it also falls short compared to Chile and Costa Rica (UNDP, 2024).

### 2.2 Ageing, dependency and disability

The latest census by the National Institute of Statistics (*Instituto Nacional de Estadística*, INE) shows that the total population of the country is 3,444,263 people: 48% men and 52% women (INE, 2023). The estimated population growth rate between the censuses in 2011 and 2023 was only 1%, which shows that Uruguay's population is starting to decline.

An analysis of Uruguay's population structure in 2023 reveals a historical trend of an ageing population. There are also more women among those aged 65 years and older, because they tend to live longer than men.

Concerning dependency (see Table 1), the total dependency index for children and people over 65 years of age was 53.1% in 2022, while the dependency indices for children and older people were, respectively, 29.7% and 23.4% (GIS, 2023).<sup>1</sup>

The slight increase in the dependency index of older people and the decrease in the percentage of dependency in children under 14 years of age reflect the general trend of an ageing Uruguayan population, and the significant reduction in the birth rate in the last decade.

Table 2 presents an estimate of the proportion of the Uruguayan population with a disability, derived from the 2011 and 2023 censuses, indicating a rise in reported numbers over this period. This table shows a significant increase in those reporting at least a mild disability between the two census years, and a corresponding decrease in those who report that they have no disabilities. The data suggest a possible increase in awareness and diagnosis of disabilities, especially Autism Spectrum Disorder, which was not included in the 2011 census.

**Table 1** Total dependency index of people under 14 and over 65 (whole country), 1996–2023

Indicator	1996	2023
Total dependency ratio	60.2%	53.1%
Child dependency ratio	39.9%	29.7%
Dependency ratio for people over 65 years old	20.3%	23.4%

Source: Gender information system (INMUJERES, 2023).

**Table 2** Population with a permanent disability, 2011–2023 (%)

Categories	Census	
	2011	2023
Non-disabled	84%	71%
At least a mild disability	12%	23%
At least a moderate disability	4%	6%
At least one severe disability	1%	1%
Not surveyed	3%	2%
No data	0%	1%
Autism Spectrum Disorder diagnosed	n/a	0.70%

Source: census data (INE, 2023).

<sup>1</sup> The total dependency index is the ratio between the number of dependent people (65 and over and under 14) and the non-dependent population (15 to 64 years old) per 100 people. The child dependency index is the ratio between the number of children (0–14 years old) and the non-dependent population (15–64 years old). The elderly dependency index is the ratio between the number of older people (65 and over) and the non-dependent population (15–64 years old) (CELADE, 2025).

### 2.3 Feminisation of poverty and child poverty

Uruguay has much lower levels of poverty and extreme poverty than other countries in the LAC region. According to INE (2024), 6.4% of households and 9.1% of people live below the poverty line. Extreme poverty is close to being eradicated, and affects 0.4% of the population and 0.3% of households, respectively.

The proportion of women living in poverty is significantly higher than that of men. Figure 1 shows the proportion of population by sex living in poverty between 2015 and 2023, with the gender gap reaching 4 percentage points in 2023. Uruguay ranks fourth highest in the region in the feminisation of poverty index (CEPALSTAT, 2023).

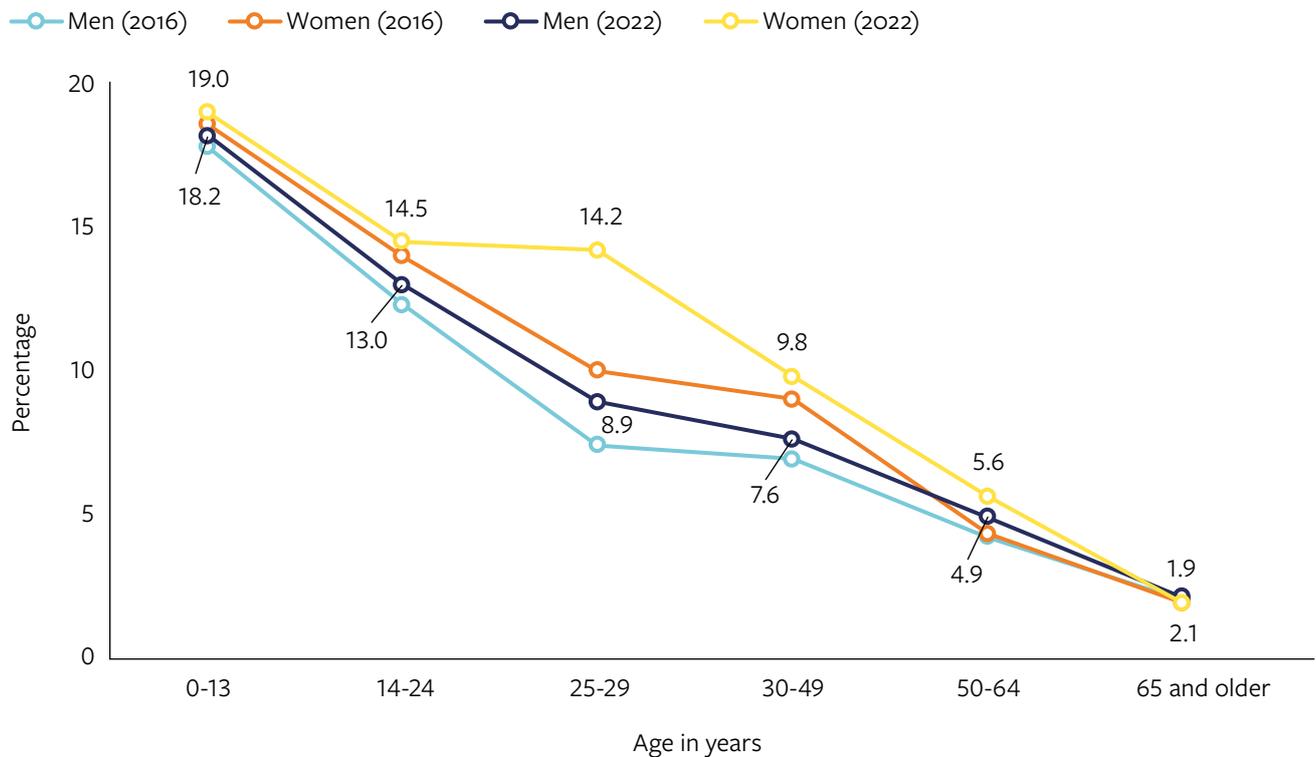
Of the 353,000 people living below the poverty line in Uruguay, 78% are in households with at least one person under 18 years of age. Most of these households are, in turn, headed by women: 68.1%. Only half (50.7%) of the women heads of households living in poverty are engaged in paid work (compared to 75.8% of men) and 27.6% of these women declare themselves inactive because they are engaged in household chores (compared to only 5.4% among men). Finally, 14.2% of these women are unemployed (compared to 7.5% of men).

The feminisation of poverty has a strong impact on child poverty. Sex- and age-disaggregated poverty trend data between 2016 and 2022 show that children and young people are much more likely to be living in poverty than older people (see Figure 2; see also Figure 6 in Section 2.6, which presents data on food insecurity among women and children).

**Figure 1** Poor population by sex, 2015–2023 (%)



Source: Visual Observatory of the SDGs (Observatorio Visualizador de los ODS) (ONU, 2025).

**Figure 2** Population in poverty by sex and age, 2016–2022 (%)

Source: ONU (2025).

While this is not a new phenomenon, it has evolved in the last 25 years. In 2002, Uruguay experienced the greatest economic crisis in its history, with child poverty levels reaching 50% (Failache et al., 2018; Salas and Vigorito, 2021). The economy began to recover in 2003, and in 2005, the Frente Amplio Government launched the Emergency Plan, followed by the Equity Plan, (*Plan de Emergencia; Plan de Equidad*) as measures to combat child poverty. Between 2005 and 2015, Uruguay experienced economic growth averaging 5.2% per year, leading to a reduction in poverty from 29.6% in 2007 to 7.0% in 2017 (Espí Hernández, 2021). Since 2015, however, economic growth and poverty reduction have started to stagnate, and the COVID-19 pandemic led to a contraction of the economy, triggering an increase in poverty rates (Amarante and Scalese, 2022). In 2023, the child poverty rate was 19%, more than twice as high as the rate for the total population (9%).

Of households living in poverty in Uruguay:

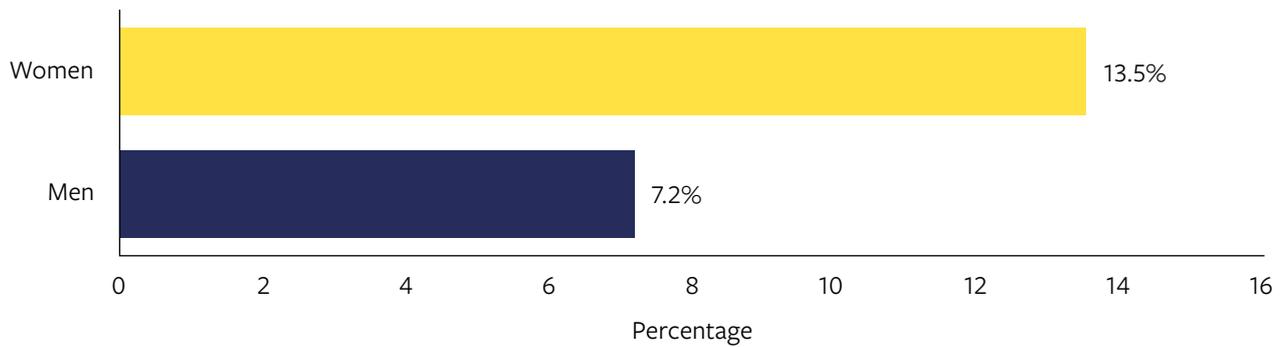
- 78% have children and adolescents living in them
- 51% of poor children and adolescents live in two-parent households
- 34% of poor children and adolescents live in single-parent households – with an average of 2.5 children per household – and in 87% of cases the adult is the mother
- 15% of poor children and adolescents live in other family arrangements.

In general, women in these households have an income from work, but their inclusion in the labour market is precarious and complicated by the need to reconcile paid work with domestic and care work (Greif and Fuletti, 2024).

2024 data from the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) reveal that 68% of those who are low income are employed or actively seeking work, a figure only slightly higher than the 66% among the non-poor. However, three key barriers impede employment access for impoverished individuals: the challenge of balancing paid work with caregiving and household responsibilities; difficulties in securing employment; and the inherent precariousness of available work given their skill levels (Ibid.).

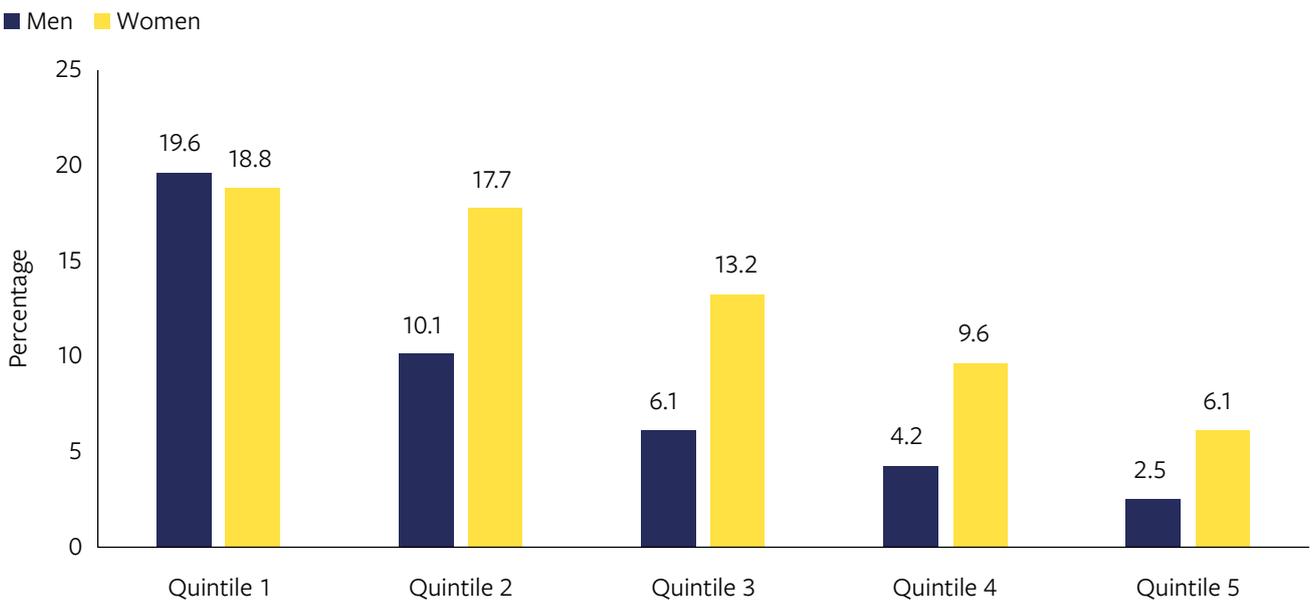
The gender gap in the proportion of the population with no income of its own was 6.3% in 2023 (see Figure 3). Some 13.5% of Uruguayan women have no income of their own, compared to 7.2% of men. In the poorest income quintile, the proportions of women and men without their own income are approximately equal (19% and 20%, respectively). There is a notable gender gap in every other income quintile (see Figure 4), which is largely explained by the unequal distribution of the total workload (paid and unpaid work).

**Figure 3** Population with no income of its own by sex (%)



Source: Gender statistics 2023 (INMUJERES, 2023).

**Figure 4** Population aged 15 years and older without its own income by sex and income quintile, 2023 (%)



Source: Regional database for monitoring the SDGs in LAC (CEPAL-United Nations, 2023).

Children and adolescents will be a priority for the new Government in Uruguay. In his initial speech after taking office on 1 March 2025, President Yamandú Orsi stated, in reference to the high percentages of child poverty:

A country that does not take care of its children does not take care of itself ... But we know very well that there are no poor children without poor adults, and that is why we must also guarantee the sustenance of the families who have these minors in their care, especially that of women heads of household. (Subrayado, 2025)

He promised to address this problem from a comprehensive perspective, addressing social, health, cultural and community components.

This section has shown that, as a high-income country with a high HDI, Uruguay exhibits significantly lower poverty and extreme poverty rates than other LAC nations. However, poverty has a disproportionate impact on women, leading to a notable gender gap and to the high level of feminisation of poverty. This has strong links to child poverty, as 78% of those below the poverty line live in households with children,

most of them headed by women who have only precarious employment and who are burdened by the demands of balancing paid work with unpaid care responsibilities. While Uruguay has made significant progress on poverty reduction since the early 2000s, recent economic stagnation and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic have highlighted the ongoing need to address these complex socioeconomic challenges, particularly gender inequality and its consequences for children.

## 2.4 Education

Primary school completion is nearly universal in Uruguay, with rates of 98% for boys and 99% for girls. In addition, the completion rate for compulsory lower secondary education increased significantly between 2015 and 2021, rising from 75% to 85% for girls, and climbing from 62% to 79% for boys. Overall, the completion rate for girls and young women at upper secondary level improved from 41% to 58%, with an increase for boys and young men from 29% to 41%. Despite this progress, Uruguay's upper secondary completion rates remain below the LAC regional averages, which are 65.4% for boys and young men and 71.2% for girls and young women (see Table 3).

**Table 3** Completion rate for primary and secondary education by sex, 2021 (%)

Indicator	Uruguay		Regional average	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Primary school completion rate	98.0	99.0	94.5	96.2
Secondary school completion rate <sup>i</sup>	41.0	58.0	65.4	71.2

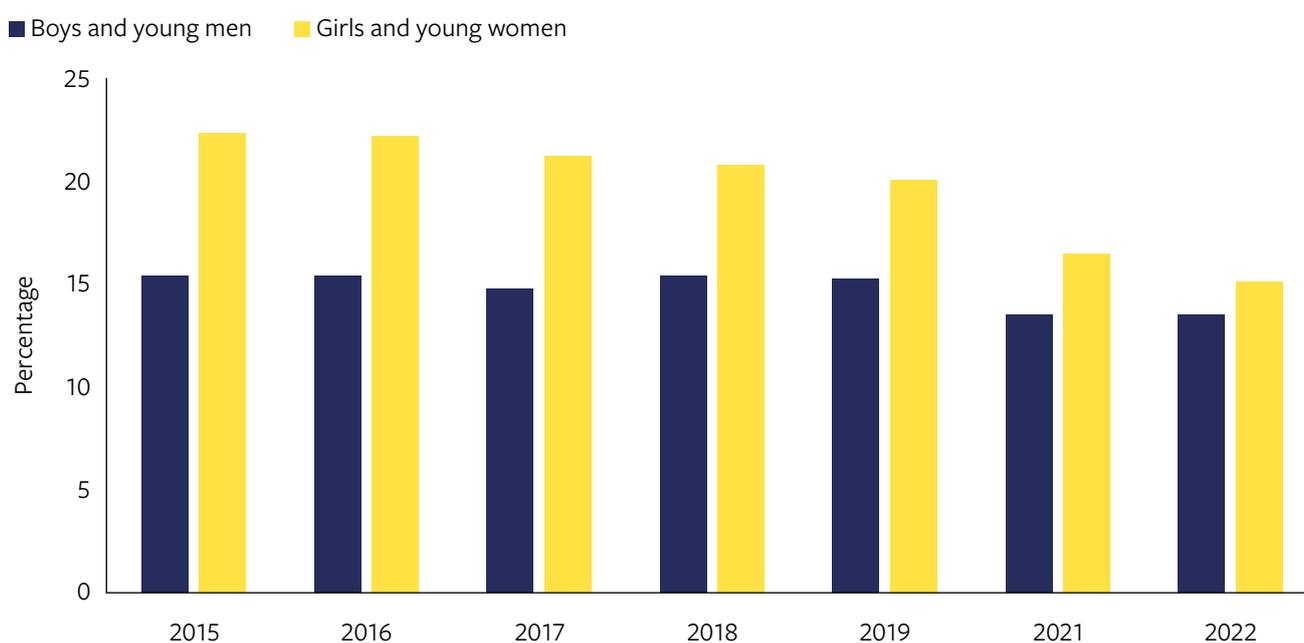
i Data refer to upper secondary level for Uruguay and all levels combined for the LAC region. as regional data disaggregated by level were not found.

Source: Regional database for monitoring the SDGs in LAC (CEPAL-United Nations, 2023).

Women living in poverty tend to have very low levels of education: 38.7% have only basic secondary education, 36% have only primary education and 0.3% have no formal education at all, according to INE (2023) data.

Figure 5 shows the proportion of young people who are not participating in the education system or the labour market, by gender. It shows a trend towards fewer young people not being in education, training or employment and a declining gender gap in this age group.

**Figure 5** Young people (15–24) not in education, employment or training, 2015–2022 (%)



Source: Regional database for monitoring the SDGs in LAC (CEPAL-United Nations, 2023).

Table 4 outlines data on young people's reported reasons for being outside of education or employment. Care work responsibilities have a high impact on their non-participation in

education or the labour market, particularly among young women. This is discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.

**Table 4** Population aged 15–24 not studying and not employed by sex, age group and reason, 2022 (%)

Reasons for not studying or not being employed	Boys and young men	Girls and young Women
Engaged in unpaid care work in the household	2.0	8.1
Unemployed (laid off) or looking for a job for the first time	6.6	5.3
Other reasons	4.7	2.5

Source: Regional database for monitoring the SDGs in LAC (CEPAL-United Nations, 2023).

## 2.5 Social security

Uruguay is one of the Latin American countries that developed its social security system at an early stage to support citizens affected by events such as illness, maternity/paternity, unemployment, old age and death, among others. The percentage of social security contributors among the economically active population, the employed population and the salaried employed population stood at 73%, 79.8% and 88.6%, respectively, in 2019 (IDB, 2020).

The social security system has covered a growing share of the active population over the past 15 years, increasing its coverage from 61% of the economically active population in 2004 to 80% in 2017 (MEF, 2020).

According to information from the Social Security Bank (BPS), 97.8% of those over 65 receive a social security benefit. This contrasts markedly with the regional reality, with 4 out of 10 older adults in Latin America receiving no

type of retirement or pension, according to the Inter-American Development Bank (CESS, n.d.). However, gender inequalities during working life have impacts on income and social security benefits, as evidenced by recent studies (Gallo and Sanguinetti, 2021).

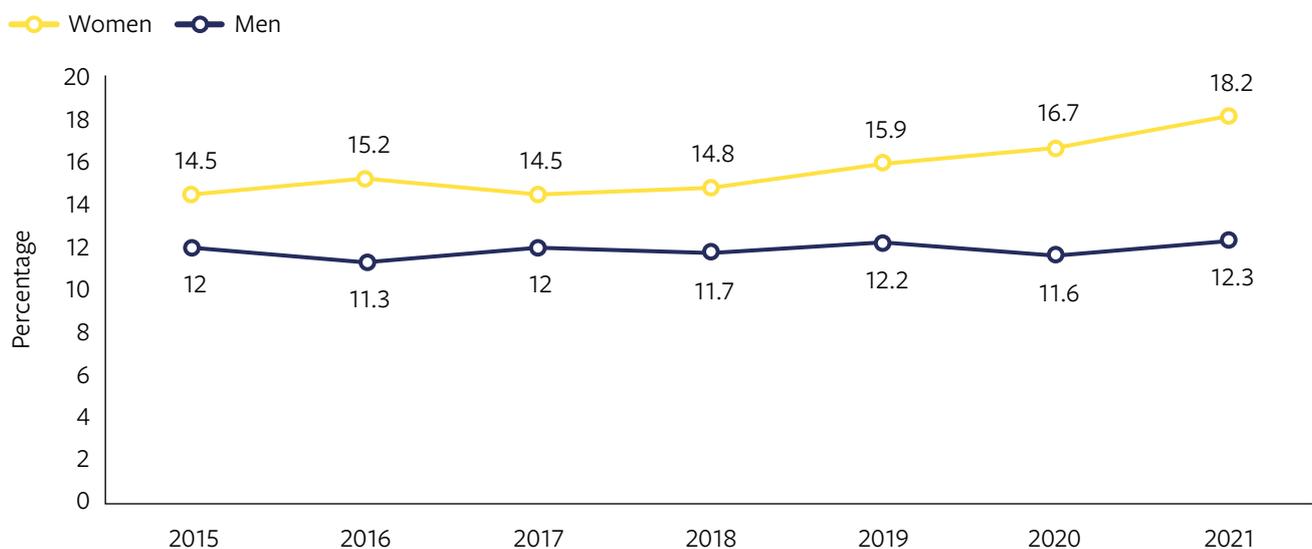
## 2.6 Health

This section presents data on selected health indicators where gender disparities are evident and/or that particularly affect women.

The prevalence of food insecurity increased with the pandemic, mainly for women (see Figure 6). According to the INE (2022), it was significantly higher in households with children under six years of age (13.9% in households without children and 21.5% in households with children).

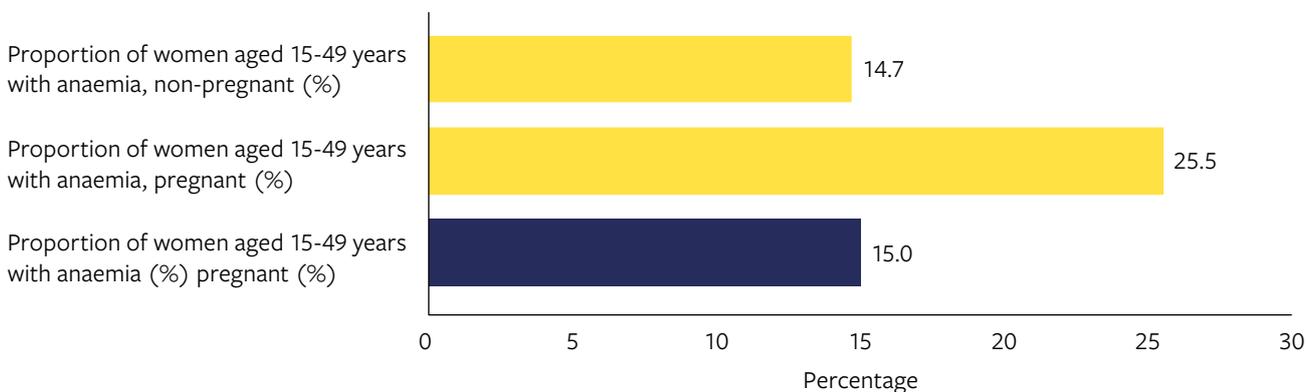
Figure 7 shows the proportion of women with anaemia by age group. This indicates a lack of a quality diet and is especially detrimental for pregnant women.

**Figure 6** Prevalence of moderate or severe food insecurity, 2015–2021 (%)



Source: Regional database for monitoring the SDGs in LAC (CEPAL-United Nations, 2024).

**Figure 7** Proportion of women with anaemia, 2023



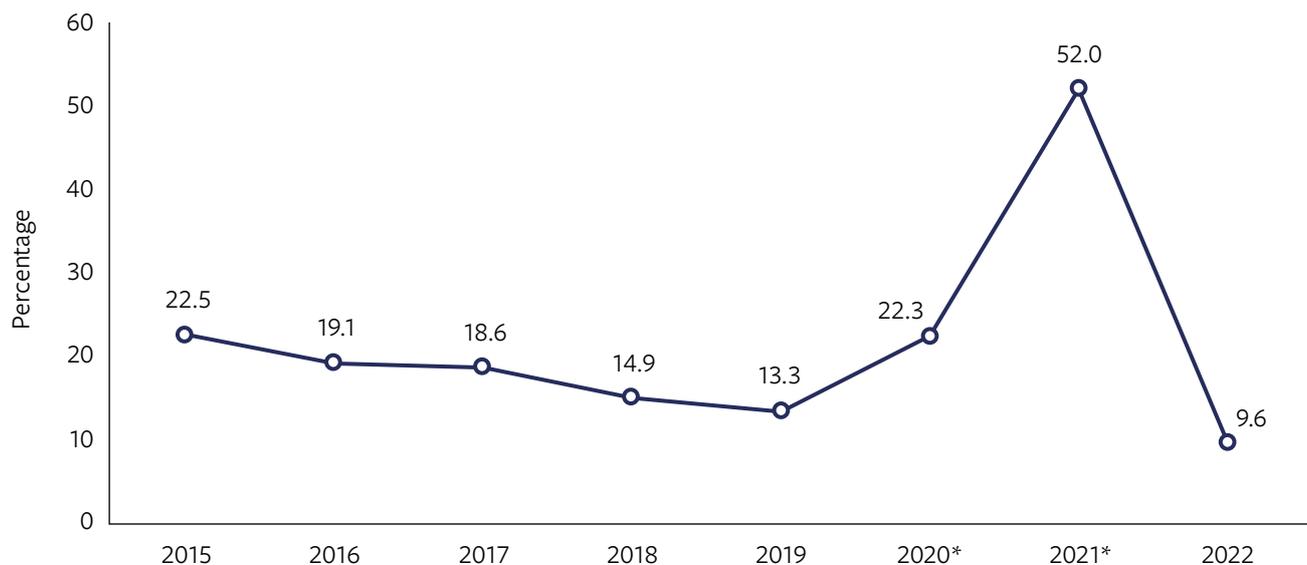
Source: ONU (2025).

Figure 8 shows progress on reducing maternal mortality until 2019, followed by steep rises in 2020 and 2021 (during the COVID-19 pandemic) before the rates fell again to below the 2019 level in 2022. However, it should be noted that the information for 2020 and 2021 reflects a revision made by the Ministry of Public Health’s (*Ministerio de Salud Pública*) Maternal Deaths Committee (*Comité*

*sobre Muertes Maternas*) on 3 January 2023, as detailed in UN Women’s (2024) country report.

Table 5 shows that the highest rate of HIV infection is found among men in the 15–49 age group. However, among women, the rate of infection is highest in the younger age group (15–24 years), where it surpasses the rate for young men.

**Figure 8** Maternal mortality rate 2015–2022 (per 100,000 live births)



Note: \*revisions made by the Ministry of Public Health’s in 2023

Source: ONU (2025).

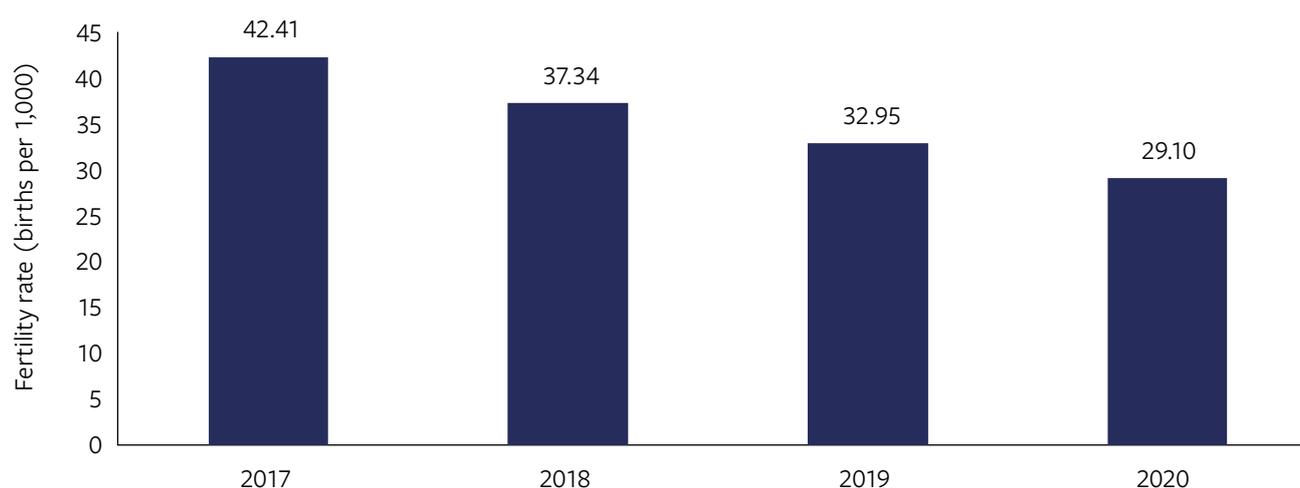
**Table 5** New HIV infections per 1,000 of the uninfected population by sex and age, 2015–2022

Age range	2015		2022	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
15–24	0.380	0.420	0.380	0.440
15–49	0.580	0.300	0.590	0.310
50 and over	0.090	0.020	0.090	0.010
Total	0.330	0.150	0.330	0.160

Source: ONU (2025).

The unmet need for family planning in Uruguay has stood at around 7% since 2015 (7.2% in 2015 and 7.0% in 2023).<sup>2</sup> The fertility rate for adolescent girls aged 15 to 19 years old has significantly reduced in the last decade (see Figure 9). This is the result of a series of public policies implemented in recent years, including the Law on the Voluntary Interruption of Pregnancy (IVE) in 2012 (Law 18987), and the

development of a National and Intersectoral Strategy for the Prevention of Unintended Pregnancy in Adolescents (*Estrategia Nacional para prevenir Embarazos No deseados en Adolescentes*) since 2014. This involved the implementation of a pilot plan, a subdermal implant programme, and the expansion of free IUD (intrauterine device) placements, among other things (UN Women, 2014).

**Figure 9** Adolescent fertility rate (15–19 years old), 2017–2020 (births per 1,000 women aged 15–19)

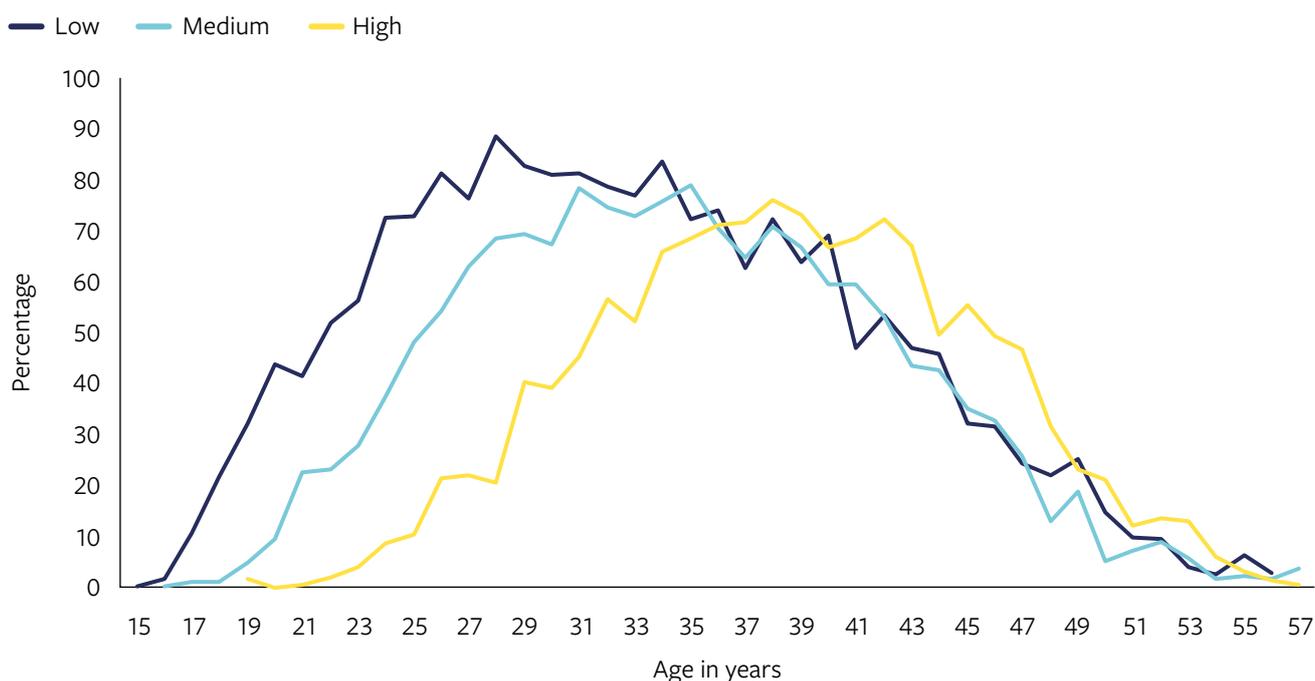
Source: ONU (2025).

<sup>2</sup> ‘Unmet need for family planning’ is measured as the percentage of sexually active women of reproductive age who report not wanting more children or wanting to delay their next pregnancy who do not use any contraceptive method.

Figure 10 shows the proportion of women with children between 0 and 12 years of age, according to years of education. It is evident that women with lower levels of education have children at earlier ages than women with higher levels

of education. While women with low levels of education have children who require high levels of care in their twenties, women with middle and high levels of education experience similar situations in their thirties.

**Figure 10** Mothers of children aged 0–12 by educational level, 2022 (%)



Note: Low educational level: up to basic secondary education (complete or incomplete). Medium educational level: higher secondary education (complete or incomplete) and teacher training, teacher training or Work University of Uruguay (Universidad del Trabajo del Uruguay, UTU; a public institution of scientific and technological education) incomplete. High educational level: UTU, teacher training and complete teacher training, or university (complete and incomplete). Source: INE’s Continuous Household Survey (Encuesta Continua de Hogares, ECH, 2022).

## 2.7 The Transgender community

Uruguay developed its first census of the transgender community in 2016. According to the Ministry of Social Development (*Ministerio de Desarrollo Social*, MIDES), a total of 853 trans people were surveyed, of whom 90% identified as trans women (MIDES, 2016b). While 34.7% were young people (18–29 years), 17.6% were over 50 years of age. Transgender people live mainly in metropolitan areas (Montevideo and Canelones)

and in the provinces bordering Argentina and Brazil (Artigas, Salto, Paysandú, Cerro Largo and Maldonado).

One key element of transgender people’s experience is a shared experience of leaving home early (at the age of 18 years, on average). Of the individuals surveyed, 58% reported having been discriminated against by a family member, mainly by siblings, fathers and mothers. A total of 40% left their home of origin due to issues related to

their sexual orientation or gender identity. This situation contributes to school drop: 60% of transgender people surveyed had not completed their basic education (third year of secondary school). The average age at which they dropped out of the formal education system was 14 years.

The severe discrimination faced by members of the transgender community in educational institutions and the labour market pushes them away from formal paid employment. According to MIDES (2017), 94.8% of trans men and 91.3% of trans woman report having experienced discrimination at least once in their lives on the

basis of their gender identity. Sex work not only becomes the first option as a way to secure a good income but also to work in a space where their sexual orientation or gender identity is not questioned. Of this population, 67% of transgender people reported having engaged in sex work at some point in their lives or were continuing to do so.

Following this overview of recent data on gender equality and social inclusion issues, Chapters 3–5 present evidence on GBV, women’s political participation and women’s economic empowerment in more detail.

## 3 Gender-based violence

This section offers a comprehensive overview of GBV in Uruguay, exploring its key manifestations and the challenges it presents for public policy. It provides a systematic examination of the responses from both civil society and public organisations, and the existing regulatory framework. Additionally, it consolidates perspectives from social organisations, academic institutions, government entities and international agencies on this pressing issue. This analysis highlights the challenges related to effective prevention strategies, the prosecution of offenders and the provision of comprehensive reparations for victims of GBV. This section focuses on the following key questions:

1. What data are available on GBV in Uruguay?
2. What are the drivers of GBV, including the role of gender norms?
3. What are the profiles of the perpetrators and their relationship with their victims, if any? How does this vary for different types of violence? What motivates victims to report or not report incidents of gendered violence?
4. What measures have been taken by the Government to prevent and respond to GBV, particularly femicides, rape and domestic abuse?

### 3.1 Available data on gender-based violence in Uruguay

#### Prevalence of gender-based violence

The phenomenon of GBV in Uruguay has become more visible in the last two decades. Progress has been made in legislation on the issue and

various programmes have been implemented to prevent this kind of violence, assist its victims and prosecute this crime.

The Comprehensive Law on Gender-Based Violence against Women (Law 19,580), the Law on Trafficking in Persons (N° 19,643) and the Law on Femicide (N° 19,538) provide new legal frameworks to address the phenomenon. The implementation of these laws has provided both quantitative and qualitative information on the real dimension of the problem and the challenges it poses for the design of public policies. However, there remains a gap in their implementation, which is mainly reflected in the lack of a budget. There are also difficulties in the justice system, which still does not guarantee women a life free of violence.

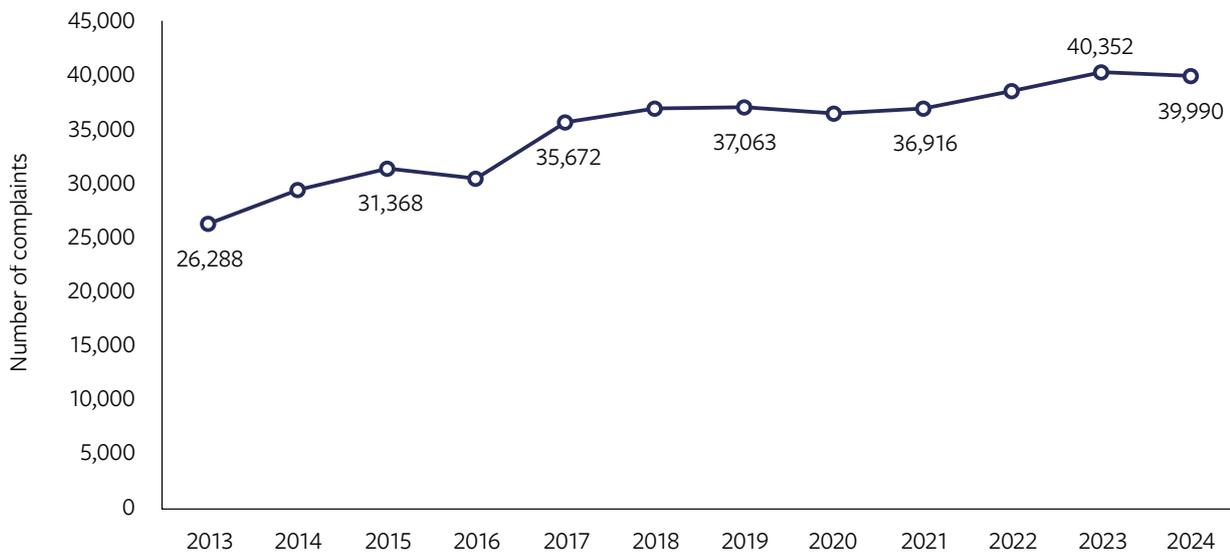
There are two main sources of data on this issue. One is the prosecution of crimes related to the new legislation (complaints, prosecutions, convictions) by the National Observatory of Violence and Crime (2025) and the second is the Observatory on Gender-Based Violence (*Observatorio sobre Violencia Basada en Género hacia las Mujeres, OVBG*), collected by the National Advisory Council for a Life Free from Gender Violence (*Consejo Nacional Consultivo por una vida libre de violencia de género, CNC*) and created by Law 19,580. The CNC has conducted two surveys on the prevalence of violence against women in 2013 y 2019.

The National Observatory of Violence and Crime (2025) data, reveals the variation in the total

number of domestic violence complaints over the last 10 years (see Figure 11). The latest data on prevalence of violence against women by the CNC in their 2019 survey revealed that 76.7% of women aged 15 years or older reported having experienced some type of GBV in some setting.

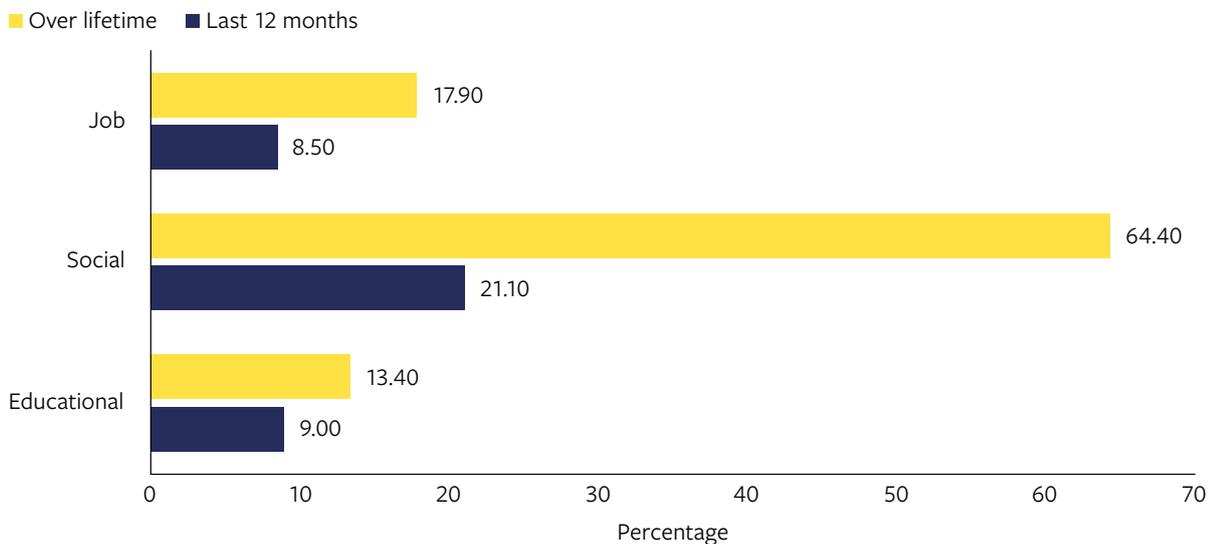
In turn, the data distinguished the prevalence of GBV according to the area in which it occurred. (see Figure 12). Neither of these data sources, unfortunately, provide conclusive information on GBV during the pandemic period.

**Figure 11** Domestic violence complaints, 2013–2024 (total)



Source: Own elaboration based on the National Observatory of Violence and Crime (2025).

**Figure 12** Women who have experienced gender-based violence by area, 2019 (%)



Source: CNC (2020).

## Intimate partner violence

Intimate partner violence is the most common form of GBV reported. Studies show a shift towards increased psychological violence, which may reflect the criminalisation of physical violence under Law 19,580, and progress in responses to such violence. It may also be an unintended result of programmes for men designed to reduce the perpetration of physical violence (Reyes, 2019; Aguayo et al., 2021; Fontela et al., 2024).

According to gender data from the World Bank (n.d.), 18% of women in Uruguay have suffered intimate partner violence, compared with a global average of 27%.<sup>3</sup> However, the CNC 2019 survey found that 47% of women aged 15 or over reported having experienced GBV perpetrated by their intimate partner or ex-partner at any point in their lives. A total of 19.5% of women aged 15 or over reported such violence in the 12 months preceding the survey (CNC, 2020).

## Femicides

In Uruguay 32 femicides were perpetrated in 2024 (MIDES, 2024). However, the total number of femicides reported by official and unofficial sources differs. While information from civil society includes cases reported by the press, state agencies only take into account cases clarified by the courts. The latest official data available, for 2023, show 23 femicides in Uruguay, while the web observatory [femicidios.uy](http://femicidios.uy) (developed and managed by independent activists) finds that 25 femicides were committed that year.

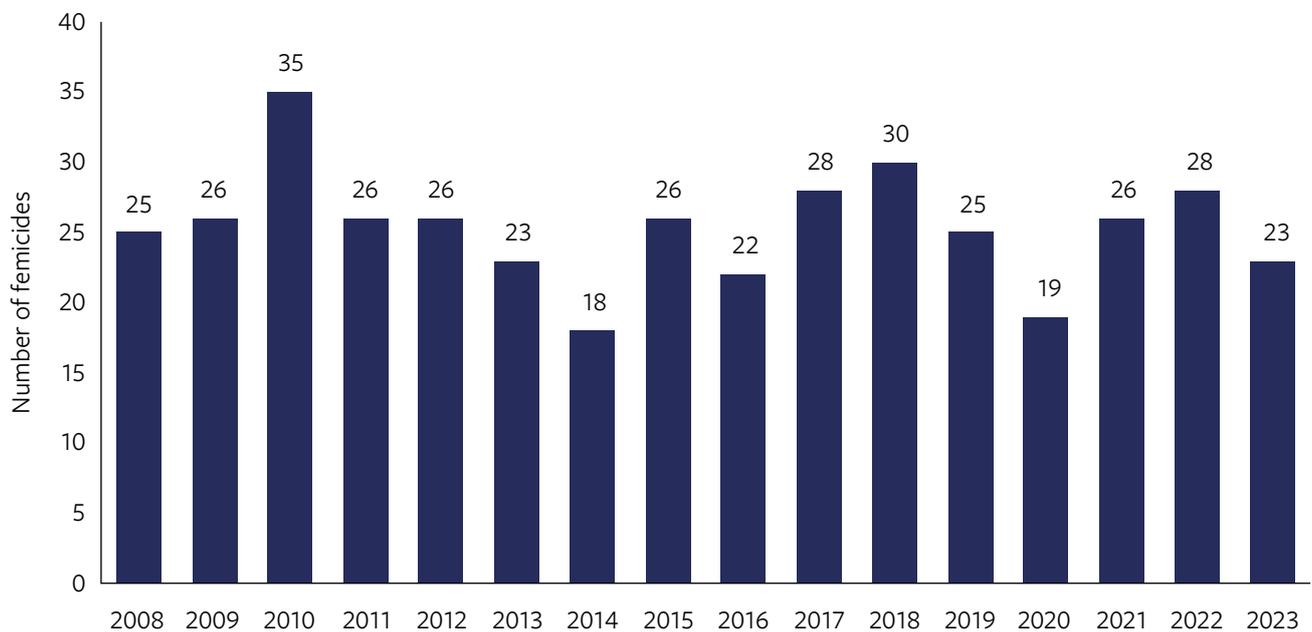
According to a report from the National Advisory Council, the femicide data provided by the state correspond to the differentiated powers of each organisation, which is where the main difference in criteria lies (NAC, 2022). This means there are no agreed criteria for measuring femicide, and diverse definitions are used by different organisations vary, leading to considerable variability in the records (Gambetta, 2022; Samudio et al., 2023).

According to official data, between 2008 and 2023, there were between 18 and 35 women killed because of their gender each year in Uruguay (see Figure 13).

By 2023, Uruguay ranked the 5<sup>th</sup> highest femicide rate among 36 countries in LAC, with a rate of 1.3 femicides per every 100,000 women. Uruguay's rate for women killed by their partner or ex-partner was 1.1 per 100,000 women, the second highest in LAC (ONU, 2025).

Some studies report that femicide prevalence in the last 20 years has been concentrated in the most populated regions of the country: Montevideo and Canelones, which account for 51.4% of such deaths. These are followed by Maldonado, and some regions on the northern border of the country: Cerro Largo (4.7%), Rivera (4.7%) and Tacuarembó (3.9%) (Samudio et al., 2023).

<sup>3</sup> The discrepancy in the estimates may be because the World Bank considers more recent surveys than the last prevalence survey carried out in Uruguay (2019).

**Figure 13** Number of femicides or homicides of women as a result of gender-based violence, 2008–2023

Source: National Directorate of Gender Policies, Ministerio del Interior (2025).

Qualitative research in these northern regions has found specific risks related to the characteristics of the border zone, which prevent both the monitoring of violent men and the protection of victims (Darré and Fontela, 2023). In border areas, perpetrators move from one country to another, and are able to evade border controls easily. Meanwhile, victims in the northern border areas make less use of GBV care services (*Servicios de atención a la violencia basada en género*) than other female victims as they need to move across the border to carry out their daily activities, such as sustenance or childcare.<sup>4</sup> This makes it more difficult for public agencies to undertake processes over a long enough time to prevent more serious episodes of violence (*ibid.*).

Neither official nor unofficial data on femicide, therefore, reflects completely reliable or standardised information on this form of

violence, a phenomenon which represents a significant public policy problem. UN Women Uruguay is working on an internal document that analyses these differences, both in terms of conceptualisation and measurement, with the objective of recommending ways to standardise them. This, in addition to being an important basis for an effective public policy, would allow Uruguay to report in a standardised way at the international level its progress towards SDG 5 on gender equality.

### Main areas and types of expression of GBV

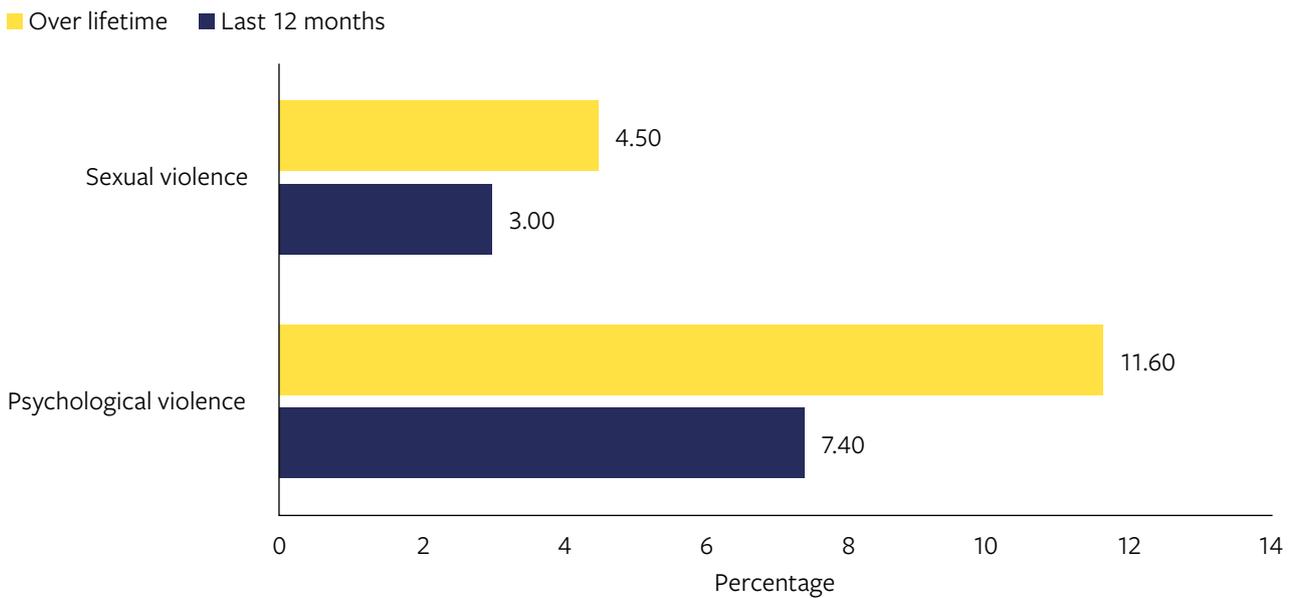
Of all the women who took part in the 2019 OVBG survey, 13.4% of those who have suffered GBV in their lifetime have experienced it in educational contexts. Among these cases, psychological violence is the most prevalent form of violence, affecting 11.6% of women, followed by sexual violence, experienced by 4.5% (see Figure 14).

<sup>4</sup> Care services are the main public services available throughout the country, so they have a crucial role in an effective approach to GBV.

Among women who reported experiencing violence in the workplace in their lifetime (see Figure 15), 17.9% indicated that they had faced

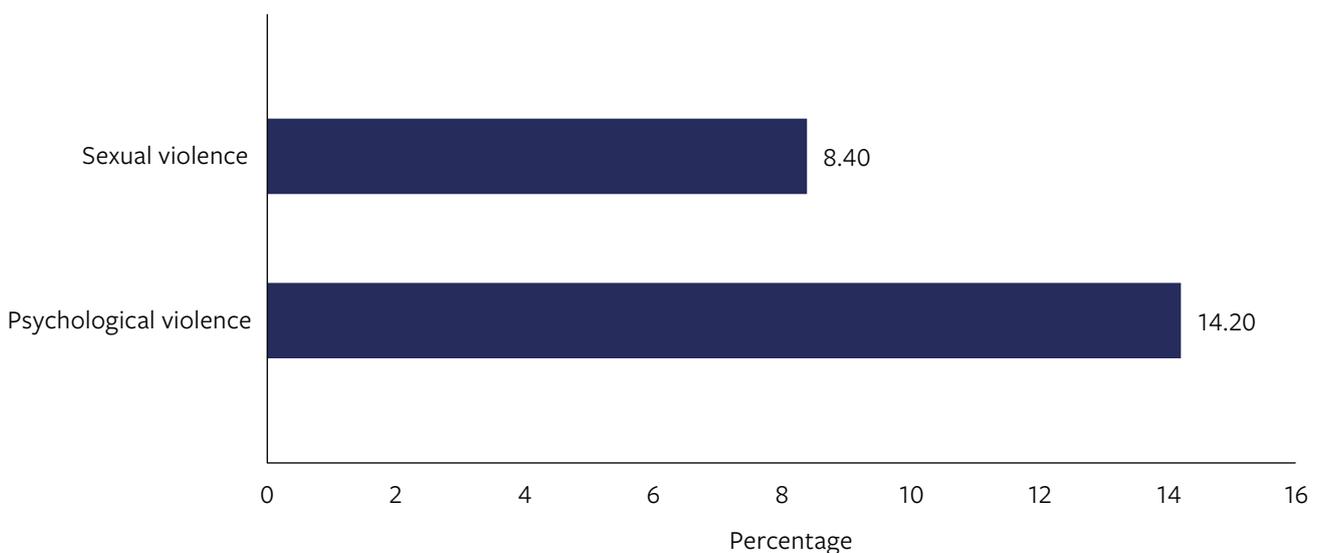
GBV. The most common forms of GBV reported were psychological violence, affecting 14.2%, followed by sexual violence, reported by 8.4%.

**Figure 14** Women reporting having experienced gender-based violence in the educational field by type of violence, 2019 (%)



Source: OVBG (2020).

**Figure 15** Prevalence of type of violence experienced by women in the work environment, 2019 (%)



Source: OVBG (2020).

## Children and adolescents as direct and vicarious victims of GBV

Intimate partner violence also affects children and adolescents who witness episodes of violence. This is why they were recognised as direct victims of GBV in the 2017 regulatory changes and in the National Plan for a Life Free of Gender Violence against Women 2022–2024 (*Plan Nacional por una Vida Libre de Violencia de Género hacia las Mujeres 2022–2024*) (CNC, 2021: 25). The second national CNC survey (2020) shows that 28.8% of women who report having suffered intimate partner violence in the last 12 months state that these violent episodes occurred while children and adolescents were present. This leads to an estimate of more than 386,000 children and adolescents having been exposed to such violence (CNC, 2020: 25).

Another type of GBV experienced by children and adolescents is sexual exploitation, which tends to be concentrated mainly in contexts of organised crime, particularly drug trafficking. In recent years, social organisations that respond to GBV and the official report of the Integral System for the Protection of Children and Adolescents against Violence (Sistema Integral de Protección a la Infancia y Adolescencia contra la Violencia, SIPIAV) for 2022, have begun to identify an increasingly frequent form of GBV directed at mothers and their children (SIPIAV, 2023). These involve situations in which the aggressor (usually the current or former partner of the woman and father of the children) takes the children hostage as a way to hurt the mother; this is termed vicarious violence.

Various studies agree that experiencing vicarious violence during childhood builds a mental model based on gender norms that legitimise the use of violence, and that this influences future behaviours

(Asensi Pérez and Araña Suárez, 2006; Asensi, 2007; Polo et al., 2003). Experiencing intimate partner violence as a child can, in turn, have severe effects on mental health, including the development of post-traumatic stress disorder (Imaz Montes and Martínez, 2022). It is necessary, therefore, to improve early detection and effective intervention. This type of situation highlights the need for the effective implementation of sex education programmes to help transform behaviour in intimate relationships.

## Trafficking and exploitation

Studies in Uruguay distinguish human trafficking for the purpose of labour exploitation (which is relatively ‘invisible’) and for sexual exploitation. A US Department of State (2024) report has stated that the Uruguayan Government reported the identification of 208 trafficking victims (1 man, 38 women and 169 minors) in 2023, compared to 406 trafficking victims (60 women and 346 minors) identified in 2022 and 357 identified in 2021. Uruguay identified very few male trafficking victims – only one adult man in 2023, for example. Migrant women are over-represented among victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation (OIM, 2024), which included Uruguayan nationals and people from Argentina, Colombia, Cuba and Nicaragua (US Department of State, 2024).

The US Department of State (2024) report states that the Uruguayan Government reduced its work to protect victims of trafficking and exploitation in 2023 in comparison to previous years. This reflects a policy change under the previous Government, which changed how victim assistance teams are contracted by replacing agreements with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) with individual consultant contracts. This change had a major impact on the quality and scope of care services for victims of trafficking (*Redacción Búsqueda*, 2024).

A preliminary report on commercial sexual exploitation in digital environments reveals an ‘inadequate’ and ‘ineffective’ government approach to the problem. The report places particular emphasis on the lack of strategies to prevent the high levels of recruitment in virtual environments (*La Diaria*, 2024). Other reports on trafficking in women and the sexual exploitation of girls and adolescents in Uruguay also highlight the persistence of institutional weaknesses both in prevention and registration, as well as in the prosecution of the crime, the comprehensive approach to these cases and reparations for victims (Fernández and Fontela, 2023; United Nations, 2024; US Department of State, 2024).

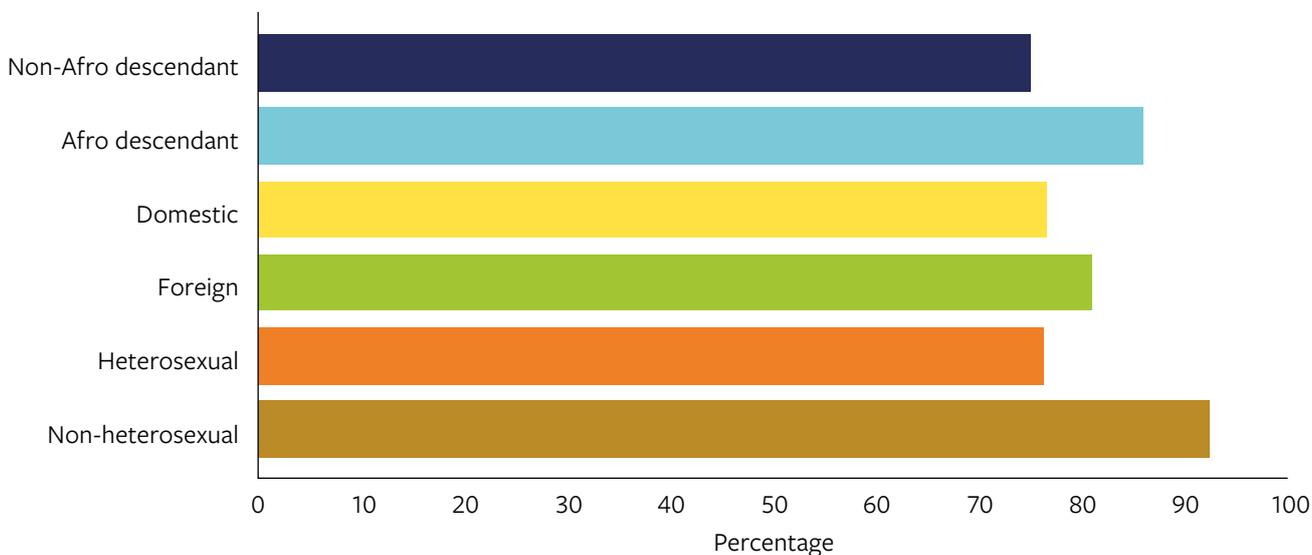
### Intersections: human mobility, gender diversity and African descent

Drawing on data from the 2019 OVBG survey, the reported prevalence of any form of GBV is higher among Afro-descendant women than it is among non-Afro-descendant women (86.1%

versus 75.1%); among women between 19 and 29 years of age; among migrant women compared to Uruguayan-born women (81.1% versus 76.6%); and among non-heterosexual women compared to heterosexual women (92.5% versus 76.3%) (see Figure 16).

Experts highlight that women and girls face significant risks of various forms of GBV during migration, with human trafficking being particularly prevalent. In addition, immigration status can complicate their ability to escape situations of intimate partner violence once they have settled in Uruguay. Despite the existence of strong regulations and public policies that aim to address these issues (as discussed in Section 3.4), barriers such as immigration status continue to hinder effective support for affected individuals. The gender norms of the countries of origin also influence ‘*what is good and what is not, what is allowed or what is not and what is punishable and what is not*’ by Uruguay (KII, UN Agency 2).

**Figure 16** Differential prevalence of gender-based violence by social group (sexual orientation, migration status and ancestry), 2019 (%)



Source: CNC (2020).

## Child marriage

Child, early and forced marriages and unions are defined and understood as any formal or informal union involving at least one person under the age of 18.

The Uruguayan Civil Code establishes the minimum age of 16 for marriage, which is lower than the international minimum standard of 18 years. Within this framework, in October 2023, the Committee for the Elimination of All Forms of Violence against Women recommended modifying Article 91 of the Civil Code to establish the minimum age for marriage as 18 years.

While there have been legislative initiatives for modify this, they have not yet led to change. The Government that has just taken office restarted this legislative initiative within the framework of Women's Month (*Medios Públicos*, 2025).

In 2023, 22 marriages involving people under the age of 18 took place. Only in one of these cases were both people minors; 20 cases involved adolescent girls under 18 with men over 18 and one case involved an adolescent boy under 18 with a woman over 18.

In Uruguay, as elsewhere in the region, informal early unions are much more common than formal marriage. According to the sources consulted, social and health personnel view such unions as normal, which prevents the early detection of situations linked to sexual abuse and exploitation (KII, Civil Society 3). This coincides with the findings of specific studies that examine the approach to the sexual exploitation of children and adolescents (Fernández Saavedra and Fontela Kopl, 2023).

The 2023 report of the Special Rapporteur on the sale, sexual exploitation and abuse of children,

Mama Fatima Singhateh, states that child, early and forced marriages are reportedly more common in rural areas of Uruguay and among people of African descent and other ethnic minorities, particularly those from low-income communities. Around 25% of young Uruguayan women marry before the age of 18. However, the data are not broken down by other characteristics such as the ethnicity or socioeconomic status of adolescents. While child marriage affects both girls and boys, it has disproportionate consequences for girls, including in terms of their sexual and reproductive health and productive well-being (Singhateh, 2023; US Department of State, 2024).

## Digital violence

Online GBV refers to acts of violence carried out through information and communications technology and affects mainly women and girls. It can include psychological, physical, sexual and/or economic harm and suffering of various kinds (ONU Mujeres and MESECVI, 2021).

Although some studies have started to examine digital violence in Uruguay, no information was available about the role of the 'manosphere' in contributing to online GBV in Uruguay. Although the phenomenon is known, through visits of foreign researchers to the country, there is still no conclusive evidence of the existence of such communities.

According to the experts consulted, '*gender violence has been refined*' in this virtual space, meaning that it is taking specific forms in new environments (KII, Civil Society 3). In the second national OVBG prevalence survey of 2019, 5.5% of the women surveyed reported that they had experienced digital violence at some point in their lives. As mentioned in Section 3.1 in relation to 'Trafficking and exploitation',

experts have identified the digital environment as an increasingly prevalent recruitment tool for commercial sexual exploitation (CONAPEES, 2024; Fernández Saavedra and Fontela Kopl, 2023; KII, Civil Society 3).

Despite existing initiatives, there are persistent and significant information gaps on gender cyber-violence and its manifestations in Uruguay. However, various modalities of this violence are evident, and often involve individual recruitment by adults who target children and adolescents. As one source points out, *'this recruitment in the community frequently translates to recruitment within online networks'* (KII, Civil Society 3).

Overall, 6.9% of women active in public life report having experienced digital violence. According to a survey of female politicians conducted by UN Women in 2021, more than two-thirds stated that they sometimes received violent responses to their posts, and 2.4% stated that they always or almost always received violent comments, while 26% of the sample reported not receiving violent responses to their posts and 4.8% stated that they received violent comments in general (ONU Mujeres, 2021).

In 2022, an initiative by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the British Embassy in Uruguay and INMUJERES developed the Digital Monitor of Violence Against Women. The tool analysed 180 active Twitter (X) accounts of women in leadership roles and with public visibility who expressed their opinions online and had more than 3,000 followers. Between 1 March and 24 November 2022, 11% of tweets directed at the women in this sample were violent, amounting to 105,310 out of a total of 988,188 tweets (UNDP, 2024). Despite existing initiatives, significant information gaps persist regarding gender cyber-violence and its manifestations in Uruguay.

### 3.2 Gender norms, drivers and risk factors

Key informants (KII, civil society 2; KII, civil society 3; KII, academy 1) highlighted the role of culture in legitimising the exercise of violence based on gender inequality. A recent study of male perpetrators of GBV found that they cited prevailing gender norms to justify their actions. Specifically, they perceived that it was acceptable to commit violence against women, particularly their partners (Fontela et al., 2024).

Furthermore, several key stakeholders (KII, civil society 2; KII, civil society 3) consider the lack of systematic implementation of comprehensive sexuality education throughout the formal education cycle to be a second determining factor. This contributes to a failure to question the traditional model of gender relations, and also to the lack of access for children and young people to information that provides them with the tools to question current norms. While the government has made efforts to provide teachers with tools to address these issues, there is no official programme that aims to eliminate gender stereotypes and is present at all educational levels.

#### Risk factors

There are no data on income levels and educational levels as specific risk factors for victims of GBV in Uruguay. The data outlined in Section 3.1, alongside other research and experts identify some additional risk factors for GBV, as follows:

- **Belonging to groups oppressed by gender**, meaning those who, according to the current model and predominant gender norms, are seen as 'feminised'. This group includes

women and girls, but also transgender and/or transsexual women, as well as children and adolescents (KII, Academic 3).

- **The context of human mobility**, particularly for some forms of GBV, such as trafficking and sexual violence (see Section 3.1).
- **Geographical location**, as the risks are greater in some parts of the country, particularly in border regions and rural areas (see Section 3.1).

The evidence also refers to triggering factors, or stressors, that increase the occurrence of gender violence, as well as its intensity, such as: job loss, contexts with exposure to addiction/substance use, and drug trafficking (various KIIs). The presence of firearms in homes is also a risk factor for GBV. Studies show that *'firearms play a key role in the identity construction of hegemonic masculinity'* (Pandolfi and Valentina, 2014: 16).

Vulnerable life trajectories (e.g. economic insecurity or exposure to violence in childhood as a victim or witness) can also be included among the risk factors that make violence more likely to be present throughout a person's entire life (Darré and Fontela, 2023; Fernández Saavedra and Fontela Kopl, 2023; United Nations, 2024; Darré and Fontela, 2024):

When you hear stories where there was no end and you wonder if it stopped at some point, and no, it seems that the violence never stopped, because there was always someone who carried it out. (KII, Civil Society 2)

Studies, as well as experts, agree that for adolescents and young people, problematic substance use, together with economic precariousness, constitute risk factors for sexual abuse and exploitation:

[T]he high incidence of drug consumption and addiction ... not only makes adolescents more vulnerable to abuse, but sometimes sex is used to pay for these addictions. (Singhateh, 2023:3)

While this statement corresponds to the views expressed during meetings held with government and civil society experts on the subject, deeper evidence on this issue in Uruguay is lacking.

### 3.3 Profiles of perpetrators and victims' reasons for not reporting

The most frequent forms of GBV are domestic violence, intra-family violence and/or violence in intimate emotional relationships:

It is where we find very cruel violence and what prevails as a form of violence as well. Especially in Uruguay, there is violence between couples, from men towards women. (KII, Civil Society 2)

According to the 2019 OVBG prevalence survey, 37.1% of women reported having experienced GBV during childhood, while 18.4% of women reported having experienced it within their current family (CNC, 2020).

Among women aged 65 or older who report GBV within their family, 9.8% were currently experiencing GBV at the time of the survey. Meanwhile, 47% of women aged 15 and older reported having experienced GBV from their partner or ex-partner at some point during their lives and 19.5% in the last year (ibid.).

The experts interviewed also raised concerns about the high incidence of sexual abuse within families and the closest circles of trust and the prevalence of teenage pregnancies that are sometimes the result of sexual abuse or exploitation. This coincides with the worrying

data from SIPIAV. In 2023, SIPIAV attended 8,157 situations of violence against children and adolescents, averaging 22 situations daily. The main expressions of violence were emotional abuse (39%) and sexual abuse (22%) (SIPIAV, 2024). The same report indicates that 119 girls under 15 years of age experienced a pregnancy between 2021 and 2023. In half of these cases, sexual abuse was confirmed (SIPIAV, 2024).

According to the GBV specialists interviewed, a distinctive element of the current expression of GBV in Uruguay is the increasing level of psychological violence. Since the approval of Law 19,580 and its application, interviewees argued that, although physical violence continues, expressions of psychological violence occur more frequently:

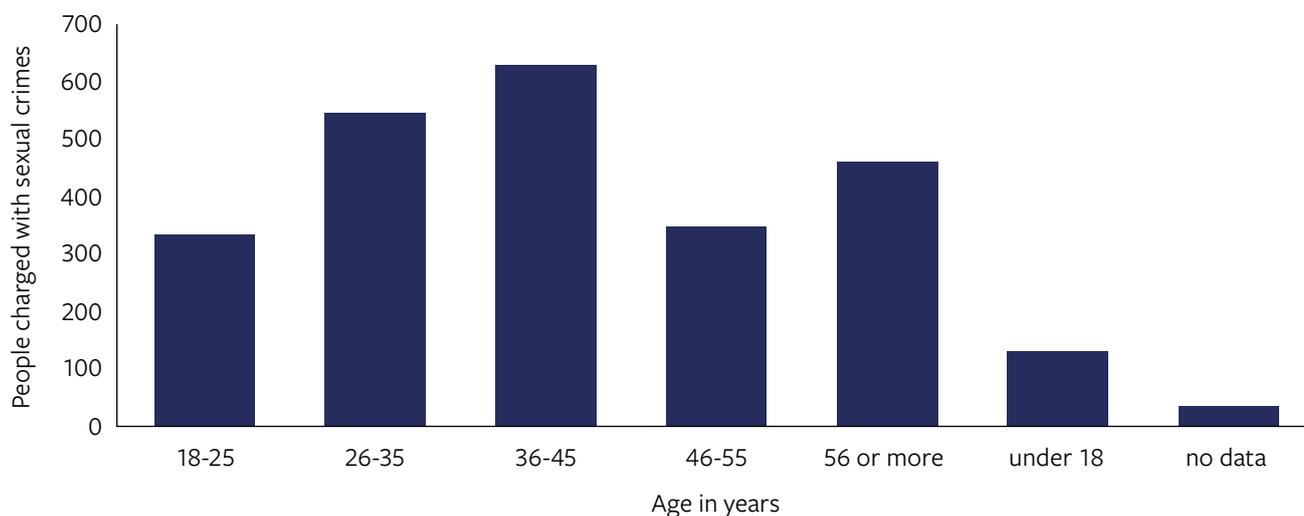
As the law was implemented, applied, and impunity decreased, the aggressors began to look for other ways, sometimes more subtle. Today we have vicarious violence, which is not yet recognised by our law. This violence occurs due to harassment in the area of justice, that is, the continuous demands and complaints made

by the aggressors, who generally have more money. (KII, Civil Society 2)

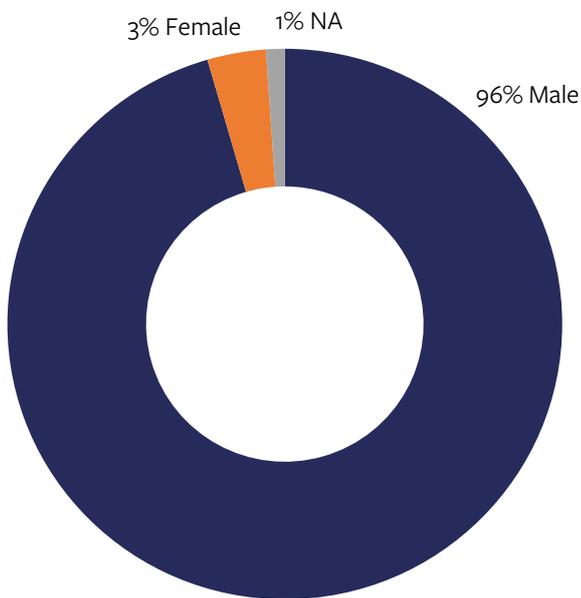
This recognition of a shift towards psychological violence coincides with research findings from various studies (Reyes, 2019; Aguayo et al., 2021; Fontela et al., 2024). These studies indicate that although policy changes and the implementation of services for men who commit GBV may help to curb the impulsivity that leads to violent behaviour, they have limited impact on reducing physical violence. These studies highlight that aggressors have been simultaneously learning manipulation mechanisms and other ways to exert psychological violence (Fontela et al., 2024). This phenomenon of an apparent switch towards psychological violence requires more investigation.

Between 2019 and 2024, the Attorney General of the Nation (Fiscalía General de la Nación) charged 2,488 individuals for sexual crimes. The data indicate that 95.5% of these aggressors are aged between 26 and 45 (see Figure 17) and they are predominantly male (see Figure 18). The majority of sexual crimes took place in the centre and north of the country.

**Figure 17** Number of people charged with sexual crimes by age range, 2025



Source: Fiscalía General de la Nación (n.d.).

**Figure 18** People charged with sexual crimes by sex

Source: Fiscalía General de la Nación (n.d.).

### What motivates victims to report or not report incidents of gender violence?

According to the 2019 CNC survey, the most common reason mentioned by women who experienced GBV situations in their current family and who did not seek help was that *'they considered it an unimportant event'*, with 61.6% of the victims stating this as the main reason. In addition, 22% of these respondents believed that reporting would not lead to any consequences or that it would be useless to seek help or report (CNC, 2020).

In addition, there is a big gap between those cases that are reported to the police, those that are processed, those that get to the courts, and those cases for which the aggressor is convicted. There is no system that collects information on the path taken by each police report after it is made, or to track whether the victim approached any victims' care service.

Representatives of civil society in Uruguay, who work daily to address GBV and care for victims, noted that GBV has increasingly been made visible and considered a problem in recent years. They argue that this change is the result of work carried out by local and international organisations in the country. According to them, this has allowed more and more women to recognise their situation as GBV and 'denaturalise' the violence they experience – as demonstrated by more requests for help. The experts interviewed also felt that legislative changes have led to certain shifts in gender norms. For example, starting in 2020, there has been a considerable increase in the demand for help in situations of GBV. However, the resources available for this help have remained the same as they have been for years. As one expert explained:

[For reporting to be effective,] the request for help would have to be accompanied by an immediate response, and that is what there is not at this moment. (KII, Civil Society 2)

### 3.4 Government responses and persistent shortcomings

The National Plan for a Life Free of Gender Violence against Women 2022–2024 brings together the public policy approach on this subject into five main strands: an inter-institutional comprehensive response system; training and awareness-raising for operators; an information system; intra- and inter-institutional strengthening; and monitoring and evaluation of the plan (CNC, 2021).

Although Uruguay has developed a robust policy with the deployment of services throughout the country, including the creation of three specialised GBV courts, the experts interviewed highlighted the need to address the following:

- situations with multiple vulnerabilities through more comprehensive approaches
- a weakening of resources in recent years, despite the increase in demand, and
- the overlapping of institutional competencies, which make it difficult to address some situations that are outside the population groups targeted by the policy (adolescents and young people, for example).

Some sectors of the current opposition have presented regressive initiatives regarding rape crimes, seeking to analyse the sexual history of the complainants. In 2024 the previous President also presented and mentioned the need to penalise ‘false accusations’. While these proposals reflect regressive perspectives in Parliament, they are unlikely to be approved during the term of the current Government, which began in March 2025.

In that month, the current Government announced three main gender projects, two of which relate directly to GBV:

- efforts to address GBV, including the non-applicability of statutes of limitations to sexual offences
- a bill to raise the minimum age of marriage to 18, seeking to reduce school dropout rates and the transmission of poverty, and
- the creation of a database to analyse income inequality between men and women in the labour market with the aim of reducing the gender pay gap (Silva, 2025).

## Gaps by population groups

**Adolescents:** both civil society experts and international organisations highlight a gap in the response to adolescent victims under 18 years of age, given that the care services of the National

Women’s Institute (INMUJERES) distributed throughout the country do not assist minors.

**Migrants:** including the perspective of human mobility in public responses to GBV is essential to enhance effectiveness. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) has been carrying out joint work in Uruguay with government organisations, civil society organisations, the private sector and other partners to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse and develop responses to the fight against human trafficking and migrant smuggling (OIM, 2024).

IOM participates in the National Council for the Prevention and Combat of Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Consejo Nacional de Prevención y Combate a la Trata y Explotación de Personas) and the National Committee for the Eradication of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents (Comité Nacional para la Erradicación de la Explotación Sexual Comercial de la Niñez y la Adolescencia). During 2023, the IOM mission in Uruguay supported the preparation of the Third National Plan for the Eradication of Commercial and Non-Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents 2023–2028 and co-financed research on trafficking and the pandemic with the El Paso civil society association (OIM and El Paso, 2023). The resulting publication highlights the weaknesses of the available quantitative data that the country has to measure the problem and act accordingly:

Uruguay does not have statistical data or systematized and articulated information on the situation of human trafficking, nor on sexual exploitation. The available data are partial and refer to the institutional approach of the body that produces them. (OIM and El Paso, 2023: 37)

This mirrors the concerns about femicide data noted in Section 3.1.

Additional barriers can make it difficult for migrant women who are victims of GBV to access direct care. For instance, they do not always know local regulations, or they come from contexts where gender norms are still strongly restrictive and legitimise gendered violence. As one interviewee explained:

Although it is very difficult to obtain data and truly quantify how many migrant women suffer gender-based violence, it is understood that in reality there is much more than what is reported. (KII, UN agency 1)

### Budgetary and implementation gaps

The Violence in Focus project, led by UN Women in coordination with UNICEF, UNDP and the United Nations Population Fund, is working on the proposed review of the Care Services for Victims of Gender Violence (Servicios de Atención a Víctimas de Violencia de Género), based on a recent evaluation carried out by the Government, which is not yet public (KII, UN agency 1).

The experts interviewed agreed on the need to apply Law 19,580, which, although they considered it ‘very complete’, does not have the necessary regulations and budget in place to be put into action and address the current implementation gaps.

In response to femicides, the Government has implemented an electronic tracking programme using anklets for aggressors when a woman’s risk assessment is high. This measure aims to restrict the mobility of aggressors and prevent them from approaching their victims. Users of the anklet are also required to engage with specialised services that address GBV. A monitoring system tracks the aggressor, sending alerts in the event of any unauthorised approach to the victim.

Academic experts, however, note that the anklet programme faces implementation challenges in certain areas, particularly along land borders and in isolated rural regions, where effective tracking and responses to breaches are difficult (KII, Academic 3). In a communication on 28 December 2023, the Supreme Court of Justice made a non-binding recommendation to judges to improve the efficiency of the process of deployment and control of anklets.

## 4 Women in politics

Uruguay is a representative democratic republic and a unitary state with a presidential system. It has enjoyed political and social stability since 1985 and the end of the authoritarian regime (which began in 1973), through a continuous commitment to democratic principles and the protection of civil, political, and social rights (Delisante Morató, 2015). Political decision-making in Uruguay takes place in three branches (executive, legislative and judicial) and three levels of government (national, subnational and local). The President of the Republic exercises executive power and has over-arching responsibility for the work of 14 ministries. Legislative power is exercised by the General Assembly, composed of two chambers: the Senate, where the Vice-President of the Republic serves as President, and the Chamber of Representatives. Judicial power is exercised by the Supreme Court of Justice, which has five members.

Uruguay is one of the most advanced Latin American countries in the areas of education, social protection and health. However, challenges persist, particularly in relation to women's representation in politics. At the executive level, women occupy 35.7% of ministerial positions and 42.9% of sub-secretarial roles in the new Government (Johnson, 2016; Presa, 2024). In 2009, the Uruguayan Parliament approved a Quota Law that stipulates that there must be one woman for every three candidates for all elected positions. Since its approval, the percentage of women in each chamber has increased, yet it remains low at only 26.6% of senators and 29% of deputies (Presa, 2024).

At the subnational level of government, the representation of women in provincial and Montevideo assemblies has gradually increased, reaching 30.8% on the provincial boards and 35.5% in Montevideo's assembly. At the subnational (province) level of government (mayors), the representation of women dropped from 15% to 10% between 2015 and 2019, and in local government it fell from 23% to 18.7%. In the 2020 elections, women accounted for only 15.9% of the total candidacies for provinces and represented 10.5% of those elected as departmental executives (ONU Mujeres, 2020). There were three departments (Cerro Largo, Río Negro and Soriano) without any female candidates.

While there is no evidence of a decline in women's participation at province and local levels, the factors at play at the national level are also relevant at the subnational level (Pérez Bentancourt in Cianelli, 2025). For mayoral elections, each party can present three candidates. Those three are elected party leaders. According to UN Women, women make up a minority percentage of the total candidacies that parties present for departmental executive positions (ONU Mujeres, 2020).

At the political party level, changes in the proportion of women in executive branches between 2015 and 2024 are shown in Table 6 (although there are no data for the percentage of women in the Frente Amplio Executive Branch).

**Table 6** Women in the executive branch of each party, 2015–2024 (%)

	% of women 2015	% women 2024
Partido Nacional	35.3%	26.7%
Partido Colorado	33.3%	35.3%
Frente Amplio	13.3%	

Sources: Johnson (2016), Partido Nacional (2025), Partido Colorado (2025), Frente Amplio (2025).

In this context, this chapter focuses on the following key questions:

- What are the main barriers to women’s political participation in Uruguay? What are the main factors shaping women’s decisions to run for political office at local and national levels?
- What measures are political parties taking to promote the participation of women in politics? What measures or initiatives are being promoted by Parliament or other relevant stakeholders and what has hindered their adoption?
- How prevalent is online violence against women in public life and what types of online violence do they face? Who are the perpetrators? What are the consequences of this violence? What data exist on this?
- What are the levels of women’s political representation at national, local and party levels, and how have they changed over the last 50 years? (The response to this question can be found in Annex 2.)

## 4.1 Barriers to women’s political participation

This research identified seven factors that challenge women’s political participation that are explored in this section:

- factors related to the electoral system
- the role of gatekeepers and limited chances of being first on election lists
- lack of support from party leaders and low access to resources
- weak access to the media
- lack of familial links in politics
- gender norms around being a good political leader, and
- lack of political training experience and information.

### Factors related to the electoral system

The party system in Uruguay is characterised by a multiparty system divided by two coalitions: a left-wing coalition led by Frente Amplio (Broad Front) and a right-wing coalition led by Partido Nacional (National Party). Each party is composed of political sectors that compete for a seat in the Senate and Chamber of Representatives. Each political sector has a political leader who acts as a gatekeeper, deciding the order of candidates on the election list.

The main institutional and political-party obstacles to the election of women in Uruguay are the small district magnitudes and the high levels of party fragmentation (Johnson, 2020).<sup>5</sup> Although all legislative positions are elected in multi-member constituencies, these vary significantly in size. The Senate is elected in a single large national constituency with 30 seats. The 99 seats in the Chamber of Representatives are elected in 19 province districts: the large district of Montevideo (currently 40 seats); the medium-sized district of Canelones (15 seats); and 17 smaller districts, of which 1 has 6 seats, and the rest have only 2 or 3 seats.

While the small district magnitudes and high levels of factionalisation do not, in themselves, exclude women, they do reduce the number of safe or competitive seats on electoral lists. The low percentages of elected women are due to the fact that female candidates are rarely placed in safe positions on the lists (Johnson, 2020). As will be discussed in Section 4.3, following the introduction of the Quota Law, parties have tended to place women on third place in their electoral lists.

### The role of male gatekeepers and limited chances of being first on election lists

A second factor is the role of gatekeepers (party leaders) who control who is included in the election list, who is in each place on the list, and who is excluded.<sup>6</sup> In Uruguayan elections, candidacies are not presented on party lists but rather on sector lists, and voters cast a ‘double simultaneous vote’ – one for the party and, within

the party, one for the sector of their preference. The selection of candidates takes place at the sector level, and the informal dynamics of most of these sectors tend to perpetuate the male leadership’s control over the selection processes (Johnson, 2020). Party leaders and sectoral leaders also tend to be men.

A study of female politicians (193 participants elected as councillors, mayors and deputies during the 2019–2020 electoral cycle) provides insights into the difficulties women face when competing with male politicians for inclusion on the election list. The study showed that although some study participants took part in the list development process, they considered the most important criteria for the selection of candidates were their political ideas (98.2%), personal characteristics (97%) and visibility or recognition by citizens (93.3%) – characteristics that the participants perceived as more difficult for them to portray compared to their male counterparts (MIDES, 2022a).

This perception could be related to the fact that men’s personal networks in political parties are usually more extensive than women’s, that they have more links with the media and therefore greater possibilities of being known. Or it could be linked to the theory that a leader is defined by particular personal characteristics and skills, such as the ability to assert oneself, work well under pressure and work out compromises, which can be perceived as being mostly found in men rather than women. Although the quantity of votes is an important variable in determining candidates, the study also identified that this was not perceived to be the most

5 District magnitude is the number of members to be elected in each electoral district. A small district magnitude means that there are few seats available for election.

6 Party leaders usually have a party sector that competes for Parliament with an election list for senators and deputies. Party leaders decide the order of people on the election list.

important variable (71% of participants identified this criterion as one of the most important) (MIDES, 2022a). However, one key informant suggested that the quantity of votes gives women the legitimacy to claim a place on the list:

The thing is that these were more like sectors or lists because, with a list, you had the opportunity to say, ‘Well, I have this list, I’m the general secretary of the group’, and then you didn’t know if you’d get 50 votes, 500 or 5,000. The point was that you potentially had electoral and political value, and that became another tool for negotiating agreements ... Over time, women in each province began registering their groups, which allowed them to gain visibility and eventually have a seat at the negotiation table when the time came. (KII, Politician 3)

### Lack of support from party leaders and low access to resources

A third factor identified in the literature is the level of political support party structures provide to men and women during political campaigns. While men tend to be supported by their parties and financed by the private sector of their party, women tend to be backed by party members and their own families and funded through their own resources (MIDES, 2022a). The most important obstacle to developing an electoral campaign for women candidates is their lack of access to resources.

Access to resources depends on links with the private sector and the confidence that the candidate generates in the private sector. Public financing to political parties depends on the votes obtained by each candidate in primary and national elections (Laphitz, 2024). In addition, parties have

different ways of financing the campaigns of their presidential tickets or candidates for deputies and senators. While the Frente Amplio presidential ticket is financed by all political sectors, the Partido Nacional and Partido Colorado presidential tickets are instead financed only by the political faction of the presidential candidate.<sup>7</sup> A similar situation happens in the case of deputies. Frente Amplio candidates for deputies from the districts in the provinces seem to have low financial autonomy in relation to their national-level sector; however, Partido Nacional and Partido Colorado candidates for deputies from the provinces raise and spend a significant portion of the sector’s income. Their levels of private fundraising are much higher than those of their Frente Amplio counterparts and are on a par with those of their sectors at the national level (Acuña et al., 2018). This has a disproportionate effect on women, considering that Partido Nacional tends to get more votes from the province level and tend to have male party leaders in each province who decide the places of women in electoral lists (see Annex 2 for the percentage of women in Montevideo assemblies and province assemblies).

In the case of donations from the private sector, a key informant indicated that the distribution of the donations received by the party was highly discretionary, inequitable and influenced by gender:

[Name of political party] received donations for the elections, and none of those donations reached me. They are very discretionary, and it’s about who decides where those donations go. I mean, in that regard, it’s not very... It’s not democratic at all because, if the party, as an institution, receives donations, the ideal would be to distribute them equitably among all its

7 The presidential ticket (formula presidencial) includes the candidacies for president and vice president for each party.

pre-candidates, as was the case at that time, to help them gain greater visibility and reach. Well, that didn't happen. (KII Politician 2)

## Lack of access to the media

A fourth factor is weak access to the media for women candidates. One key informant argued that it is difficult for a woman to obtain interviews with the media and to become known, because the media tend to focus on the most competitive candidates for presidential tickets and those most likely to be on electoral lists for senators or deputies, who are usually men. According to the MIDES study, 67% of the women politicians surveyed reported that the lack of access to media was the difficulty that had the most significant impact on their electoral campaign. This study also found that 73% of the respondents considered women to have less visibility in general (MIDES, 2022a).

## Lack of familial links in politics

A fifth factor mentioned by interviewees is the importance of familial links in politics. As one key informant argued:

Being an outsider – because, as I said, not having that generational connection with maybe a relative who was a politician back then – you realise that cronyism, what people call the famous political caste, is always present. You think it doesn't exist in Uruguay, but yes, it does. We always see that positions or trusted roles are given to the same people, within the same circles. (KII Politician2)

Those who are well connected tend to be men, as shown by the familial links between former male presidents of the republic and other public figures, such as former male ministers. Women who make it to the electoral list as candidates are often those who have familial links with the leader of their political sector leader. As one politician in the MIDES study put it, '[o]f course, it's difficult to have your own agenda. You have to, well, be "someone's woman"' (MIDES, 2022a: 32). There are, however, cases of women who do not succeed in their political career even though they have familial links in their party.

## Gender norms around being a good political leader

Gender norms are another factor: ideas and norms related to leadership characteristics, women's self-confidence and women's political training.<sup>8</sup> A study by UN Women found that there are differences in perceptions of leadership styles between men and women in Uruguay. People perceived women to be more emotional (58%) and understanding (53%) while men are perceived as more aggressive (42%) than women. In terms of which gender was perceived as more honest or rational, no difference was found (ONU Mujeres, 2023). Some key informants pointed out that the ideas and norms that define the characteristics of a leader lean towards traits that are perceived as male. In this way, people do not see a woman as a leader:

I believe the most important barrier is the construction of political culture and understanding what it means to be a leader... A leader who carries political weight and represents

8 According to Marcus and Somji (2024: 6), 'social norms ... define socially acceptable behaviour, roles, entitlements, and gender expression for people who identify (or are identified by others) as male or female'. These norms are reflected in areas such as the characteristics of a good leader, women's self-confidence and women's political training.

others has characteristics that necessarily make them a man... they have legitimacy from others, they can assert themselves when necessary, but also to be kind when necessary, to be intelligent, to be highly educated, to attend all the meetings, to go to everything – there's this series of conditions that, when you start analysing them one by one, turn out to be all the barriers that women face. (KII Politician 1)

Key informants mentioned that another characteristic of a good leader is self-confidence. According to one of the key informants, women always feel questioned about their opinions, which can undermine their confidence, while men are typically more self-confident and are under less pressure to constantly prove that their opinions are valid. The following quote shows that women in public life face more personalised critique in the media and have to defend themselves or ignore this – this leads to them being perceived as less self-confident or having less authority:

For me, a barrier has been understanding the personal conditions I need to have to not feel hurt by the things that happen or that others do. Or by the things that happen to you in the action of managing politics. In this idea people believe that politics is cruel, what happens is that your name and your body are called into question, so people talk about you. And when people start talking about you – if it's something you've never experienced before – it can be a difficult thing because they project things on to you, some of which are true and some of which are not. (KII Politician 1)

As the following participant suggests, women in Uruguay are seen as great as long as they do not run for office, because when they do they are perceived as dangerous. This idea is based on the fact that when women compete for seats, they

become competition for their male counterparts, who can lose their seats:

The barrier of power struggles has also been a barrier. I mean, you can be wonderful as long as you don't compete for positions, don't challenge roles, or don't claim space. When you do claim space, you become more dangerous – it's about the perception others have of the threat you pose. (KII Politician 1)

### Lack of political training, experience and information

Male politicians practice discriminatory tactics that exclude women from bargaining spaces. For example, women have to overcome obstacles such as restricted access to political training, experience and information (MIDES, 2022a).

Some key informants argued that women need political training in tactics, bargaining and political strategy, given that they have less experience in politics and that many have only recently started their careers as politicians, while men have developed these skills during political meetings and activist practices and through their connections with political leaders. In addition, women are sometimes excluded by men from the political meetings where they could get experience (MIDES, 2022a). As one key informant explained:

And that men have a much more refined understanding of political tactics and strategy than we do is a kind of learning that, in some way, is denied to us, right? ... When you have a goal and set a political objective, you have to figure out how you're going to achieve it, who your allies are, and how to find them, right? And that requires a learning process in political action and management, something we have dedicated ourselves to much less. (KII Politician 1)

Another female key informant pointed out that women need more support in areas related to negotiation and in understanding electoral design and electoral rules. This could be explained by the explicit exclusion of women from spaces and informal practices of bargaining that are part of the decision-making process, including informal meetings between men that women cannot attend because they are not invited or not welcome (MIDES, 2022a).

#### 4.2 Factors influencing women's decisions to run for political office

The interviewees suggested that women in Uruguay start their political career by engaging in political activities with the aim of solving problems in society. Regarding support for candidacies, the MIDES study with female politicians shows that their candidacy is facilitated by leaders of their political sector (60% of respondents), but also by their party members (42% of respondents). Only a few participants mentioned that their candidacy was supported by female party members (13%) or by a social sector (9.9%) (MIDES, 2022a).

There is sometimes a lack of ambition among women who decide to run for political office (Lawless and Fox, 2010). In some cases, women have agreed to run following the wishes of their political sector, even if they felt unable to comply with expectations. In other words, they did not particularly aspire to be candidates, but agreed to so out of their motivation to solve problems or help people (MIDES, 2022a). There is no information about why leaders support women who do not decide for themselves to run for office.

On this point, some interviewees argued that they started their careers as active members of their political party and then started to occupy spaces

inside their political organisation, motivated by their interest in helping people and by their political ideals. They also mentioned that they promoted areas such as gender policies and social policies while men were less interested in these areas and more interested in areas such as economics and productivity. One interviewee pointed out that when she realised that she would not have space for her career as a candidate in her own party she decided to create her own sector. This highlights how women knowingly face many obstacles inside their own party when they decide to run for political office, to the point that some create a new political sector in order to be first on the election list. As one participant explained:

In 2019, after a lifetime – because it was practically 30 years that I was active within that list – I realised many things, and if I stayed in that place, I wouldn't be able to achieve much in terms of a possible path forward. I mean, it would always be the same, and I didn't want to keep doing the same thing ... So, that journey led me to 2019, where I finally said, 'Enough'. That's when I began, like a phoenix, to rise again. That's when I started connecting with people who were also somewhat disillusioned with the party, people who couldn't find their place... Still, I had already had the name of my sector in mind for years. (KII Politician 2)

#### 4.3 Measures by government and political parties to promote the participation of women in politics

##### The Quota Law in Uruguay

The Quota Law was approved by Uruguay's Parliament in 2009, but it only started to be applied in 2014. The Quota Law established that all political parties must incorporate at least one woman for every two male candidates on their

candidate lists for primary national and provincial elections. It also established that in binominal constituencies the candidates have to be of different sexes and the Electoral Court must deny electoral sheets that do not comply with the law.<sup>9</sup>

The application of the Quota Law was minimal in the elections of 2014 and 2019; political parties applied the quota in a way that meant women were never first on the list, which meant that women were not selected, considering electoral rules and district magnitude (in binominal districts only the first place is elected competitively) (Johnson, 2020). This practice is possible because the law stipulates that there must be one woman for every three candidates, but it does not specify her position within the trio, which leads parties to place women in the third place.

This was also mentioned by the interviewees:

Similarly, based on the experience we've had, the application of the quota in the Partido Colorado has always been minimal, very minimalist – whether for internal organisations or later in the design of lists for elective positions. In general, they place women third on the list in a way that they don't get elected. And when it comes to substitute systems – and there are different types of substitute systems, like the respective ones where there's one main candidate and three substitutes alongside them – women are always placed in the last position. (KII, Politician 3)

Table 7 shows the impact of the Quota Law on the different electoral positions, with an increase in women in the Senate, Chamber of Representatives, national conventions and provincial assemblies, but no impact on mayoral positions for subnational and local governments.

**Table 7** Women elected as incumbents in each electoral period (%)

	2009	2014	2019	2024
	Before quota	After quota	After quota	After quota
<b>Senate</b>	13.3%	30.0%	32.3%	29.0%
<b>Chamber of Representatives</b>	15.2%	18.2%	28.3%	28.0%
<b>Parties' assemblies</b>	16.4%	30.2%	30.8%	N/A*
<b>Provincial assemblies</b>	18.8%	28.0%	32.0%	N/A*
<b>Mayors (local gov.)</b>	23.6%	17.0%	18.7%	N/A*
<b>Mayors (subnational gov.)</b>	15.0%	5.3%	10.5%	N/A*

\* Data not available as the next elections for provincial and mayors will be held in May 2025.

Sources: Johnson (2016), ONU Mujeres (2020) and MIDES (2025).

9 Binominal constituencies are those provinces where the district magnitude is two, which means that there are only two seats to be elected.

In the 2024 elections, some men took the place of women who resigned from their seats for lower positions (ONU Mujeres Uruguay, 2024). In this way, some interviewees argued, the minimum quota application means that women agree to provide their name to comply with the quota (given that they are on the list) and then withdraw, leaving their place to their male alternate. According to one key informant, women resign from their seats because they feel they owe a favour to the political leader:

They use the quota in a very minimalist way, and they even make agreements to ensure certain outcomes. For instance, in the last election, a woman was elected as a deputy in one sector, but she had already agreed to resign. So, she won't take office, and the man who comes next on the list will. (KII Politician 2)

In 2017, Parliament approved the extension of the Quota Law for the next elections, considering that the 2009 bill restricted its application to the 2014 elections. In 2020, two bills were presented in Parliament that proposed parity as a solution to the low levels of women in politics; neither were approved (ONU Mujeres Uruguay, 2024). In 2024, a woman Partido Nacional senator presented a parity bill in Parliament that proposed to have parity between men and women for all elective positions, from national to subnational and for political party directories. The proposed bill was supported by the members of the opposition (Frente Amplio), the Vice-President and one female senator from Partido Colorado, while rejected by the rest of the members of the ruling parties (Partido Nacional, Partido Colorado and Cabildo Abierto). The main arguments against parity related to the idea that it is not true that women are under-represented in Parliament, because women can be represented by men (Tristan, 2024).

According to a key informant, there is a perception among both male and female politicians that it is easier for a woman to obtain a position because of the Quota Law (KII, Women in Politics, Frente Amplio 3). Similarly, other key informants emphasised that the need is not just for more women in politics but for women with a gender perspective, as not all female politicians adopt a gender-sensitive approach (KII, Women in Politics, Partido Colorado 4). In 2023, UN Women conducted a survey about women in politics and public opinion about parity law. The study found that 47% of the respondents agree with a parity law, 19% agreed with the Quota Law and 26% believed that the quota should not exist (ONU Mujeres, 2023).

In June 2024, Parliament approved a new Amendment to Law 18,485 (Political Parties Law) known as Political Party Financing (Law 20,292). One of the main changes introduced under this law was to create an incentive for women's participation in politics by establishing a 20% increase in the subsidy for lists led by women and an additional 10% per elected woman (Chasquetti, 2024). There are, as yet, no studies on the effectiveness of this law.

### Government training programme for women in politics

At the government level, INMUJERES launched the Programme to Strengthen Women Political Leaders (*Programa de Fortalecimiento de Mujeres Líderes Políticas*) in 2022. This training programme for women in politics aims to contribute to a greater presence of women in decision-making positions at all levels of government through their empowerment and the promotion of a gender-equal culture within the national political system. This programme aims to:

- enhance knowledge and provide tools from a gender-mainstreaming perspective in strategic areas to facilitate women's access to decision-making positions
- raise awareness among political actors, social actors and sectors of public opinion on substantive issues to ensure women's political autonomy, and
- deepen the diagnosis and visibility of political violence against women as a specific manifestation of GBV.

In the context of this programme, the project named 'Support for the creation and implementation of a training centre for women in politics' (*Apoyo a la creación y puesta en marcha de un centro de formación para mujeres políticas*) is financed by the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo) (MIDES, 2022c).

## Party initiatives

At the party level, in 2017, Frente Amplio's Plenary approved a decision that there would be gender parity on its list for all elective positions. This mechanism was developed in the 2019 elections (*Portal 180*, 2017). No other party has taken any action to incorporate women in politics and the literature shows that they are far from doing so (MIDES, 2022a). Partido Colorado has, however, developed a Gender Commission to incorporate gender as a political issue in their plan of government for elections (KII Politician 3).

## 4.4 Digital violence against women in public life

According to the OVBG survey of 2019, the prevalence of digital violence against women in public life is 5.5% (OVBG, 2020). In 2021, UN Women conducted a survey about online violence faced by women in politics on social networks.<sup>10</sup> According to this study, 66.7% of the respondents reported being subjected to violence on social networks and 61% considered that they were subjected to this violence because they were female. Comparing the percentage of violent messages received by female and male legislators, the study did not find any significant difference, with 26% of men and 29% of woman receiving violent messages in June 2020.

The study found that the most frequent type of violence experienced by women was the use of offensive language about their private lives or physical appearance, offensive sexual comments and online group attacks. Less frequent were threats of harm made towards the women and/or their families, threats to share intimate images or videos without their consent, and the posting of comments, images or sexual videos related to them on the internet or social media.

High levels of violence relate to high levels of political activity and there is a positive correlation between the level of women's visibility and the level of violence that they face (ONU Mujeres, 2021). One of the interviewees also mentioned suffering violence during the last electoral campaign at an important moment for her visibility:

<sup>10</sup> The survey was answered by 43 women politicians who participated in the last electoral campaign and the sample comprised women politicians who are in positions of political responsibility as senators or deputies, or in their parties. The study collected half of a million messages sent to Uruguayan women politicians through Twitter (now X) between June 2019 and June 2020 and used machine learning techniques to identify violent messages and characterise them according to their content.

It was truly unexpected because, after 30 years, they know me within the party, they know who I am, and how I behave and everything I read from my party members was very, very harsh and critical. Yet, the harassment and violence I suffered on social media during those days was brutal. If I hadn't been well-grounded, well-positioned, and emotionally stable, those days could have been fatal. (KII, Politician 2)

The study also highlighted that despite there being little difference in the levels of violence experienced by men and women in politics on social networks, there are differences in the content of the violence directed towards men and women. While men receive violent messages related to political management or criticism of the government, women receive violent messages towards their person, often related to their perceived lack of skills, influenced by gender stereotypes. As an example, the following message was sent to a woman legislator:

Looks like you have self-esteem issues. Do you understand the difference between the President of the Chamber and yourself? Go to therapy, girl, and stop embarrassing yourself on social media.

This can be compared to the following message, which was sent to a male legislator:

Have you recovered from the beating you got? That's what happens for being an opportunistic politician and a cheap blanco. (ONU Mujeres, 2021: 30)<sup>11</sup>

To address the information gap on online violence against women in public life, in 2022, INMUJERES, UNDP and the British Embassy launched the Digital

Violence Monitor for Women. This tool provided accessible real-time evidence, updated daily, on the level of aggression and insults received by public figures such as women politicians, journalists, communicators, activists and artists on Twitter.<sup>12</sup> To measure online violence, all derogatory or mocking expressions that discredited or challenged the value of women, generally related to their personality and/or qualities (including mental, physical or emotional abilities), were considered. Threats of violent action were also taken into account (MIDES, 2022b).

The report includes an analysis of the number of attacks received and the most frequent types of aggression. The report found that 11% of tweet messages directed toward female public figures between March and October 2022 were violent and that a total of 18% of Twitter accounts were violent. Regarding the type of aggression, 45% of aggressive tweets undermined women's abilities, 35% aimed to discredit what they said and 7.8% were insults related to their bodies and sexuality. The most frequent insults referred to the women as ridiculous, unpresentable, crazy, dumb, vulgar and fat (MIDES, 2022b).

Users identified as violent on Twitter (now X) tend to use the platform more than its other users – they follow more accounts, are followed by more accounts and tweet more. In addition, the words used in their profile descriptions tend to include details such as family, political affiliation, opposition stance (anti-leftist, anti-fascist, anti-speciesist, etc.) and appeals to freedom or liberalism (ONU Mujeres, 2021). There are no studies that provide information about the consequences of this violence or whether these accounts are from real people or bots.

<sup>11</sup> 'Blanco' is the name used for those who are affiliated to Partido Nacional, also known as Partido Blanco.

<sup>12</sup> At the time of writing, the monitor's website was no longer working.

# 5 Women's economic autonomy and empowerment

The sexual division of labour and the unequal distribution of care are central factors in explaining gender inequality in economic well-being. Across the LAC region, overall, women spend almost three times more time on unpaid care and domestic work than men, which limits their participation in various areas and exacerbates inequalities (Banco Mundial, 2020; UN Women and ECLAC, 2022).

In addition, women are over-represented in poverty and tend to be under-represented in the most dynamic economic sectors, such as technology and especially software and STEM (science, technology, engineering and maths). Furthermore, the data show that women in every income quintile who have no income of their own vastly outnumber men. Women with no income of their own tend to spend more time caregiving than those with income, while for men the time spent on caregiving varies very little, whether they have an income or not.

In essence, women are poorer, have lower incomes and are the main caregivers, as this chapter will show. Both the literature and those interviewed for this study point out that these inequalities, sustained by the sexual division of labour, are based on two processes. The first is gender stereotypes and the social norms associated with care as a female responsibility, both in society and in the market (e.g. Sistema de Cuidados, 2015, 2020; MIDES, 2020; Goyeneche et al., 2025). The second factor is gender stereotypes that associate the most dynamic and better-paid jobs with 'masculine traits and skills' (e.g. Colacce and Zurbrigg, 2020; Soria, 2022). This chapter focuses on the following key questions:

- What are the latest data on women's economic empowerment?
- What are the key barriers affecting women's economic empowerment?
- What policies are in place to remove barriers and promote gender equity in the labour market?
- What has been the role of the SNIC – Sistema Nacional Integrado de Cuidados (National Integrated Care System) – in reducing women's unpaid work hours and enabling women to join the labour market?

## 5.1 Latest data on women's economic empowerment

### Labour force participation

The data presented in Table 8 illustrates that labour participation gaps vary significantly across income quintiles. Notably, gender disparities are more pronounced in the lower-income quintiles, which are closely linked to the sexual division of labour and market participation. Women in these quintiles typically possess, at most, a high school education and face constraints related to family income. Their labour participation rate is alarmingly low – particularly in rural areas – at merely 48.6%, indicating a substantial 20 percentage point gap between them and their male counterparts (68.3%). Among working women, 43% are employed as cleaners in homes, buildings or hospitals, while 40.3% work as saleswomen, shopkeepers or caregivers. These women encounter what UN Women describes as 'sticky floors', referring to the low position of women in labour markets and the difficulties in making progress and getting better positions (ONU Mujeres Uruguay, 2024).

**Table 8** Labour participation rates by sex and household income quintile, 2022 (%)

Quintiles	Country total		Montevideo		Outside Montevideo	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
1	50.1	67.7	55.0	65.9	48.6	68.3
2	53.0	67.1	56.1	67.2	51.7	67.1
3	54.9	65.6	58.3	65.7	53.2	65.6
4	57.0	69.4	61.4	70.0	53.2	68.85
5	56.8	70.2	57.5	70.7	55.6	69.5

Source: UN Women (2024), based on INE's Continuous Household Survey (Encuesta Continua de Hogares, ECH) 2022 microdata.

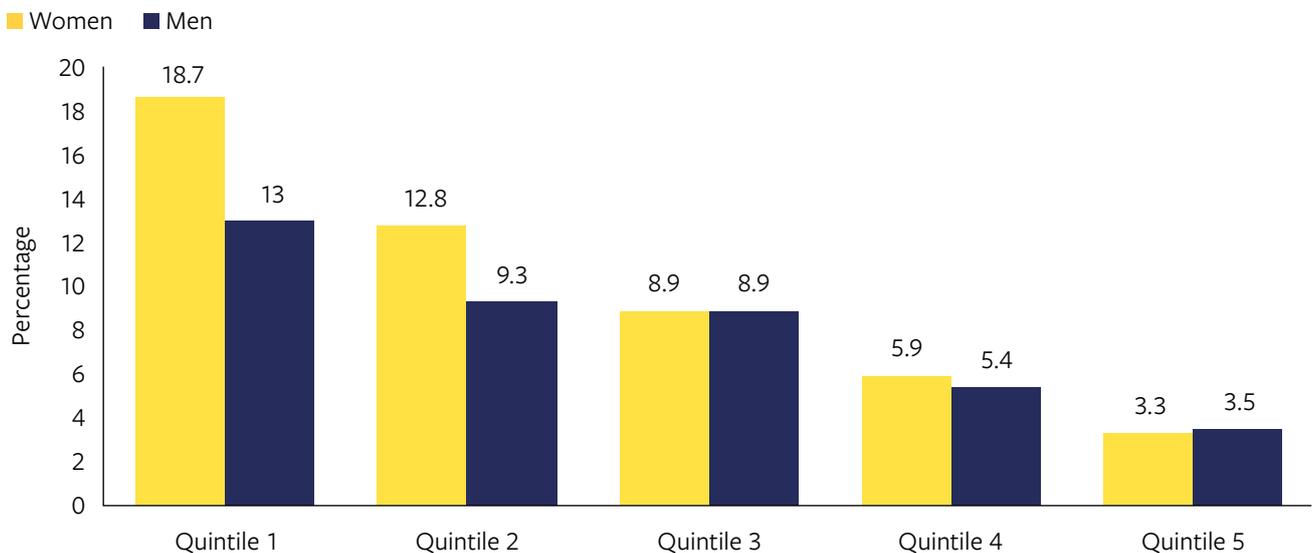
In contrast, women with tertiary education and high family incomes experience 'glass ceilings' that hinder their economic empowerment (ONU Mujeres Uruguay, 2024). This group enjoys a high labour participation rate that aligns closely with that of men. However, while they do not face significant employment challenges such as unemployment, underemployment or informality, they still deal with a gender pay gap of 15.8%.

It is important to highlight the significant disparities regarding participation in the workforce between women who live in Montevideo and those in rural areas or small villages. Studies show that a strong family-oriented caregiving tradition dominates in remote regions, which intensifies the amount of time that women dedicate to caregiving responsibilities (Mascheroni and Angulo Benítez, 2023). This cultural framework can further limit their opportunities for participation in the workforce and professional development.

Women in Montevideo have a workforce activity rate of 57.0%, compared to a rate of 53.0% for those living in localities of Uruguay's interior with more than 5,000 inhabitants it is 53.0%, falling to 47.4% for those in localities with less than 5,000 inhabitants and rural areas (MIDES, 2020).<sup>13</sup> This means that there is a gap of almost 10 percentage points between the activity rates for women depending on their place of residence, while there are no major variations for men by the region in which they live (MIDES, 2020).

Women in lower income quintiles have higher percentages of unemployment and underemployment (see Figure 18). Their low levels of labour participation are associated with more precarious conditions and fewer opportunities for accessing employment. In addition, as Figure 19 shows, female unemployment is higher than male unemployment in all quintiles except in quintile 5. Unemployment gaps are largest in the first and second quintiles.

<sup>13</sup> The activity rate indicator refers to the proportion of people who are active (working or looking for work) among those aged 14 and over. It can be used to measure the degree of participation of people with particular characteristics in the labour market (MIDES, n.d.a).

**Figure 19** Unemployment rates by quintiles, 2022 (%)

Source: INE's ECH 2022 microdata. INE's Continuous Household Survey (Encuesta Continua de Hogares, ECH) 2022 microdata.

## Income gaps

In 2019, women in Uruguay earned an average of 94% of what men earned per hour. However, this overall figure masks more significant disparities within specific demographics. Notably, among individuals aged 56–65, the wage gap widens to 87%. Additionally, women with tertiary education face a gap of 76%. In various sectors, the gender pay gap is particularly pronounced, with a gap of 78% in manufacturing, trade, restaurants and hotels, financial services, insurance and real estate. Among non-agricultural workers, merchants and sellers, the gap is 74%. The informal sector shows an even more striking gap of 91%, highlighting the persistent issue of gender-based earning differences across various contexts (Urquidi et al., 2023).

Most working women are employed in salaried positions, with 31.1% working in the public sector and 47.2% in the private sector. Notably, 40.4% are employed as professionals, scientists, or intellectuals. Falling between these groups are

women from middle-income households with intermediate levels of education—such as high school, qualifications from the Universidad del Trabajo del Uruguay (UTU), teacher training, or incomplete teacher training. While some women in this group are active in the labour market, they often lack the social safety nets necessary to achieve significant career advancement or to avoid being trapped on 'sticky floors' (ONU Mujeres Uruguay, 2024).

In addition, 10 years after having their first child, women earn 42% less income than their childless peers (Banco Mundial, 2020). This, as mentioned by interviewees, and as frequently highlighted in the literature, is due to the unequal distribution of care work, given the sexual division of labour and gender stereotypes (Banco Mundial, 2020; UN Women, 2024; Goyeneche et al., 2025). As the literature shows, women not only relegate their careers to the background when they have children, but, because they earn less, in many cases, they often decide to work less and, therefore, earn less (UN Women, 2024).

## Women in managerial positions

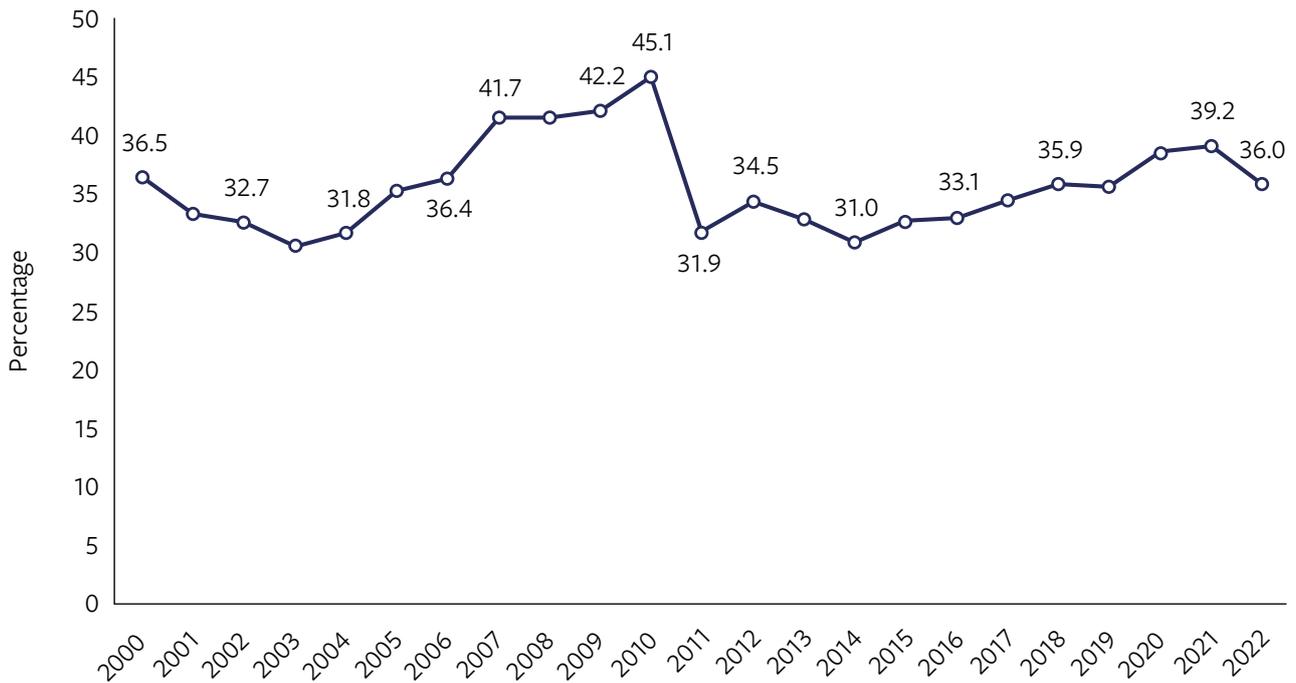
Uruguayan women still remain under-represented in management positions in the workplace. The female share of employment in senior and middle management for Uruguay was 35% in 2023 (World Bank, 2024). Despite an increase in female representation in management roles from 2003 to 2010, subsequent years show a decline, resulting in levels similar to those seen in the early 2000s and indicating a lack of sustained progress (see Figure 20).

While there are no studies that explain this decline, evidence suggests that women continue to experience persistent challenges in reaching higher positions in their workplaces. These include gender norms around women not being considered good leaders, a lack of female role models, women’s greater responsibilities for unpaid care and domestic work, and their lack of

time to socialise with colleagues at work, leading to fewer networking opportunities that would increase their chances of promotion (*America Retail*, 2024; Iriarte, 2024)

As of 2021, women held only 11 of the 96 senior positions (presidency, vice-presidency, secretariat and treasury) within Uruguay’s 19 business chambers. Some work on this issue mentions general reasons linked to gender inequalities to explain this segregation. On the one hand, there is persistent vertical segregation in access to power, or, in other words, in terms of tasks within each workplace. On the other hand, there is horizontal segregation, i.e. between occupations, both because women have less access to management positions and because of the areas in which they tend to work, which are more related to educational and social activities and less to science and technology, for example (ONU Mujeres and INMUJERES, 2021).

**Figure 20** Proportion of women in managerial positions, 2000–2022 (%)



Source: CEPALSTAT, 2024. Databases and statistical publications.

## Financial inclusion

In terms of financial inclusion, 75.7% of women and 72.3% of men in Uruguay had an account at a bank or other financial institution or service in 2021. The rate for women in Uruguay is higher than average in LAC, but lower than other high-income countries. Account ownership denotes the percentage of respondents who report having an account (by themselves or together with another person) at a bank or other financial institution or who report having personally used a mobile money service in the past 12 months (World Bank, n.d.).

## Poverty

As shown in Figure 1 (see Section 2.3) women in Uruguay are twice as likely to be living in poverty than men (8.8% and 4.4%, respectively). This is

largely due to three factors: women have less income than men and many of them do not have their own income; women have a higher unemployment rate than men; and women spend more time caring for the household, which in turn hinders their labour market participation (OPP, 2019; Banco Mundial, 2020; MIDES, 2020). Poverty also affects Afro-descendant women to a greater extent than other women (see Table 9).<sup>14</sup>

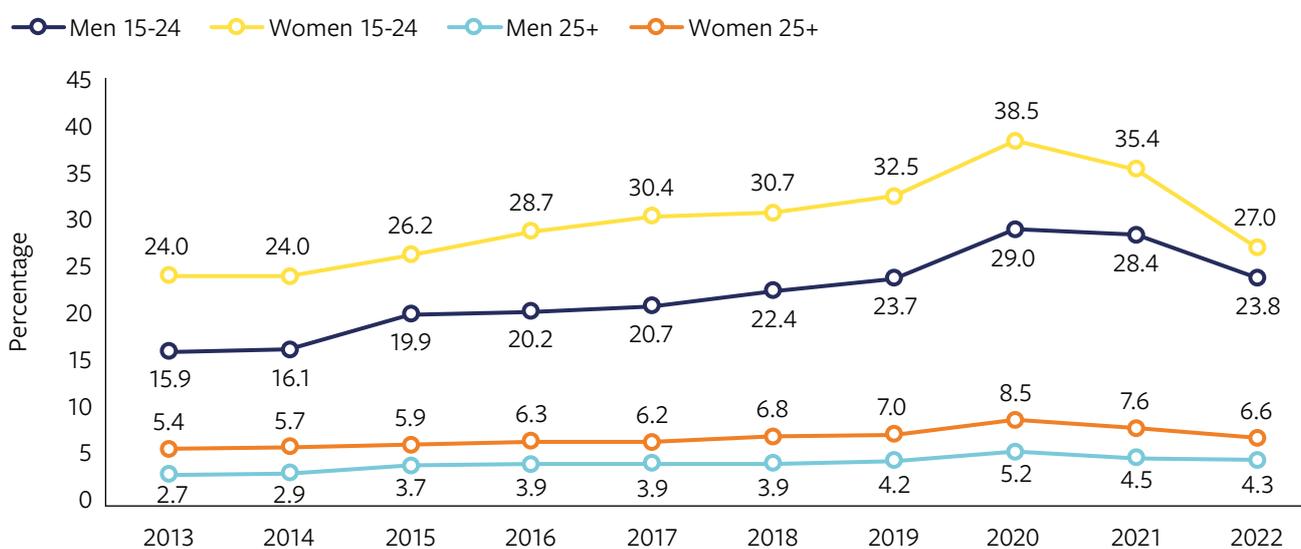
While the percentage of people with no income of their own decreases as household income increases, the percentage of women with no income of their own exceeds that of men in every income quintile (MIDES, 2020). Figure 20 shows, however, that, although unemployment remains higher for women, the proportion of unemployed women and the gender gap in employment have reduced since 2020.

**Table 9** Population living in poverty by sex and Afro-descendant race, 2016–2022 (%)

Racial descent	2016		2022	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Afro-descendant	17.9	20.5	16.6	18.6
Not Afro-descendant	8.1	8.5	8.8	9.4

Source: Gender information system (INMUJERES, 2023).

<sup>14</sup> Poverty analysis in Uruguay is traditionally based on the income approach, which measures whether the household's per capita income is sufficient to cover minimum food and non-food needs (INE, 2024).

**Figure 21** Unemployment rate by sex and age group, 2013–2022 (%)

Source: CEPALSTAT, 2024. Databases and statistical publications.

## Unpaid care and domestic work

According to ONU Mujeres Uruguay (2024) one constant characteristic of the labour market in Uruguay is the ‘*low female participation in the lowest income stratum in the interior of the country*’, which is explained by the marked sexual division of labour at this level. Given that women, particularly those with lower incomes, are largely responsible for unpaid care work in the household, their labour market insertion tends

to be more precarious and unstable. Indeed, as Table 10 shows, women devote many more hours to unpaid care work than men.

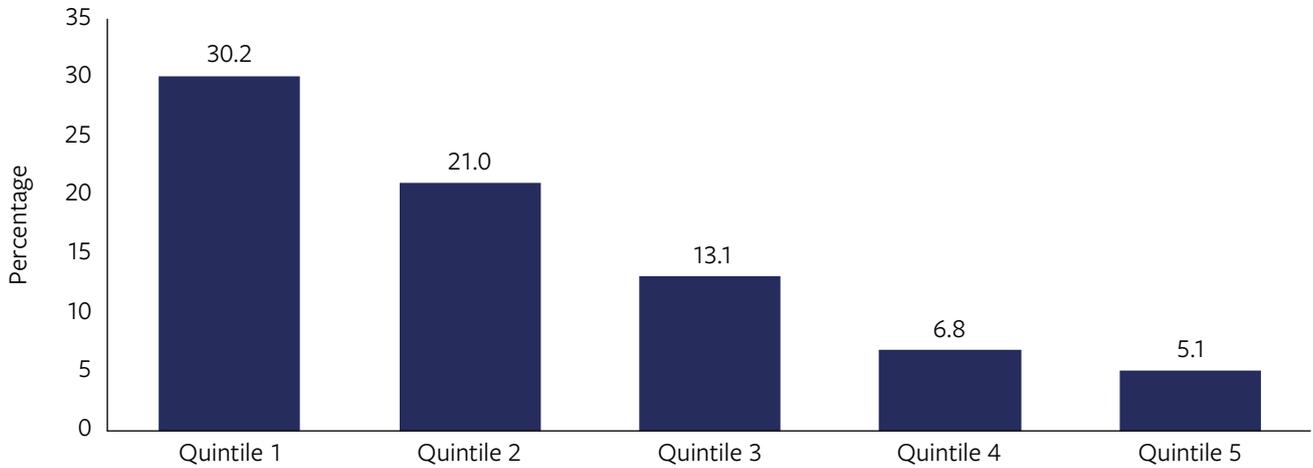
Figure 22, in turn, shows that women in the lowest quintiles are more likely to be engaged in household work as their only job. For example, in quintile 1, 30.2% of women aged between 25 and 64 years dedicate their time exclusively to unpaid work and domestic tasks.

**Table 10** Average hours per week spent on unpaid work and paid work combined (total workload) by sex

	Men	Women
Unpaid work	18.1	33.6
Paid work	32.1	20.9
Work total	50.1	54.5

Source: CEPALSTAT, 2024. Databases and statistical publications.

**Figure 22** Women aged 25–64 exclusively undertaking unpaid care work and domestic tasks by income quintile, 2022 (%)

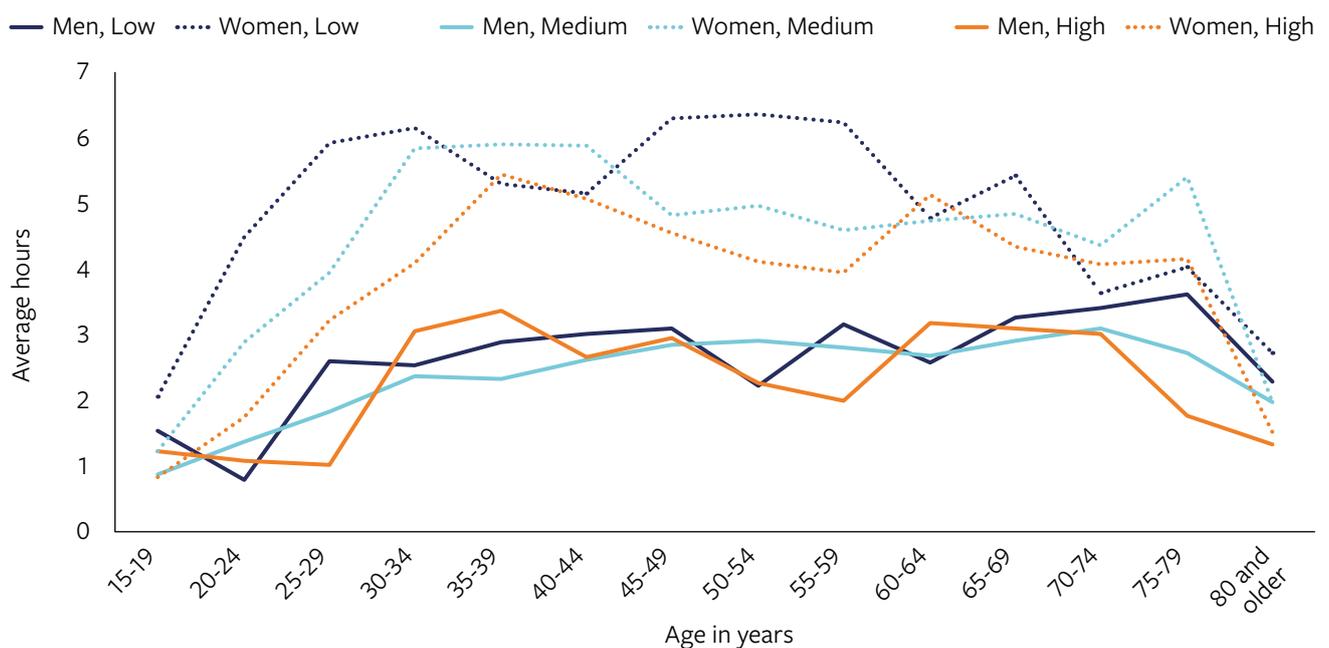


Source: INE’s ECH 2022 microdata. INE’s Continuous Household Survey (Encuesta Continua de Hogares, ECH) 2022 microdata.

An analysis of the average daily hours of unpaid work by sex and socioeconomic level of the household reveals a greater burden of unpaid work for women in the lower quintiles throughout

their lives. Figure 23 also shows that, in most periods of life, women in all income quintiles spend more time on unpaid care and domestic work than men in any quintile.

**Figure 23** Average daily hours of unpaid care and domestic work by age, sex, and socioeconomic stratum of the household, 2023



Source: INE’s Continuous Household Survey (Encuesta Continua de Hogares, ECH) 2022 microdata.

The care sector represents 3.5% of the total number of employed persons and is highly feminised (94.5% of employed persons are women). Among those employed in this sector, there is a higher proportion of young people (aged 14–24) and of those aged 65 years or older, compared to the total number of employed people. Those employed in this sector have lower educational levels. The percentage of women with primary or secondary education as the highest educational level is higher for those working in the care sector than for all employed women (21.4% and 14.1%; 60.5% and 49.0% respectively) (MIDES, 2020).

Finally, there are also gender gaps in women's ability to engage in entrepreneurship activities. Women own only 12% of businesses and hold only 11% of management positions in Uruguay (Banco Mundial, 2020). As mentioned by interviewees, this is largely the result of gender norms associated with women's 'ability' to lead and be fully engaged in paid work. Although some changes have been identified in recent decades, this tendency remains (KII, Academic, 1).

## **5.2 Key barriers affecting women's economic empowerment: care work inequalities and job segregation**

Women in Uruguay face two main barriers to their economic autonomy and the closing of gender gaps. On the one hand, women are mostly responsible for care work, which places obstacles in the way of their economic activity and their opportunities for career development and promotion. On the other hand, women are associated with jobs that tend to be less dynamic and less well-paid (Colacce and Zurbrigg, 2020; ONU Mujeres Uruguay, 2024).

Likewise, although women have increased their labour participation over time, they have been the most affected by economic crises, given that their employment has always been more precarious and unstable (Camou and Maubrigades, 2021).

In 2021, a survey in Uruguay explored attitudes towards time use and gender norms. Table 11 summarizes the responses, broken down by gender (men, women) and total. Key findings include: the majority (72.9%) disagree that children suffer when a mother has a full-time job; 61.3% disagree that being a housewife is as rewarding as a paid job; but 65.4% agree that a woman earning more than her husband is likely to create problems. Furthermore, 52.5% disagree that children of divorce should live with their mother, while 68.3% agree that fathers are as good at caring for children as mothers. Despite this, as some studies have shown, in practice – beyond perceptions of what is 'politically correct' – care remains largely the responsibility of women (e.g. Salvador et al., 2021).

**Table 11** Responses to survey questions on time use and gender norms, 2021 (%)

Questions (respondents asked to agree or disagree with statements)		Men	Women	Total
1: 'When a mother has a full-time paid job, the children suffer.'	No	72.5	73.2	72.9
	Yes	27.5	26.8	27.1
2: 'Being a housewife is as rewarding as having a paid job.'	No	64.8	58.6	61.3
	Yes	35.2	41.4	38.7
3: 'If a woman earns more than her husband, she will almost certainly create problems.'	No	30.4	38.0	34.6
	Yes	69.6	62.0	65.4
4: 'If parents divorce, it is better for the children to live permanently with the mother than with the father.'	No	50.3	54.2	52.5
	Yes	49.7	45.8	47.5
5: 'Fathers are as good at caring for young children as mothers are.'	No	32.0	31.6	31.7
	Yes	68.0	68.5	68.3

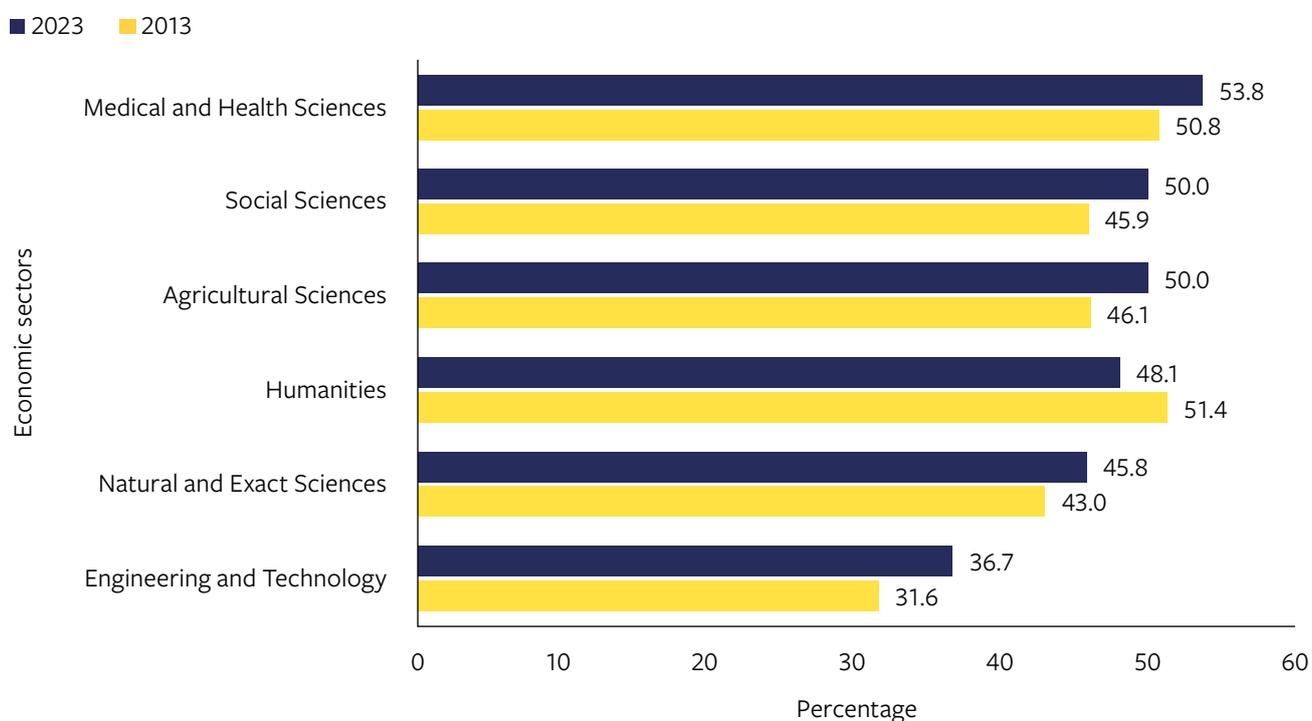
Sources: World Values Survey, 2011 and 2022, Uruguay.

Although women perform better in education than men, this is not reflected in the labour market. An analysis of employment distribution across various sectors reveals significant gender disparities. Sectors such as construction, transportation, agriculture, fishing, hunting and mining exhibit a predominance of male workers, while women predominate in domestic work, social and health services, and education (MIDES, 2020). Furthermore, women's representation in the fields of science and technology remains limited; for instance, only 23% of engineering students are women (Banco Mundial, 2020).

Interviewees highlighted that this discrepancy is based on gender norms that come from both individuals and the labour market. On the one hand, families tend to associate caregiving with women, while on the other hand, employers

(particularly for high-income jobs), demand full-time workers and this is not compatible with performing care tasks (KII, Civil Society 1; KII, Academic, 1). In addition, the skills that men tend to develop, as a result of gender norms, are usually more associated with high-value positions in the labour market, such as leadership and the ability to be permanently available, among others (KII, Civil Society 1; KII, Academic, 1).

Figure 24 shows the percentage of women categorised in the National System of Researchers (*Sistema Nacional de Investigadores*); these percentages are similar to men in each area. This suggests, therefore, that the problem is not that women do not participate in the different areas of knowledge, but that, because of gender barriers, they do not gain access to relevant positions.

**Figure 24** Female researchers categorised in the National System of Researchers for each area of knowledge, 2013–2023 (%)

Source: ‘Indicadores de género en ciencia, tecnología e innovación’, Agencia Nacional de Investigación e Innovación (ANII).

### 5.3 Policies to remove barriers and promote gender equity in the labour market

This section outlines key government policies to remove barriers and promote greater participation of women in the labour market.

#### Wage councils

One of the key policies to promote gender equality in the labour market has been the establishment of wage councils. These tripartite commissions consist of representatives from the government, trade unions and employers, and are organised by industry sectors. They have the authority to set minimum wages and other fringe

benefits. Originally created in 1942 to facilitate wage negotiations, these councils have evolved to play a crucial role in shaping labour standards.

By 2015, tripartite agreements reached through the wage councils benefited 76.5% of workers in Uruguay’s formal economy (MTSS, 2011). The councils have been instrumental in formulating agreements that advance gender equality in the workplace. Such agreements include provisions for health-check days, non-discrimination policies, equal treatment in the workplace, family care leave and, in some cases, access to care centres (Villegas Plá, 2025). Interviewees highlighted the importance of these agreements in reducing gender gaps in the labour market in Uruguay (KII, Civil Society 1; KII, Academic, 1).

There are no evaluations that demonstrate the impact of wage councils in reducing labour market differences. However, several studies indicate that collective bargaining agreements, particularly those that incorporate gender and care clauses, have a positive impact on women's labour market integration and the redistribution of care responsibilities. These agreements often provide crucial support services, such as childcare centres, breastfeeding facilities, various leave provisions (maternity, parental and paternity leave), and policies ensuring gender equality and non-discrimination. This comprehensive approach facilitates greater equity in women's employment opportunities (Villegas, 2017; Villegas and Castillo Fernández, 2020).

### The National Integrated Care System (SNIC)

Another particularly significant public policy for enhancing women's economic autonomy has been the care system. Established in 2015 through Law 19,353, Uruguay's SNIC was the first of its kind in Latin America. All interviewees emphasised that the care system has been a key policy in the promotion of gender equality in economic participation and equal distribution of unpaid care and domestic work for several reasons. First, it has contributed to placing the issue of care at the centre of the public and political agenda. Second, it has made an effective contribution to improving the redistribution of care work (ibid.). However, these efforts are still considered insufficient. Some interviewees highlighted that more time is needed for these policies to develop (KII Politician 1), while others stressed that care

must be defined in broader and more structural terms (KII, Academic, 1).

Interviewees noted that in countries like Uruguay, which face high levels of child poverty and growing inequalities, care is intrinsically linked to the fight against poverty. This connection introduces additional challenges, as it requires a dual focus in public policy: addressing immediate needs while also accommodating the demands of an expanding population (KII, Civil Society 1; KII, Academic, 1). Furthermore, interviewees emphasised that, unlike in many other countries in the LAC region, the care system in Uruguay has undergone modifications as a result of changes in governing political parties, but it has not been dismantled (KII, Civil Society 1; KII, Academic, 1; KII Politician 1).

Key informants emphasised the need to strengthen educational policies that promote extended hours for students in public education and to expand childcare centres, such as those under the CAIF Plan (Centros de Atención a la Infancia y la Familia – Child and Family Care Centres), which currently lacks sufficient coverage (KII, Academic, 1; KII Politician 1).<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, while care policies are key for society, they are particularly important for low-income women. Some studies show that female labour participation has increased in small towns in the interior of the country where the supply of childcare services by CAIF and SIEMPRE centres (Centros de Educación y Cuidados Sindicatos y empresas – trade unions and companies) has expanded and care strategies have been transformed from traditionally family-based ones towards greater co-responsibility with the State (Salvador et al., 2021; Goyeneche et al., 2025).

15 Since 1988, the CAIF Plan has been an intersectoral public policy of alliance between the State, civil society organisations and municipalities. Its objective is to guarantee the protection and promote the rights of children from conception to three years of age, prioritising the access of those who come from families living in poverty and/or social vulnerability, through urban and rural modalities.

## Employment policies

The interviewees also highlighted the importance of protected employment policies such as ‘Uruguay Trabaja’ (KII, Academic). These policies should sustain people in the labour market rather than just provide them with an initial experience. Uruguay Trabaja offers a full-time protected job with a gender focus and is aimed at individuals facing socioeconomic vulnerability. This job allows participants to engage in community-valued tasks for up to eight months, with four days a week dedicated to work and one day focused on training to expand educational opportunities and promote personal and social development strategies (MIDES, n.d.b).

In recent decades, Uruguay’s job training programmes and initiatives with training components that target individuals in poverty or vulnerable situations have primarily benefited women. Nevertheless, this does not imply that these programmes have integrated a gender perspective effectively in either their design or implementation. In many cases, there is no guarantee that access to childcare services aligns with the schedules of the programmes. Only two initiatives focused on training and employment promotion were designed specifically for women and incorporated a gender perspective throughout their components: Barrido Otoñal/Barrido Inclusivo and the Programme for the Promotion of Equal Opportunities for Women in Employment and Vocational Training (Programa de Promoción de la Igualdad de Oportunidades para las Mujeres en el Empleo y la Formación Profesional). Even so, these programmes did not address the challenge of reconciling time dedicated to caregiving with participation in the workforce (Espino, 2018).

Although programmes of protected work are essential, there is still much to be done in this

area. In reality, the Employment Promotion Law 19,973 of 2021 does not constitute a regulatory framework that addresses gender inequalities specifically, so it operates on the basis of pre-existing inequalities without actively acting to change them (Pérez de Sierra, 2025).

Some studies have highlighted the importance of expanding policies to combat poverty so that they also reduce inequalities (Midaglia and Villegas, 2017). These policies are central to the economic integration of low-income and low-educated women. These women tend to be very young mothers, which generates a greater demand for care that translates into low and precarious labour market participation (ONU Mujeres Uruguay, 2024b). The importance of reducing gender gaps through a more equitable allocation of public spending has also been underscored. To achieve this, the implementation of fiscal policies that incorporate a gender perspective is particularly emphasised (KII, Academic, 1). This means mainstreaming a gendered approach in public policies, through the Ministry of Economy – as happened in Argentina – or through inter-ministerial councils that coordinate funding for gender-focused policies.

## Legislation on the organisation of the national care system

The law that created the national care system (Law 19,353), approved in November 2015, recognises care as a social right in Uruguay. This means that all dependent persons have the right to quality care and that the State assumes the responsibility of guaranteeing its effective provision.

The National Care Board (Junta Nacional de Cuidados) established by Article 11 of Law 19,353 and regulated by Decree 445/016, serves as the key

authority for setting the strategic guidelines of the country's care policy and ensuring the fulfilment of agreed-upon objectives. Its composition includes the heads of various ministries, such as MIDES, the Ministry of Economy and Finance (Ministerio de Economía y Finanzas), the Ministry of Education and Culture (Ministerio de Educación y Cultura), the Ministry of Public Health (Ministerio de Salud Pública), the Ministry of Labour and Social Security (Ministerio de Trabajo y Seguridad Social), the Planning and Budget Office (Oficina de Planeamiento y Presupuesto), the Social Security Bank (Banco de Previsión Social), the National Public Education Administration, the Uruguayan Institute for Children and Adolescents (Instituto del Niño y Adolescente del Uruguay) and the Congress of Mayors (Congreso de Intendentes). The Director of the INMUJERES participates as a member with a voice but no vote.

The National Secretariat for Care and Disability (Secretaría Nacional de Cuidados y Discapacidad) governed by Article 11 of Law 19,353, Decree 445/016, and Article 495 of Law 19,924, is tasked with coordinating and executing the objectives of the SNIC under the directives and principles set forth by the National Care Board. It operates within the framework of MIDES.

In addition, the Advisory Committee on Care (Comité Asesor en Cuidados) created under Article 18 of Law 19,353 and Decree 444/016, advises both the National Care Secretariat and the National Care Board on best practices to achieve the objectives, policies and strategies of the SNIC. This committee comprises honorary delegates from NGOs focused on care issues, including Red Pro Cuidados, Organización Nacional de Jubilados y Pensionistas, Asociación Nacional de Organizaciones no Gubernamentales and Comisión Honoraria Nacional de Discapacidad, as well as representatives from academic institutions

such as Universidad de la República, Universidad Católica, Centro de Investigaciones Económicas del Uruguay and Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales.

## 5.4 The National Integrated Care System (SNIC)

Care policies promote access to and distribution of care through various instruments. Likewise, care policy is interrelated with various sectoral systems such as health, education, social security and labour regimes (Villegas Plá, 2025). Uruguay's SNIC has impacted women's labour market participation, child development and poverty levels, and in particular its component oriented to the expansion and restructuring of care services, such as daycare centres, SIEMPRE and CAIF (Batthyány and Genta, 2019; Salvador et al., 2021; Genta et al., 2022; Piñeiro and Cossani, 2024).

This care system explicitly aims to promote gender equality and address the existing sexual division of labour. The institutional framework of the SNIC consists of the National Care Council (Consejo Nacional de Cuidados), which serves as the inter-institutional governing body and includes participation from 10 public institutions. In addition, the National Care Secretariat (Secretaría Nacional de Cuidados) functions as the coordinating, articulating and executing body, while the Care Consultative Committee (Comité Consultivo de Cuidados) provides a platform for social participation in the formulation of care policies. This comprehensive approach underscores the commitment to crafting policies that support both women's economic independence and equitable distribution of caregiving responsibilities.

By 2020, Uruguay had become the country with the highest coverage of education and care services for children aged 0–3 years in the LAC

region, with an estimated growth in supply of 53% compared to 2015 (Piñeiro and Cossani, 2024). This growth was achieved mainly through an increase in the supply of already existing services, such as child and family care centres (*Centros de Atención a la Infancia y la Familia, CAIF*) and kindergartens run by the National Public Education Administration (Administración Nacional de Educación Pública), and the creation of new care services, such as: child care centres under agreements between trade unions and companies (*Centros de Educación y Cuidados de Sindicatos y Empresas, or SIEMPRE centres*); care spaces for children of high school students; community care homes (services provided in the caregiver's home or in community spaces for children between 45 days and 2 years of age); and educational inclusion scholarships, which enable children from families that are taking part in family accompaniment programmes in territories with insufficient public offerings to access privately managed centres (Piñeiro and Cossani, 2024).

However, according to interviewees, the coverage of these services is still very insufficient for the populations' demand (KII, Civil Society 1; KII, Academic, 1). Centres continue to have schedules that do not adjust to labour realities, usually providing childcare for only four to six hours while the working day is eight hours (KII, Academic, 1;

KII Politician 1). The main limitations concerning the implementation of the care system are the fiscal restrictions and the multiple needs in terms of public policy (KII, Academic, 1), and it is still necessary to continue to raise awareness about the importance of care provision (KII Politician 1).

The available evidence is consistent with the interviews in mentioning insufficient coverage. Table 12 presents coverage estimates based on data considering the total number of children aged 0–3 years in 2022, as well as projections of the number of older people with severe dependency and the total number of caregivers in the country. This shows that, despite the existence of the SNIC, the coverage of the different target populations of the system remains insufficient (Villalobos Dintrans, 2025).

Furthermore, it has been pointed out that although these care centres are central to children's development and women's labour market participation, they have not had a significant impact on gender roles within the household. For example, as pointed out by Goyeneche et al. (2025), programme workers tend to reproduce gender stereotypes that associate care with female responsibility and consequently transfer the responsibility for care to mothers (or even aunts and grandmothers).

**Table 12** SNIC coverage estimates, 2024

Group	Total	Covered by SNIC (number)	Coverage %
Children 0–3 years	133,222	77,272	58
People with severe dependency	34,256	6,095	17.9
Caregivers	50,039	4,332	8.6

Source: Villalobos Dintrans (2025: 5).

Another significant component within the care system is the changes in leave of absence. Within the framework of the design of the SNIC in Uruguay, the modification of the current leave regime was implemented to guarantee the right to care for workers in the private sector. The new Law 19,161, therefore, extended maternity leave from 12 to 14 weeks, extended paternity leave (which can reach 13 days in the case of private sector workers), and established a half-hour care allowance for the first time in the country for private sector workers, which can be used by both fathers and mothers for up to six months of a child's life.

Several studies have pointed out that even though there has not been a dismantling of the care system, there have been significant setbacks in the last five years as the result of a lack of clear objectives, the weakening of the gender perspective and a lack of budget (Piñeiro and Cossani, 2024; Espino, 2024; Red Pro Cuidados, 2024; Neves, 2024).

According to the International Labour Organization's care policy investment simulator, an investment in universal child and long-term care services will generate 133,000 jobs by 2030 in Uruguay (OIT, n.d.). In addition, studies highlight the need to strengthen the supply of care to promote the development and well-being of the population (e.g. Piñeiro and Cossani, 2024; Goyeneche et al., 2025).

# 6 Future research agenda and policy recommendations

## 6.1 Gender-based violence

### Future research agenda

- Generate empirical evidence on the outcomes of public policies designed to address various forms of GBV (e.g. Law 19,080; Law 17,815; Law 19,538 and Law 19,643). The current lack of evidence complicates the understanding of their evolution and impact, making it challenging to develop informed policy decisions.
- In relation to sexual crimes, particularly the sexual exploitation of children and adolescents, improve the identification of cases, and the study of specific risk factors that are rooted in Uruguay's territories and their specific expressions there.
- Explore the apparent shift towards psychological violence and how perpetrators are learning manipulation and coercion techniques.
- Explore in greater depth digital violence and its expressions and impact on adolescents and young people.
- Generate empirical evidence that enables the identification of ways in which political violence is expressed in digital media and in scenarios of daily political activity.
- Produce information on the increasingly frequent expressions of GBV within the framework of criminal organisations linked to drug trafficking and the specific forms it takes, with a focus on micro-organized crime and its community-based expression.
- Improve registration systems in order to take into account the trajectory of women in the response system. Develop more information about the reasons for the mis/under-reporting of GBV in this system, their link with gender norms and the possible drivers of gender norm transformation.
- Explore the reasons behind the evidence from the 2019 OVBG prevalence survey that women feel distrust in the institutional response they receive in cases related to GBV (OVBG, 2020).

### Recommendations for government

- **Integrate action on GBV into the SNIC:** work alongside the Secretary of Care to design an intervention strategy that addresses GBV within the care system. This could include, for example, the development of a unified protocol for all SNIC personnel to ensure consistent handling of GBV cases.
- **Create economic empowerment initiatives:** partner with the Ministry of Labour and Social Security to create or enhance programmes that support the economic reintegration of women survivors of violence, offering training in technical skills and/or access to micro-credits.
- **Promote citizen participation:** organise community forums that empower women to share their experiences and recommendations for improving institutional responses to GBV. These discussions will provide valuable input for shaping effective public policies to combat violence.

- **Support mass awareness campaigns:** support the design and implementation of comprehensive media campaigns across traditional and digital platforms to raise awareness of GBV. It is critical to promote cultural change towards equality and encourage the reporting of violence.
- **Set up an inter-institutional support network:** establish and coordinate a collaborative network involving multiple ministries, civil society organisations and representatives from international agencies. This network will ensure a cohesive and comprehensive approach to preventing and addressing GBV.
- **Implement prevention programmes:** collaborate with MIDES to design and implement community workshops focused on healthy relationships and women's rights. These workshops can empower individuals and foster a culture of respect in some specific communities.
- **Run social media campaigns:** create targeted campaigns on platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and X that challenge myths and misconceptions surrounding GBV. Use survivor testimonials and empowering messages to engage and educate the public.
- **Promote safe spaces in schools:** partner with the Ministry of Education and Culture to establish 'safe spaces' within schools where students can openly discuss GBV. These spaces should provide access to counselling and resources to support affected students.
- **Establish inter-agency protocols:** collaborate with various ministries and agencies to develop clear and effective protocols for responding to GBV. This could be done at the public level but also in the private sector, for example by establishing an agreement with the Chamber of Industries of Uruguay (Cámara de Industrias del Uruguay).
- Consider GBV survivors as potential subjects of public policies that support their social reintegration processes: for example, initiatives for women's economic empowerment could be a strategic priority for the next Government.
- **Fully apply Law 19,580:** this includes providing sufficient budget to the agencies in charge of its implementation.
- **Develop specific actions that address the particular needs of different population sectors and experiences:** this includes adult women, girls under 18, women and girls who are victims of trafficking, and transgender and transsexual persons.
- **Conduct systematic GBV prevalence surveys:** this will enable informed public policy decisions. These surveys must be conducted frequently and sufficient and permanent financial and human resources must be dedicated to this task.
- **Generate common criteria for collecting data:** the production and dissemination of data on different types of GBV and femicides must be standardised.
- **Improve the registration and monitoring of GBV cases involving child and adolescent victims:** particularly early marriages and unions, abuse and sexual exploitation.
- **Increase the minimum age for marriage:** amend the legislation that regulates the minimum age for marriage to international standards.
- **Resume training programmes for police and security personnel:** staff must be trained to deal sensitively and effectively with cases of GBV. This training should include victim care protocols and a strong emphasis on prevention strategies. Consider the evidence from the implementation of previous training programmes, as well as new evidence on the topic in the country, for further adjustment.

## Recommendations for civil society

- **Monitor public policy implementation:** monitor and follow up on the implementation of the various components of the GBV combat policy in its entire scope.
- **Advocate for change:** this is essential to influence the legislative changes that are needed at the parliamentary level to comply with international standards and guarantee human rights.
- **Enable access to free legal advice:** facilitate partnerships with legal professionals and NGOs to provide free legal counsel to victims of GBV. This will help to inform women of their rights and their available avenues for seeking justice.

## 6.2 Women in politics

### Future research agenda

- Develop evidence on outputs of the government's training programme for women in politics.
- Develop evidence about the impact of the Political Party Financing Law on women's participation.
- Deepen understanding of the main factors shaping women's decisions to run for political office. Current literature focuses more on barriers to access rather than the factors that shape women's decisions on whether to run for office.
- Research online political violence, the profile of the perpetrators and their motivations for attacking women. It is still necessary to better understand the characteristics of the perpetrators of digital political violence.

- Develop evidence about the relationship between the public exposure of women in politics and the increase in intimate violence.

## Recommendations for government

- **Continue the Programme to Strengthen Women Political Leaders:** this is an important programme that should be continued, given that one of its objectives is to raise awareness among political actors, social actors and sectors of public opinion on substantive issues to ensure women's political autonomy.
- **Run public campaigns promoting women leaders:** launch campaigns to highlight effective female political leadership and challenge gender stereotypes.
- **Support awareness campaigns against political violence:** support local organisations' campaigns to educate the public on gender-based political violence.

## Recommendations for civil society

- **Take advocacy action with women in politics:** work with women in politics, including those who do not have a gender perspective and those who have resigned from their seats to allow a man to take their place.
- **Take advocacy action with men in politics:** work with men in politics, recognising that they include those who limit women's political representation.
- **Take advocacy actions related to political financing:** develop advocacy actions related to political party financing and the impact of incentives on the political parties in relation to the promotion of electoral lists led by women.

### 6.3 Women's economic autonomy and empowerment

#### Future research agenda

- Develop programmes with their own budget which aim to achieve the goal of women's full economic autonomy.
- Develop more information on the gender inequalities experienced by rural women and women in small towns.
- Improve both quantitative and qualitative studies to enhance understandings of discrimination and the occupational segregation of women across economic sectors. It would be beneficial, for example, to investigate whether dynamic sectors like technology exhibit similar patterns of labour segregation as those found in dominant sectors of the Uruguayan economy, such as agribusiness.
- Generate additional qualitative and quantitative evaluations of the different components of the care system, to understand their impact on gender relations.
- Update impact studies on gender clauses in wage councils, the care system and 'protected employment' policies, ensuring that a gender perspective is included.

#### Recommendations for government

- **Improve parental leave policies:** establish joint working between MIDES and the Ministry of Labour and Social Security to develop co-responsible parental leave policies as well as other care agreements in collective bargaining that promote the equitable sharing of care responsibilities between parents.

- **Promote work-life balance:** support the development of policies that effectively integrate paid work and family responsibilities. The Uruguayan Government could draw on successful examples from the UK and other relevant contexts to inform best practices.
- **Implement awareness campaigns:** advocate for initiatives that educate the public on the significance of sharing care responsibilities, emphasising its positive impact on women's economic independence and overall family well-being.

#### Recommendations for civil society

- **Advocate for gender equality in academic and social networks:** participate in advocacy activities to promote policies that favour gender equality in caregiving. Foster broad partnerships between academic institutions, caregiving worker organisations, trade unions and related entities to discuss, raise awareness of and influence the importance of sharing caregiving responsibilities.
- **Participate in the development and monitoring of caregiving policies and ensure accountability:** continue to strengthen the role of civil society in the development and monitoring of caregiving policies. Allocate resources for the independent evaluation of programmes and interventions, and advocate for their reformulation or enhancement as necessary.
- **Support women entrepreneurs:** provide and facilitate targeted training and resources for women who aspire to become entrepreneurs, focusing on skills development, access to funding and networking opportunities that consider their caregiving responsibilities.

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# Annexes

## Annex 1 List of participating organisations

KII number	Topic(s)
Civil society 1	WEE
Academic 1	WEE
Politician 1	WEE/ Women in politics
Academic 2	Women in politics
Politician 2	Women in politics
Politician 3	Women in politics
Academic 3	GBV
Civil society 2	GBV
Civil Society 3	GBV
UN agency 1	GBV
UN agency 2	WEE/ Women in politics/ GBV

## Annex 2 Changes in political representation over time

This annex answers the research question ‘What are the levels of women’s political representation at national, local and party levels, and how have they changed over the last 50 years?’

### Women at the national level: executive, legislative and judicial power

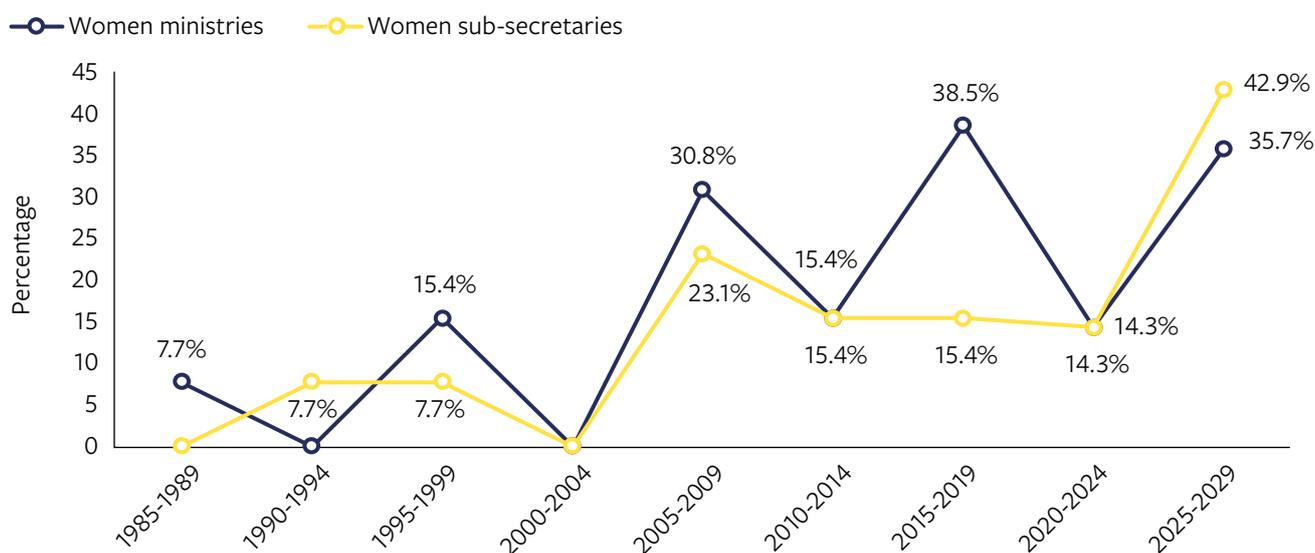
#### The Executive Branch

In the Executive Branch, women’s access to political decision-making positions has seen gradual improvement over the past 50 years, albeit with some fluctuations. Despite conversations around gender parity in the

most recent elections, women occupy 35.7% of ministerial positions and 42.9% of sub-secretarial roles in the new Government. This is notably lower than in countries like Chile, where the proportion of women in ministries is 58%, and Costa Rica, where the proportion is 50%. As such, Uruguay’s representation of women in ministerial roles remains relatively low in comparison to these neighbouring nations (CEPALSTAT, 2024).

Figure A1 shows the percentage of women ministers and sub-secretaries during the tenure of governments in recent decades. The proportion of women ministers has increased, although not as much as the proportion of women sub-secretaries.

**Figure A1** Women ministers and sub-secretaries in each government period, 1985–2025 (%)



Sources: Johnson (2016) and the Corte ELECTORAL (2025: [www.gub.uy/corte-electoral](http://www.gub.uy/corte-electoral)).

### The Legislative Branch

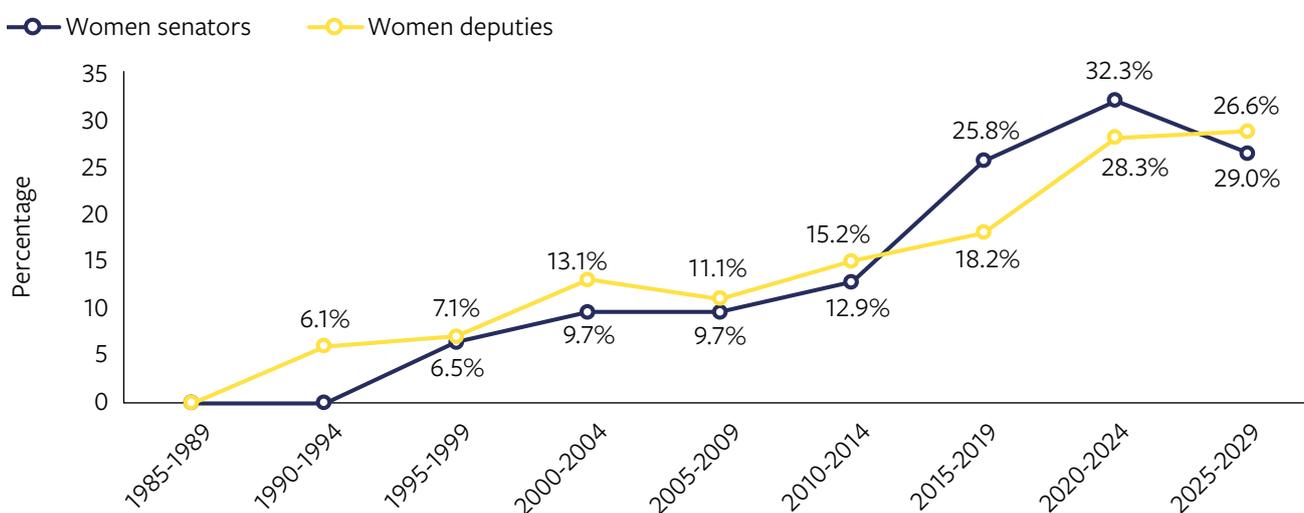
In the Legislative Branch, women’s access to the House of Representatives or Senate continues to be reflect negatively on the Uruguayan State (see Figure A2). Since the approval of the Quota Law in 2009, the percentage of women in each

chamber has increased; however, it continues to be at low levels, reaching only 26.6% of senators and 29% of deputies.

### The Judicial Branch

Finally, in the Judicial Branch, the presence of women in the Supreme Court of Justice and Appeals Court has increased in the last 34 years, reaching 60% (see Table A1).

**Figure A2** Women senators and deputies in each government period, 1985–2025 (%)



Sources: Johnson (2016) and the Corte Electoral (2025: [www.gub.uy/corte-electoral](http://www.gub.uy/corte-electoral)).

**Table A1** Women in the Supreme Court of Justice and Appeals Court, 1990–2024 (%)

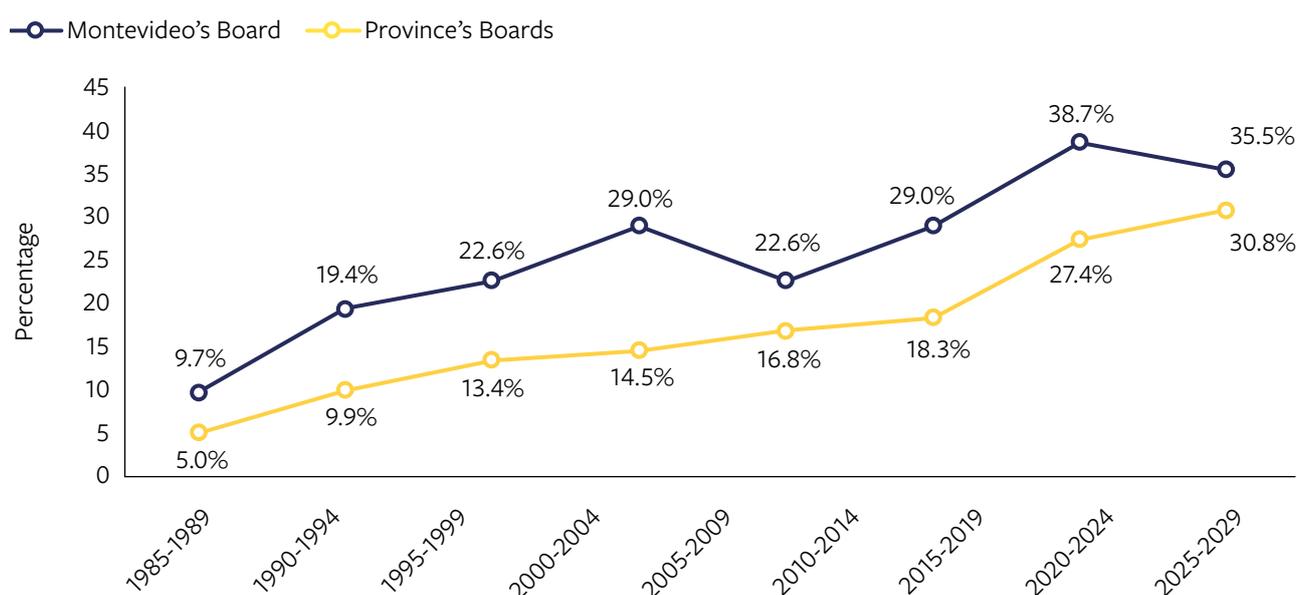
	1990	1998	2010	2016	2024
Supreme Court of Justice	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	20.0%	60.0%
Appeals Court	16.3%	34.1%	52.9%	52.9%	60.0%

Sources: Johnson (2016) and Poder Judicial (2018).

## Women in subnational and local levels of government

Uruguay has three levels of government: national, subnational (or province) and local. At the subnational level, Uruguay saw its first female

mayors elected in 2010, with three women appointed across 19 provinces. Over the past 40 years, the representation of women in provincial and Montevideo assemblies has gradually increased, reaching 30.8% on the provincial boards and 35.5% in Montevideo's assembly (see Figure A3).

**Figure A3** Women in provincial and Montevideo assemblies, 1985–2024 (%)

Sources: Johnson (2016) and MIDES (2020: [www.gub.uy/ministerio-desarrollo-social/indicador/porcentaje-representantes-femeninas-juntas-departamentales-segun-departamento-total-pais](http://www.gub.uy/ministerio-desarrollo-social/indicador/porcentaje-representantes-femeninas-juntas-departamentales-segun-departamento-total-pais)).

A study by the Presidency, however, revealed that, despite the implementation of the Quota Law, the percentage of women in second and third-level government positions has actually decreased. Specifically, the representation of women at the subnational (province) level of government

(mayors) dropped from 15% to 5%, while it fell from 23% to 18.7% in local government in the 2019 elections (there will be new subnational and local elections in 2025) (Johnson, 2016).

## Women in political parties

Parties in Uruguay are composed of executive branches (*directorios*) and national assemblies (*convenciones nacionales*), the legislative branches of the parties. During the primary elections for each period, citizens define national candidates who will run for the presidency as well as members of the executive and legislative branches of each party. In the case of Frente Amplio, Mesa Política's (Frente Amplio's executive branch) members are designed by

political sector, which means that a quota does not apply (Johnson, 2016). At the same time, members can change at any time, so there are no data for 2024. In 2015, the percentage of women in Frente Amplio's Mesa Política was 13.3%. In 2015, the percentage of women in the Partido Nacional Executive Branch was 35.3%, while in 2024 this decreased to 26.7%. In the case of Partido Colorado Executive Branch, the percentage of women was 33.3% in 2015, rising to 35.3% in 2024.

**Table A2** Women in parties' executive branches, 2015–2024

	Party	Total number of members	Number of women	% Women
2015	Frente Amplio	15	2	13.3%
	Partido Colorado	17	5	29.4%
	Partido Nacional	15	6	40%
2024	Frente Amplio	15	s/d	Data not available
	Partido Colorado	17	6	35.3%
	Partido Nacional	15	4	26.7%

Sources: Johnson (2016) and data from Partido Nacional (2025: [www.partidonacional.org.uy/](http://www.partidonacional.org.uy/)), Partido Colorado (2025: <https://partidocolorado.uy/>), Frente Amplio (2025: [www.frenteamplio.uy/](http://www.frenteamplio.uy/)).

The national assemblies were created as part of the 1996 reform, and started working in 1999. According to Johnson (2016), the presence of women in these assemblies has been higher than in the executive branches or other elective positions.

Table A3 shows an increase in the number of women in the national assemblies, reaching 35.8% for Frente Amplio, 32.6% for Partido Colorado and 29.2% for Partido Nacional (latest available data: 2014)

**Table A3** Women in parties' national assemblies, 1999–2014 (%)

	1999	2004	2009	2014
Frente Amplio	23.2%	22.2%	34.4%	35.8%
Partido Colorado	15.6%	15.0%	29.8%	32.6%
Partido Nacional	8.6%	12.0%	26.4%	29.2%

Source: Johnson (2016).

### **Annex 3 Regulatory frameworks consulted**

Ley 18,561 sobre Acoso Sexual en el Ámbito Laboral y en la Relación Docente-Alumno, y su Reglamentación por Decreto 256/017 (Sexual Harassment in the Workplace and in the Teacher-Student Relationship)

Ley 19,293 que entró en vigor en 2017 introduce el nuevo sistema procesal penal acusatorio (new accusatory criminal procedural system.).

Ley 19,538 sobre Actos de Discriminación y Femicidio modifica los artículos 311 y 312 del Código Penal, tipificando el 'femicidio' como agravante del homicidio. (classifies 'femicide' as an aggravating factor in homicide).

Ley 19,580 de Violencia hacia las Mujeres basada en Género (Comprehensive Law on Gender-Based Violence against Women) y creación del Observatorio de Igualdad de Género (Gender Equality Observatory)

Ley 19,643 de Prevención y Combate de la Trata de Personas (Prevention and Combat of Human Trafficking)

Ley 19,747 de Protección a Niños, Niñas y Adolescentes contra la Violencia, modifica el Capítulo XI del Código de la Niñez y la Adolescencia (Protection of Children and Adolescents against Violence)

Ley 19,846 de Igualdad de Género entre Varones y Mujeres. (Gender Equality between Men and Women)

Ley 19,889 de Registro Nacional de Violadores y Abusadores Sexuales (National Registry of Rapists and Sexual Abusers)



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