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3.11.5. Single women and female heads of households

COMMON ANALYSIS
Last update: October 2025

This sub-profile refers to single women (e.g. divorced women, unmarried women, widows) and female heads of households. Girls can also fall in this sub-profile.

The analysis below is based on the following EUAA COI reports: Country Focus 2025, 1.1., 1.2., 1.3.; Targeting 2021, 2.5.; Country Guidance should not be referred to as a source of COI.

Step 1: Do the reported acts amount to persecution?

Some acts to which single women and female heads of households could be exposed are of such severe nature that they would amount to persecution. More specifically, displaced single women in Somalia face significant risks of GBV and sexual exploitation.

The severity and/or repetitiveness of other acts that single women and female heads of households could be subjected to and whether they occur as an accumulation of various measures, should be considered. Instances of stigmatisation in case of pregnancies without marriage have been reported. Although there is no immediate stigma around getting divorced, the attitudes of local communities towards divorced women may differ. A woman still needs to obtain her own clan's consent for a divorce as well as to cite the specific reasons behind it. However, remarriage after divorce is common. Evictions against displaced women were also reported.

Step 2: What is the level of risk of persecution?

The individual assessment of whether there is a reasonable degree of likelihood for single women and female heads of households to face persecution **in the whole of Somalia, including South-Central Somalia, Puntland and Somaliland**, should take into account **risk-impacting circumstances**, such as:

- **Being in a IDP situation**: Single women and girls who are displaced or live in IDP camps, face heightened risks of sexual exploitation and other forms of GBV violence. In 2023, most recorded cases of conflict-related sexual violence reported by UNSOM

involved displaced women and girls.

- **Family status**: Divorced women may risk social ostracism within their communities. Women with children born out of wedlock might be pushed to live in the area of local sex workers.

- **Family and society perceptions**: Victims of rape without a support network are possibly being ostracised.

- **Clan affiliation**: Single women from minority clans are also at risk of being ostracised by their communities. Minority women are especially vulnerable to violence and abuse-including sexual and GBV from both within their communities and by armed forces, militias, and majority clan members.

- **Level of assistance by a support/clan network**: Single women are often supported by their community, which acts as a safety net, provided they have not violated customary laws or norms. However, women who are victims of rape or sexual violence frequently lack access to effective policing, justice, or welfare systems.

In the case of single women and female heads of households without support from the extended family or clan, well-founded fear of persecution would in general be substantiated in the whole of Somalia, including South-Central Somalia, Puntland and Somaliland

Step 3: Is there a ground for persecution?

Where well-founded fear of persecution is substantiated, persecution of this profile may be for reasons of **membership of a particular social group**. For example, women with children born out of wedlock may be subjected to persecution based on their common background which cannot be changed (having a child out of wedlock) and distinct identity in Somalia (in relation to stigmatisation by society and seen as betraying the family honour).

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