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8.4.2. Societal attitudes

As reported in the 2024 EUAA COI report Bangladesh Country Focus, sources described Bangladesh as a 'patriarchal society'993 with norms 'undervaluing women's rights and capabilities', dictating men as the 'primary decision makers and bread winners', and women as having subordinate roles.994 Sources further described a social stigma surrounding sexual abuse and gender-based violence.995

In Bangladesh, misogyny has become 'more visible', particularly after 5 August 2024 according to Dr Fauzia Moslem, President of Bangladesh Mahila Parishad, a non-governmental organisation, committed to women's rights in Bangladesh.996 Women have been harassed and attacked by men in public, including for not wearing a veil997 smoking,998 or wearing 'inappropriate clothing'999 under the guise of 'moral policing.'1000

Meanwhile, Islamic conservative forces have gained ground after the fall of the former government.1001 In May 2025, the group Hefazat-e-Islam opposed the government's proposals that include equal inheritance rights for women, a ban on polygamy, and recognition of sex workers as labourers. In support of Hefazat-e-Islam, 20 000 people protested against the proposal.1002

Female-headed households have increased during the last decade, reaching 17.4 % of the population according to the latest national census from 2022.1003 Households run by women have predominantly been among the poorest households.1004 Based on the findings from the 2022 census, 5.6 % of female-headed households lived below the extreme poverty line, while 14.1 % of female-headed households lived below the median poverty line.1005 The absence of male heads reportedly leads to increased vulnerability for women and their dependants, since women in general have a limited decision-making authority and deteriorated position in society. Some rural women heads of household were reportedly harassed and abused when engaging in agricultural activities, which is perceived as a 'male task.'1006 UN Women reported on the unrest following the fall of the former government disrupting access to essential services, such as sexual and reproductive health, general healthcare, water, sanitation, and hygiene services, disproportionally impacting inter alia female-headed households.1007

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