



GENDER EQUITY IN MOLDOVA: TRENDS, DRIVERS OF CHANGE AND EMERGING CHALLENGES

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.36004/nier.es.2025.1-10>

JEL Classification: I38, D63, F55

UDC: 316.346.2(478)

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Received 28 February 2025

Accepted for publication 01 May 2025

SUMMARY

This article explores recent developments and key factors influencing gender equity in Moldova from 2015 to 2024, set against a backdrop of institutional reforms, international pressures, and internal cultural resistance. Based on data analysis from the International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES), conducted in 2015 and 2024, the author offers a comprehensive overview of the dynamics of gender relations, starting with the theoretical distinction between equality and equity and employing an intersectional sociological approach. Using a multi-theoretical framework—comprising gender role theory, family decision-making theory, social change theory, and institutional theory—the article highlights substantial progress in strengthening the legislative framework, promoting female leadership, and enhancing the flexibility of family policies in Moldova. The analysis examines the interconnectedness of cultural norms, institutional processes, and civil society initiatives, exploring both the advances made and the ongoing systemic resistances. The findings show positive progress in gender equity but also reveal ongoing structural challenges: deeply rooted gender stereotypes and economic inequalities. They also offer opportunities for developing evidence-based programmes on gender equality and guidelines for designing public awareness campaigns.

Keywords: *gender equity, gender equality, gender roles, family decision-making, social change, public policies*

INTRODUCTION

The issue of gender equity has, in recent decades, become a central normative and analytical standard in assessing democratic progress, sustainable development, and social cohesion. In a context marked by significant political, economic, and cultural changes, Moldova provides a fertile ground for a multidimensional analysis of how gender relations are built, negotiated, and transformed. Although public discourse and the legal framework on equal opportunities between women and men have experienced notable growth, social reality remains burdened by structural inequalities, enduring

traditionalist norms, and subtle symbolic barriers.

Within this dynamic, gender equity – understood not merely as the equal distribution of resources and opportunities, but as the differentiated recognition and valorisation of each individual's needs and aspirations – emerges as a valuable analytical framework for understanding social transformations. The conceptual distinction between “equality” and “equity” is essential to grasp the subtle dimensions of social inclusion processes, the redistribution of power, and the reconfiguration of gender roles in Moldova.

CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The analysis of gender equity requires a clear conceptual framework and a strong theoretical basis. In the scientific literature, gender equity is described as a normative principle that involves differentiated treatment to achieve a just outcome, in contrast to gender equality, which calls for identical treatment for all individuals, regardless of sex (UNICEF, 2017). From a sociological perspective, gender equity pertains to the fair distribution of resources, responsibilities, and opportunities, considering the historical inequalities, power imbalances, and institutional and cultural barriers that differentially impact women, men, and individuals with diverse gender identities.

To understand the trends and drivers of change in the field of gender equity, this article employs an interdisciplinary approach that combines gender role theory (Eagly & Wood, 2016), family decision-making theory (Paolucci, Hall, & Axinn, 1977), social change theory (Durkheim, 1956; Paoletti, 2022), and institutional theory (Scott, 2008).

Gender role theory helps analyse how social norms and expectations about gender shape behaviours and responsibilities within family and modern society. According to this theory, gender roles are created through socialisation, influencing the actions of men and women in ways that maintain and strengthen the division of labour.

Family decision-making theory offers a thorough, ecosystemic analysis of how men and women negotiate each partner's involvement in household activities, based on factors such as education, occupation, and income. This theory provides the conceptual tools needed to interpret how both daily and strategic family decisions are systematically influenced by existing policies as well as power dynamics within the couple.

Social change theory, as applied by the renowned French sociologist Émile Durkheim in both sociological and pedagogical works, posits that education received within the family is a key mechanism of socialisation and social transformation. This aspect is beneficial for understanding normative and institutional changes in contemporary societies.

Institutional theory identifies three pillars – regulative, normative, and cultural-cognitive – which vary in the type of constraint they impose and the legitimacy mechanisms they activate. The regulative pillar, comprising laws, regulations, and public policies, functions through coercion; the normative pillar, involving values, moral standards, and socially prescribed expectations, operates via moral pressure and social obligation; while the cultural-cognitive pillar, made up of mental interpretative frameworks that influence perceptions and actions, functions through shared understanding and cultural internalisation.

DATA AND METHODS

The theoretical perspectives outlined above are combined with data from the Gender Equitable Men (GEM) Scale (Nanda, 2011, pp. 13–16), developed by the Population Council and Promundo, and widely utilised in IMAGES surveys (Promundo-US, 2021; Equimundo, 2022). The GEM Scale is a crucial methodological tool for measuring attitudes towards gender norms in intimate relationships, reproductive health, gender-based violence, family responsibilities, and household decision-making. This instrument allowed the assessment of changes in gender attitudes in Moldova during the period 2015–2024, as well as the extent to which these attitudes influence actual family decision-making.

To examine trends in gender equity and the factors driving change in Moldova, this article relies on data from the IMAGES-2 survey (Cheianu-Andrei, et. al., 2024), which was conducted using internationally applied complex methodology. It is important to highlight that data interpretation involved a comparative analysis of the changes in men's and women's knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours between 2015 and 2024, with the IMAGES-1 survey (Cheianu-Andrei, et. al., 2015) serving as a reference point. The following hypotheses were proposed:

- H1: Equitable attitudes increased from 2015 to 2024, with larger gains among younger, urban, and higher-educated respondents.*
- H2: Women report consistently more equitable perceptions than men across domains.*
- H3: Exposure to enabling policies correlates with more egalitarian household decision-making.*

In accordance with the international methodology, the IMAGES survey includes two separate samples – one for men and one for women. In Moldova, IMAGES-2 involved a primary sample of 1,014 men (1,515 in IMAGES-1) and a secondary sample of 515 women (503 in IMAGES-1), allowing for the analysis of differences in perceptions, attitudes, and practices. Both samples were probabilistic and stratified. They are nationally representative, with a margin of error of $\pm 3.1\%$ for men ($\pm 2.5\%$ in IMAGES-1) and $\pm 4.3\%$ for women (the same for IMAGES-1), at a 95% confidence level. Minor updates and additions were made in questionnaires in 2024. Quantitative data were analysed using the SPSS statistical software. However, the following limitations should be acknowledged: (i) the IMAGES-1 data were collected using the pen-and-paper interviewing (PAPI) method, and those from IMAGES-2 – computer-assisted personal interviewing (CAPI); (ii) attitude items are sensitive to social desirability bias, especially on violence and caregiving, potentially inflating pro-equity responses.

The data obtained from the IMAGES-2 survey were complemented by findings from the qualitative study Trends, Good Practices, and High-Impact Initiatives in the Context of IMAGES (Cheianu-Andrei & Zaporozan-Pîrgari, 2024), which gathered the views of 17 experts working in public institutions, international organisations, and non-governmental organisations in the field of gender equality. Together, these studies provided a comprehensive approach and a rigorous, nuanced analysis aimed at understanding the trends, drivers of change, and existing challenges, thus enabling the formulation of policy and strategy recommendations grounded in clear empirical evidence.

MAIN RESULTS

TRENDS IN GENDER EQUITY AT THE NORMATIVE AND INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL

Between 2015 and 2024, Moldova has experienced a series of significant changes in gender equality, evident both in laws and institutions as well as in social perceptions and daily practices. However, these changes have not been consistent, with some areas making progress, others stagnating, and some even regressing.

The trend analysis shows a complex shift, including clear progress in economic and political participation, alongside the ongoing resilience of patriarchal norms and gender stereotypes. The Global Gender Gap Report

(2025) confirms Moldova's advancements in gender equality. Between 2015 and 2025, the country improved its global position from 26th to 7th out of 148 countries, becoming the leading nation in the Eurasia and Central Asia region, with a score of 0.813 out of 1 (Table 1). The Global Gender Gap Index assesses four main areas: economic participation and opportunity, education, health, and political empowerment. Moldova performs best in economic participation and opportunity, followed by health and political empowerment, while education remains the most challenging area.

Table 1.*Global Gender Gap Index in Moldova, 2015–2025*

	2015	2024	2025
Economic participation and opportunity	18	5	4
Education	50	37	44
Health	42	40	26
Political empowerment	58	38	23
Overall Index	26	13	7

Source: compiled by the author based on data from the Global Gender Gap Reports (<https://www.weforum.org/publications>)

A consolidation of Moldova's legislative and normative framework is evident. The adoption of the Programme for the Promotion and Assurance of Equality between Women and Men (2023–2027) (Government Decision No. 203, 2023), along with the gradual transposition of European Union directives related to gender equality, demonstrates a strong political commitment to align with European standards. In this context, analytical notes were prepared to identify the requirements for transposing: (i) Directive 2004/113/EC of 13 December 2004, which implements the principle of equal treatment between men and women in access to and supply of goods and services; (ii) Directive 2010/41/EU of 7 July 2010 on applying the principle of equal treatment between men and women engaged in self-employment; (iii) Directive 79/7/EEC of 19 December 1978 on the progressive implementation of equal treatment in social security matters; and (iv) Directive 2022/2381/EU of 23 November 2022 aimed at improving gender balance among directors of listed companies and related measures.

Another notable progress has been made in policies aimed at reconciling family and work life. The Government of Moldova, together with Parliament, has launched several public policies to broaden options for families with children and support them in achieving a work-life balance: (i) the National Programme for Child

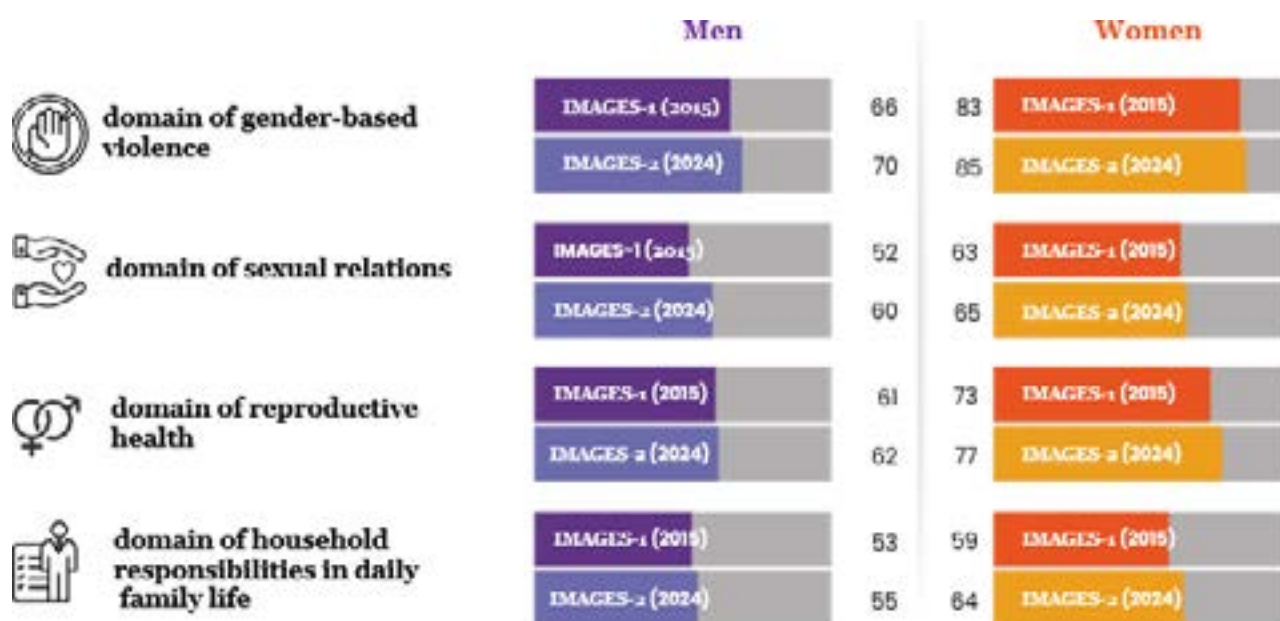
Protection 2022–2026, which focuses on strengthening parents and families' capacity for child-rearing and care by providing access to accredited parenting education services and programmes (Government Decision No. 347, 2022); (ii) the National Programme for Expanding Alternative Childcare Services 2023–2027, which seeks to nearly double the number of children in early education to allow working parents – especially women – to re-enter the labour market actively, considering that the employment rate of women aged 20–44 who care for children is relatively low (Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, 2023); (iii) amendments to the legal framework requiring employers to provide care services for employees' children under the age of three (Parliament Law No. 46, 2022); (iv) the reform of parental leave and the extension of paternity leave (Government Decision No. 572/2023), among others. These measures symbolically reconfigure parental roles and represent a vital step towards redistributing family responsibilities.

In public and institutional discourse, there is a noticeable rise in the use of gender-sensitive language and increased visibility of initiatives aimed at changing behaviours. The GirlsGoIT initiative, Fathers' Clubs, and various awareness campaigns help shape new representations and normalise the presence of women in traditionally male-dominated fields – and vice versa.

PERCEPTION OF GENDER EQUITY

The IMAGES-2 data act as an indicator of how the public perceives and cognitively and normatively affirms the concept of equity across four areas: gender-based violence, reproductive health, sexual relations, and

household responsibilities. In all these sectors, women exhibit higher rates of correct perception than men, indicating an asymmetric awareness process linked to varied life experiences and social positions (Figure 1).

Figure 1.*GEM Perception and Acceptance Rates by Gender, 2015 and 2024, %*

100 represents full understanding and acceptance of gender equity

Source: IMAGES-2, p. 63

The strongest convergence between norms and perceptions is seen in the area of gender-based violence, where 85% of women and 70% of men correctly identify the issue. This aligns with social change driven by education and public debate – key factors in Durkheimian socialisation and norm change – and with recent observations on the pace of cultural shifts. However, the continued existence of tolerant attitudes towards violence – 13% of women and 21% of men believe women should accept violence to keep the family united; 23% of men and 12% of women say “there are situations when a woman should be beaten” (Cheianu-Andrei, et. al., 2024, p. 57) – shows the resilience of informal rules that clash with current legal and moral standards. In terms of institutional theory, the cultural-cognitive pillar still produces resistance to the regulatory pillar, even when public policies are clear. The social profiles linked with these beliefs – men with lower-secondary education and low income; women aged 50–59 with low income – imply that socio-economic stratification influences both the internalisation of norms and openness to pro-equity messages.

In the field of reproductive health and associated rights, the difference in accurate perception (77% women, 62% men) can be explained through the lens of gender role theory. Traditional socialization has assigned women responsibilities related to reproduction and caregiving, and men the role of providers; this division of domestic labor influences both access to information and cognitive interest in reproductive rights. At the same time, family decision-making theory helps interpret the tension between individual autonomy and couple

practices: where patriarchal norms legitimize male monopolies over women’s bodies, correct perceptions of reproductive equity decrease. The fact that urban men, younger and with higher education levels, tend to disagree more with hierarchical statements suggests the emergence of more cooperative decision-making models, where negotiation and reciprocity replace one-way authority.

Perceptions of fairness in sexual relations are more aligned between genders (65% women, 60% men), which may indicate a normative field in flux, where egalitarian values are introduced through formal education, mass media, and social networks but still coexist with expectations of “appropriate” roles for each gender. From a Durkheimian perspective, this reflects a partly “anomic” state characteristic of periods of rapid transformation in collective rules: old codes of conduct no longer hold a moral monopoly, while new norms are not yet fully adopted. At the same time, the institutional logic of family and educational spheres – including curricula, health services, and religious discourses – shapes “windows of opportunity” or, alternatively, symbolic “vetoes” over new norms.

The lowest level of correct perception is seen in household responsibilities (64% women, 55% men), highlighting the ongoing influence of the traditional domestic labour order. Gender role theory attributes this to the persistent social expectations linking caregiving with women and productive activities with men, which have cumulative effects on available time, careers, and income. According to family decision-making theory, task sharing is negotiated based on resources and

constraints—such as education, income, occupational status, and access to public care services—but these negotiations occur within a normative framework that often upholds the status quo. Therefore, even when public policies promote work–life balance, the cultural-cognitive pillar (norms, gender stereotypes) restricts their practical realisation.

Another sign of the persistence of a hierarchical normative order is the relatively high agreement among men that they should have the final say in family decisions (64%, compared to 43% of women). This pattern suggests that decision-making authority in families often remains with men, and its legitimacy is more rooted in tradition than in the couple's affective–rational contract. The observation that acceptance of this hierarchy decreases among young urban men with higher education and income points to an intergenerational shift, which can be seen as an effect of exposure to alternative cultures and the accumulation of symbolic and material resources that support egalitarian partnerships (Cheianu-Andrei, et. al., 2024, p. 52).

Taken together, the IMAGES-2 data describe an ecology of social change where education, socio-economic status, and residential environment interact with public policies and cultural norms. In Durkheimian terms, the internalisation of new rules happens through socialising institutions – family, school, media – and the speed and depth of internalisation depend on the coherence of normative messages and the ability of institutions to provide positive sanctioning mechanisms for fair behaviours. In institutional terms, the alignment of the regulatory, normative, and cultural-cognitive pillars remains incomplete: legislation and strategies are in place, but traditional cultural stereotypes still provide justifications for maintaining an unequal distribution of power and labour within the family.

The practical value of IMAGES-2 data is twofold. Firstly, it shows that public policies should focus on social groups

where normative resistance is strongest – men with low education and income, older women facing economic vulnerabilities – through a combination of educational initiatives, material support, and care infrastructure. Secondly, daily “life scripts” need to be transformed: relational and sexual education programmes centred on reciprocity and consent; measures that facilitate the redistribution of domestic labour (such as balanced parental leave effectively utilised by fathers, accessible care services for children and dependents); strengthening women's reproductive autonomy via information and user-friendly services; and public campaigns that explicitly challenge the legitimacy of violence. From the perspective of family decision-making theory, such efforts expand couples' “negotiation space,” while, according to gender role theory, they modify social expectations of what is “appropriate” for women and men. Ultimately, as per institutional theory, only the alignment of law, professional standards, and cultural representations can turn correct perceptions into consistent everyday practices.

Moldova is currently experiencing increased awareness of gender inequalities, particularly regarding violence; however, issues such as the distribution of household responsibilities and decision-making within families remain crucial points. The observed trends—differences across genders, generations, education levels, and socio-economic statuses—confirm that gender equity is not merely a result of policies but an emergent property of the social system, reliant on the interaction of institutions, norms, and resources. Basing interventions on gender role theory, family decision-making theory, social change theory, and institutional theory offers not only a clear explanatory framework but also a plan for action: the simultaneous transformation of rules (laws), expectations (norms), and everyday practices. Only through this integrated approach can the proper understanding of gender equity—currently more common among women—become widespread knowledge and a routine part of social life.

DRIVERS OF CHANGE IN THE FIELD OF GENDER EQUITY

Transformations in the field of gender equity must be understood within the broader framework of structural and cultural processes that have reshaped power relations, social norms, and institutional architecture. In Moldova, change has resulted from a complex interaction between external pressures, internal mobilization, and emerging dynamics.

From an institutional theory perspective, the process of European integration has served as a catalyst for change, promoting the adoption and harmonisation of the legislative framework with international standards, including through the ratification of major conventions on women's rights and combating gender-based violence. The regulatory pillar evolved from commitments to international conventions (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination

against Women, 1979; Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, 2011), as well as the implementation of EU directives on equal treatment, which exerted compliance pressures on administrative bodies and political actors, prompting reforms in key areas such as protection against violence, non-discrimination, and work-life balance. However, the effectiveness of these measures was influenced by the cultural-cognitive pillar: traditional norms and cultural resilience shaped the pace and scope of change.

The role of civil society actors can also be examined from the perspective of institutional theory and social change theory. Civil society organisations have served not only as providers of services but also as agents of symbolic transformation, gradually shaping collective

norms through public campaigns, professional training, and the promotion of alternative models of masculinity and female leadership. In Durkheimian terms, these initiatives have functioned as mechanisms of secondary socialisation, establishing educational contexts that reshape community values and norms.

The period 2019–2024 was characterised by increased institutional openness to gender equality issues, partly due to the involvement of women in decision-making roles. In family decision-making theory, this is significant because macro-level policies influence how power and responsibilities are distributed within family microstructures. For example, extending paternity leave or making care services more adaptable alters the parameters of couple negotiation, providing women and men with new resources to share reproductive and productive work.

Changes in public discourse were facilitated by the rise of independent media and online platforms, which enabled the dissemination and validation of egalitarian narratives. Social campaigns such as “16 Days of Activism against Violence,” “Different Models, Different Discourses,” („Altfel de modele, altfel de discursuri”), and storytelling initiatives featuring women in leadership or community roles have transformed the public conversation, previously dominated by patriarchal and stigmatising narratives. From a gender role theory perspective, these campaigns gradually diminish traditional expectations that assign men dominant roles in the public sphere and women caring-focused roles. Alternative models presented in the media help reshape social perceptions.

Another driver of change has been younger generations socialised in diverse educational and cultural contexts, including through migration. Transnational families and the transfer of behavioural models from the diaspora have produced hybrid forms of gender relations, in which the coexistence of traditional and egalitarian values creates both tensions and opportunities for

transformation. From an institutional perspective, this phenomenon can be seen as an informal import of norms; from a social change theory perspective, it is an example of socialisation reshaped by global mobility.

The formal education system and non-formal programmes have gradually incorporated the gender dimension into curricula, both through optional subjects such as “Education for Health” and “Harmonious Family Relations,” and through community initiatives like Fathers’ Clubs and GirlsGoIT. From a Durkheimian perspective, schools serve as institutional frameworks for primary and secondary socialisation, and the inclusion of egalitarian content helps internalise norms that, over time, can transform societal gender role structures. Simultaneously, these educational interventions can be understood through family decision-making theory, as they prepare future adults to negotiate domestic responsibilities and spousal decisions more equitably.

Overall, changes in gender equity in Moldova result from a dynamic interplay of institutional pillars, international pressures, internal mobilizations, and cultural shifts. Institutional theory explains the tensions between legislation and informal norms; social change theory highlights the role of education and socialisation in transforming values; gender role theory accounts for the persistence and erosion of traditional divisions of labour; and family decision-making theory demonstrates how public policies and shifts in mindset lead to concrete practices in daily life.

However, although these processes have achieved visible progress – particularly in areas like combating violence and increasing women’s participation in public life – their nature remains delicate. The sustainability of change relies on the capacity of institutions to integrate gender equity principles across sectors, the resilience of civil society, and the strengthening of egalitarian cultural values among new generations.

EMERGING CHALLENGES

The analysis of IMAGES-2 data reveals a significant gap between formal norms, institutionalised through legislation and public policies, and informal norms, maintained in everyday life. This gap, common in many transitional contexts, can weaken the sustainability and irreversibility of reforms in gender equality. Although awareness of the concept of gender equity has grown theoretically, its practical application remains fragmented and inconsistent. From an institutional theory perspective, this tension can be explained by the conflict between the regulatory pillar, which enforces egalitarian norms via law, and the cultural-cognitive pillar, which sustains traditional gender patterns. Data show that 27% of men and 29% of women believe that granting rights to women results in losses for men, and 37% of men and 38% of women think that women’s rights gains diminish men’s rights. These perceptions

reflect a competitive view of rights, typical of societies where the redistribution of power is seen as a zero-sum game, as if resources, power, or opportunities were fixed. Such views overlook the reality that protecting one group’s rights can produce social and economic benefits for society as a whole.

In the labour market context, stereotypes are even more evident: 53% of men and 59% of women believe that women’s employment “takes” jobs away from men (Table 2). From the perspective of gender role theory, such perceptions arise from the traditional division of labour, whereby men hold a monopoly over the productive sphere, while women are associated exclusively with the reproductive and domestic spheres. The persistence of these beliefs is reinforced by differentiated socialisation, through which career skills and expectations are distributed unequally from early childhood.

Table 2.*Perceptions of gender equality, %*

	Men		Women	
	Total agreement	Partial agreement	Total agreement	Partial agreement
Granting rights to women means that men lose	10	17	12	17
When women gain rights, they take away men's rights	15	22	17	21
When women are employed, they take some jobs away from men	22	31	30	29

Source: IMAGES-2, p. 47 (Differences up to 100% represent responses: partial disagreement, total disagreement).

Data on family responsibilities confirm that traditional norms regarding gender roles remain widely shared. 86% of men and 71% of women agree that “for a woman, the most important thing is to take care of the home and cook for the family.” Moreover, 66% of men and 61% of women believe that changing nappies, washing, and feeding children are exclusively the mother’s responsibility. These findings can be interpreted through family decision-making theory, which emphasises that the distribution of duties results from negotiations influenced by education, income, stereotypes, and traditions. In a cultural framework that legitimises male authority, such negotiations are structurally unbalanced.

Another sign of ongoing asymmetry is the high proportion of men – 64% – who believe they should have the final say in family decisions, compared to 43% of women who agree with this idea (Table 3). From a Durkheimian perspective, this highlights the resistance to change of rules internalised through primary socialisation, transmitted via the family and reinforced by the community. According to social change theory, changing these rules involves not only targeted interventions but also a sustained process of reconfiguring socialisation mechanisms – particularly in formal and non-formal education – to establish a new shared value base.

Table 3.*Attitudes toward family responsibilities, %*

	Men		Women	
	Total agreement	Partial agreement	Total agreement	Partial agreement
For a woman, the most important thing is to take care of the home and cook for her family	56	30	41	30
Changing diapers, washing, and feeding children are the mother’s responsibility	34	32	30	31
The man should have the final say in family decision-making	38	26	18	25

Source: IMAGES-2, p. 52 (Differences up to 100% represent responses: partial disagreement, total disagreement).

The current analysis shows that, on one hand, a strong formal structure promotes gender equality; on the other hand, informal norms and deeply ingrained stereotypes still influence individual behaviours and choices. Without alignment among the three pillars of institutional theory – regulatory, normative, and cultural-cognitive –

reforms risk remaining merely declarative. Sustainable change, therefore, requires simultaneous actions within the legislative framework, support infrastructure, and social culture to ensure that egalitarian perceptions become stable everyday practices.

DISCUSSION

Despite the notable progress made over the past decade, gender equity in Moldova remains in a transitional stage, marked by the complex interaction of external pressures, internal mobilisation, and the evolution of cultural norms. International commitments and the process of European integration have supported the gradual realignment of legislation and public policies with the principles of gender equality, leading to significant reforms in areas such as political participation, family policies, and the prevention of gender-based violence. However, IMAGES-2 data indicate that this formal framework encounters considerable resistance at the level of informal norms, which hampers the translation of reforms into enduring social practices.

From the perspective of institutional theory, there is a clear imbalance between the regulatory pillar – reinforced through legislation and sectoral strategies – and the cultural-cognitive pillar, where gender stereotypes and traditional beliefs continue. According to social change theory, these findings indicate a stage of normative transition where old codes of conduct coexist with emerging egalitarian norms. However, a profound transformation of mentalities requires long-term efforts

aimed at reconfiguring the mechanisms of primary and secondary socialisation, including through formal education and community-based initiatives. Without a systemic approach that aligns legislation, support infrastructure, and the transformation of social norms, there is a risk that gender equity will remain more of a stated goal than an everyday reality.

Recent crises – regional conflict spillovers, inflationary pressure on household budgets, and intensified migration flows – create intersecting risks and opportunities for gender equity. Economic stress may re-traditionalize household bargaining, while displacement and uncertainty are associated with heightened gender-based risks. Conversely, labour shortages and flexible work arrangements can open entry points for women's employment and for men's greater caregiving involvement. We therefore interpret attitudinal shifts alongside these shocks and recommend "crisis-aware" equity measures: targeted income support for low-income families, guaranteed access to affordable childcare, proactive gender-based violence services, and campaigns that normalize shared caregiving for men in times of stress.

CONCLUSIONS

Gender equity is a crucial condition for social cohesion, sustainable development, and democratic resilience. In the long run, enhancing gender equity demands:

1. Alignment of the three institutional pillars (regulatory, normative, and cultural-cognitive) so that egalitarian social norms support legislation and public policies.
2. Integrated educational interventions that address gender stereotypes from early childhood and promote egalitarian role models in the family, school, and media.

3. Concrete measures for redistributing material and symbolic power, including through equitable family policies, equal access to economic resources, and support for shared childcare.
4. Sustained involvement of civil society and local communities in processes of cultural change through awareness campaigns, community programs, and mentoring initiatives.

Only through long-term collective engagement – grounded in knowledge, solidarity, and institutional courage – can Moldova transform gender equity from a normative goal into a widely shared social practice, with lasting effects on the development of society.

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