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8.4.1. Legislation and representation

As reported in the 2024 EUAA COI report Bangladesh Country Focus, Bangladesh is party to several international treaties and agreements related to the rights of women and girls, including the Convention of the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW),977 and its Optional Protocol.978 When Bangladesh adopted the CEDAW, it however made reservations against article 2 and parts of article 16, which inter alia states that women should have 'the same rights and responsibilities during marriage and at its dissolution' as this was considered to be against sharia.979 Women's rights are enshrined in the constitution, which stipulates that '[w]omen shall have equal rights with men in all spheres of the State and of public life'.980 The constitution further guarantees 50 seats for women in parliament.981 Personal laws based on religious beliefs however impact women's possibilities to divorce982 and inherit.983 Special legislation also addresses specific forms of violence against women, including domestic violence, dowry-related violence, and acid violence.984

Under the previous government, in 2023 and 2024, Bangladesh ranked highest among South Asian countries in the Global Gender Gap Index,985 meaning that the country had the best gender parity score in the region.986 Nevertheless, women were underrepresented in political and public life.987 Bangladesh, however, dropped 40 positions internationally in the 2024 index (published before the fall of the former government), as economic gender parity had 'deteriorated significantly' over the past five years. In 2024, women's representation in senior leadership roles also decreased, resulting in a 92 %-point gap to bridge. Additionally, in 2024, Bangladeshi women encompassed one-fifth of professional and technical workers, resulting in a 25.4 % parity score. In 2024, there was only one female minister for every nine male ministers, and women occupied just one fourth of parliamentary seats.988

While women played a significant role in the mass uprising of July-August 2024, being at the forefront of the movement, as stated by Yunus in March 2025,989 their public visibility decreased as male students took 'center-stage' and 'out-jostled' them in competitions for leadership positions, as reported by the Fuller Project.990 Women have not been 'adequately represented in the cabinet of the interim government', as reported by Human Rights Watch.991 Formed in August 2024, the 16-person interim government includes four women and 12 men.992

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