

The World's Women 2020

Trends and Statistics



Department of Economic and Social Affairs

The World's Women 2020

Trends and Statistics

Message from the Secretary-General

Twenty-five years since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, progress towards equal power and equal rights for women remains elusive. No country has achieved gender equality, and the COVID-19 crisis threatens to erode the limited gains that have been made. The Decade of Action to deliver the Sustainable Development Goals and efforts to recover better from the pandemic offer a chance to transform the lives of women and girls, today and tomorrow.

António Guterres

Message from the Under-Secretary-General

Women are on the front lines of the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic, in health care settings and in-home care, in the family and in the public sphere. While data are still scarce, it is evident that women are essential actors in this unfolding worldwide crisis. I call on all countries to accelerate efforts towards the empowerment of women and girls and towards improving the evidence base to monitor progress: data gaps in the coverage of key gender topics need to be filled, timeliness and comparability of data over time and across countries need to be improved, and data disaggregation and dissemination by age, sex, location and other key variables need to become a priority in order to fully measure and address intersecting inequalities, respond to crises, and ensure gender equality by 2030.

Liu Zhenmin

Acknowledgements

The World's Women 2020: Trends and Statistics online portal, which has been prepared by the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD), Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), is the result of the collective effort of a wide range of contributors from around the world, under the leadership of Francesca Grum, Chief of the Social and Gender Statistics Section.

Special acknowledgment is owed to the following staff of the Statistics Division: Maria Isabel Cobos Hernandez, Margaret Mbogoni, Andrew Smith, Mehmet Kemal Sökeli, Seiffe Tadesse, Lubov Zeifman and Lin Zhuo for their research, analysis and writing of individual chapters; Thataw Batun, Daniel Eshetie, Luis Gerardo Gonzalez Morales and Paul Narain for the production of the portal; and Tomoyo Ebisawa, Lingyan Hu and Zahia Khalid for their technical support and research.

Special gratitude goes to the following experts for their support and tireless efforts to produce the portal against tight deadlines: the editor, Roberta Brangam; Deepti Kochhar, Chandan Mahapatra and Nicole Talisay from Esri and Ziad Al-Kadri, Narin Gulec and Tanja Herron from the United Nations Graphic Design Unit.

Sincere appreciation goes to the experts from the following national statistical offices and regional and international organizations for providing data, analysis and drafting of individual narratives.

National Statistical Offices

- Barbara Cobo (**Brazil**)
- Karine Leclerc, Melissa Moyser, Martha Patterson, Rachelle Pelletier, Katherine Wall (**Canada**)
- Karen Andrea Garcia-Rojas, Maria Alejandra Lara (**Colombia**)
- Miina Keski-Petäjä, Pontus Lindroos, Laura Lipasti, Marjut Pietiläinen (**Finland**)
- Dieudonnee Ankamah, Sarah Woode (**Ghana**)
- Linda Laura Sabbadini (**Italy**)
- Akira Tsumura (**Japan**)
- Mohammad Khalaf and Manal Sweidan (**Jordan**)
- Ainur Dossanova (**Kazakhstan**)
- Ruta Beinare, Ieva Zabarovska (**Latvia**)
- Raul Figueroa, Pilar García, Eduardo Gracida, Octavio Heredia, Rosa María Licea, Eloina Meneses, Fernando Olguín, Adriana Oropeza, Alejandra Ríos, Norma Sandoval (**Mexico**)
- Nadejda Cojocari, Svetlana Furtuna, Valentina Istrati, Natalia Kleinknecht, Tatiana Sobcovschi, Aurelia Spătaru, Elena Vâtcărău (**Moldova**)
- Katja Branger, Andrea Mosimann (**Switzerland**)
- Tinashe Mwadiwa (**Zimbabwe**)

Regional and international organizations

- Syed Ahmed, Molla Hunegnaw Asmare, Meaza Bekele Gebretsadik, Melat Getachew, Keiso Matashane-Marite, Gonzague Rosalie, Fatouma Sissoko, Gulilat Tesfaye, Ali Yedan (**Economic Commission for Africa (ECA)**)
- Paula Aghon, Amparo Bravo, Francisca Orellana, Iliana Vaca Trigo (**Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)**)
- Yonca Gurbuzer, Martha Osorio(**Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations**)
- Ulysse Boiteau Montéville, Petra Nahmias, Tanja B. Sejersen, Sharita Serrao (**Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)**)
- Christelle Cazabat, Bina Desai (**Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC)**)
- Zeina Hilal, Mariana Duarte Mutzenberg, Andy Richardson (**Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)**)
- Martin Schaaper (**International Telecommunication Union (ITU)**)
- Molly Gillian (**IUCN-International Union for Conservation of Nature**)
- Jillian Campbell (**Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity**)
- Krishna Pendakur (**Simon Fraser University**)
- Julie Ballington, Ionica Berevoescu, Juncal Plazola Castano, Sarah Crawford, Sneha Kaul, Sara Duerto Valero (**United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women)**)
- Henri Luomaranta, Anu Peltola (**United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)**)
- Kristen Mary Jeffers, Andres Vikat, Fiona Willis-Núñez (**Economic Commission for Europe (ECE)**)
- Wilfried Amoussou-Guénou, Friedrich Huebler, Alasdair McWilliam, Rohan Pathirage, Zahia Salmi (**United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)**)
- Robert Bain, Claudia Cappa, Christie Chatterley, Enrique Delamonica, Jose Espinoza-Delgado, Collen Murray, Lauren Pandolfelli, Tom Slaymaker (**United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)**)
- Emilie Filmer-Wilson, Mengjia Liang, Rachel Snow (**United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)**)
- Carolina Ferrari, Sebastian Steinmuller (**Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)**)
- Valérie Lechene (**University College London**)
- Enrico Bisogno, Michael Jandl, Andrea Oterova, Fatma Ismetova Usheva, Lisa Weijler (**United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)**)
- Richard E. Cibulskis (**World Health Organization (WHO)**)
- Theophiline Bose-Duker, Isis Gaddis, Talip Kilic (**World Bank**)

Data providers and reviewers

Trevor Croft and Sunita Kishor (Demographic and Health Surveys Program (DHS)); Elisa M. Benes, David Bescond, Florence Bonnet, Umberto Cattaneo, Michael Frosch, Rosina Gammarano, Steve Kapsos, Marie Claire Sodergren and Kieran Walsh (International Labour Organization (ILO));

experts from DESA, including from the Population Division: Patrick Gerland, Giulia Gonnella, Bela Hovy, Yumiko Kamiya, Vladimira Kantorova, Stephen Kisambira, Mun Sim Lai, Nan Li, Karoline Schmid and Thomas Spoorenberg; Catharina Cuellar, Lilia Jara and Anna Coates (Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO)); Henriette Jansen (UNFPA); Global Health 50/50.

Executive Summary

What is the state of gender equality in the world? What do data tell us about progress towards the commitments made in the Beijing Platform for Action, which, 25 years after its adoption, remains the most comprehensive road map for advancing women's rights worldwide. Importantly, in adopting the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in 2015, Member States reaffirmed, in Sustainable Development Goal 5, that gender equality is central to the achievement of sustainable development for all by 2030. As has been done at five-year intervals since the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action, *The World's Women 2020* takes stock of progress in advancing women's rights, empowering women and girls and ensuring gender equality in the world community.

The **World's Women 2020** is a collection of 100 stories providing up-to-date assessments of progress towards gender equality in the following six critical areas, including, under each area, the impact of COVID-19 on women: (a) population and families; (b) health; (c) education; (d) economic empowerment and asset ownership; (e) power and decision-making; and (f) violence against women and the girl child.

Gender equality in time of crisis: COVID-19 is affecting women and men in different ways

While deaths from communicable diseases are usually higher in developing countries, this situation changed drastically over the course of 2020 due to the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, a highly communicable disease that has affected developing and developed countries alike. As of October 2020, more than 35 million confirmed cases and more than 1 million deaths have been reported worldwide.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed and deepened underlying inequalities in societies around the world. Gender inequalities in all spheres of life are compounded by other inequalities based on factors including age, ethnicity and wealth. While the pandemic continues to threaten the global community, available data from 38 countries and territories reveal that women above age 20 appear to be more likely to be diagnosed with COVID-19, while men in all age groups under age 80 are more likely to die from it.

It is highly likely that the higher share of diagnosis among women is related to the fact that they comprise over 70% of workers in the health sector. In providing care for those who have fallen ill from the virus, women face a higher risk of infection than men in the workplace. At age 80 and older, when women make up the majority of the population, they significantly outnumber men among those infected: for every single case of COVID-19 among men aged 80 and older there are two cases among women.

Mortality rates among men from COVID-19 are also elevated: men account for a higher proportion of deaths, at least 60%, across all age groups, except among the population aged 80 and older. This may be related to the disruption of health services caused by COVID-19, which has affected the delivery of prevention and treatment services for a number of health-related conditions, including hypertension, cancer and cardiovascular emergencies that are more prevalent among men. For example, the delivery of prevention and treatment services for hypertension has been severely disrupted in 53% of countries surveyed; for diabetes and diabetes-related complications in 49% of countries; for cancer in 42% of countries; and for cardiovascular emergencies in 31% of countries. Emerging research shows that smoking may also be associated with adverse outcomes of COVID-19, which works to the disadvantage of men, who are more likely to smoke than women (4.5 times more likely, globally). Traditional masculine norms which inhibit men from seeking health care could also be related to poor outcomes observed in men.

Given the gender component of the disease spread and related mortality, it is vital that clinical trials include both women and men, older people and those with co-morbidities.

Although less likely to die from COVID-19, women face additional challenges related to the disease compared to men, including: reduced access to sexual and reproductive health services; increased time required to provide care for children (including home-based education), for older persons and for the sick; and higher infection risks than men in the workplace, particularly as women constitute over 70% of the workforce in the health sector. The lockdowns imposed in response to the pandemic have left many people feeling alone, without their usual social connections, in particular, access to support programmes for women and girls, and have exacerbated mental health problems. During lockdowns, many women and girls may have been trapped in unsafe environments and at heightened risk of experiencing intimate partner violence.

Contents

Chapter 1: Population and families	5
Women and girls in forced displacement [UNHCR & IDMC]	7
Jordan: child marriage	15
Composition of population by age and sex	20
Life expectancy at 65 and 80 years by sex	30
Divorced, separated and widowed women and men	36
One-parent households	44
Finland: mean age at birth of first child by sex; total fertility rates; living arrangements for children	51
Average number of children; age at childbirth; and childlessness	57
Mean age at first marriage; child marriage; and adolescent birth rate	66
Proportion of older women; proportion living alone	76
Chapter 2: Health	85
Women's health in their reproductive years	87
Women's decision-making on and equal access to sexual and reproductive health [UNFPA]	97
Health risk factors	105
Leading causes of death among women and men aged 50 and older	114
Coronavirus-19, gender and health	124
Gender and selected communicable diseases: HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis	131
Deaths caused by injury	140
Ghana: skilled health-care assistance in childbirth	147
Deaths among people aged 30-70 from non-communicable diseases (premature mortality)	155
Menstrual health and hygiene [UNICEF]	160
Life expectancy and causes of death	167
Chapter 3: Education	178
Students experiencing bullying	180
Schools with access to single-sex basic sanitation	186
Out-of-school children, adolescents and youth	191
Youth and adult literacy rates	198
Female researchers active in research and development (R&D)	204
Gross enrolment ratio in tertiary education	211
Mexico: school attendance among youth aged 15-24	217

Schools providing life skills-based HIV and sexuality education	225
Lifelong learning	230
Gender parity index of the gross enrolment ratios in primary, secondary and tertiary education	237
Women teachers and professors at tertiary levels of education	243
Information and communications technology (ICT) skills	249
Enrolment in technical and vocational programmes	255
Canada: female graduates in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) at the tertiary level of education	261
Female graduates in science, technology, engineering and mathematics at the tertiary level of education	267
The impact of birth registration on educational outcomes in Pakistan [ESCAP]	273
Proportion of children aged 7-14 and children in grades 2 and 3 achieving minimum proficiency in reading and mathematics in Zimbabwe	278
Gross enrolment ratio in secondary education	284
Children and adolescents with minimum proficiency in reading and mathematics	290
Educational attainment.....	296
School completion at primary and secondary levels of education	302
Chapter 4: Economic empowerment.....	309
Access to formal financial services	311
Italy: behaviour and activities during the Coronavirus-19 lockdown: a gender approach	318
Colombia: effect of the Coronavirus-19 pandemic on women.....	327
Switzerland: employment models in couple households	334
Unemployment rate by sex, age and persons with disabilities	341
Protection of equal economic rights for women and men in selected issues under the law in developing regions	348
Time spent in unpaid work; total work burden; and work-life balance	353
Republic of Moldova: social protections and old age pensions	364
Status in employment	375
Women and men in part-time employment	382
Employment of women and men by economic sector	388
Women and men in the labour force.....	395
Equal rights of women to the ownership and control of land [FAO]	404
Multidimensional child poverty [UNICEF]	413
Women and men in informal employment by sector	419

Earnings of married women and men in employment by type of remuneration	428
Latvia: influence of the presence of children in the household on the employment of women and men	433
Gender segregation in occupations	442
Discriminatory attitudes towards women in paid employment	448
Measurement and status of young women and men in paid and unpaid work [ECLAC]	454
Maternity and paternity leave and related benefits.....	461
Gender pay gap	469
Youth not in education, employment or training (NEET)	477
Unpaid work and income poverty in countries in the Latin America and the Caribbean region [ECLAC]	483
Colombia: total workload of women and men; discriminatory attitudes towards women in the workplace; and unemployment	488
Methodological note on gender equality in trade [UNCTAD].....	497
Women Heads of State or Government and Government Ministers	503
Brazil: youth not in education, employment or training (NEET)	509
Resource allocation within households and individual poverty [The World Bank]	515
Canada: gender wage gap	522
Use of the Internet and mobile phone ownership among women and men [ITU]	527
Japan: households with dual incomes and presence of women in non-regular employment	533
Income and unpaid work in Latin America: intersection of gender and race inequalities [ECLAC]	540
Mexico: economic impact of unpaid work on households	546
Italy: gender differences and trends in reading as a leisure activity	553
Ratification of international agreements on equal remuneration and on equal rights in employment and discriminatory laws and regulations at the national level	560
Chapter 5: Power and decision-making	566
Women in managerial positions	567
Mexico: women in the national parliament and in local government	576
Financial decision-making in the household [ECE]	583
Factors affecting women's representation in parliament	589
Women in the civil service	595
Women as decision makers in the corporate world	602
Women in national parliaments	609

Women in politics and decision-making positions in Africa [ECA]	618
Women in local government [UN Women].....	626
Chapter 6: Violence against women and the girl child	633
Kazakhstan: intimate partner violence	635
Sexual violence in childhood	642
Femicide in Latin America and the Caribbean [ECLAC]	648
Women in the police	654
Mexico: intimate partner violence	660
Intimate partner violence	667
Laws on domestic violence	675
Female genital mutilation	681
Sexual violence by non-intimate partners	688
Attitudes towards physical violence against women	695
Intimate partner and family-related homicide	702
Women judges	708
Chapter 7: Environment.....	716
Gender and the environment: an overview of issues and methodologies.....	717
Women and the environment in Asia and the Pacific [UN Women]	724

Chapter 1

Population and families

Introduction

Population patterns and changes in family composition affect the lives of women and men throughout the world

As of 2020, there are around 65 million fewer women than men in the world, about 3.8 billion women to 3.9 billion men. The ratio of males to females varies by age, however, and while males outnumber females at birth, with around 107 to 108 male babies for every 100 female births, women outnumber men in older ages due to the inherent biological advantage of women over men.

Worldwide, the age at which women and men first marry or enter into a union has risen over the past two decades (age 23 for women and age 26.5 for men), mainly due to increased education, formal employment opportunities and women's greater economic independence. Marriage before age 18, a violation of children's rights that may also compromise their education and career prospects, lead to social isolation and the risk of early pregnancy, still exists in many regions, especially for girls, although it has slowly declined over the last two decades, from 26% to 20%. In Southern Asia, where child marriage has declined by 23 percentage points since 2004, there is still a 29% prevalence of child marriage, while in sub-Saharan Africa, with a proportion of child marriage of 34.5%, has recorded only a minor 2% decrease. In tandem with the decline in child marriage, motherhood among adolescent girls aged 15–19 has declined globally from 56 to 41 births per 1,000 women in the period 2000–2020, although it remains high in sub-Saharan Africa, at 101 births per 1,000 women. Pregnancies and childbirth among adolescent girls are linked to wide range of negative long-term consequences for both mothers and their babies, including risks to their health, as well as poverty as a result of discontinued schooling and fewer job opportunities.

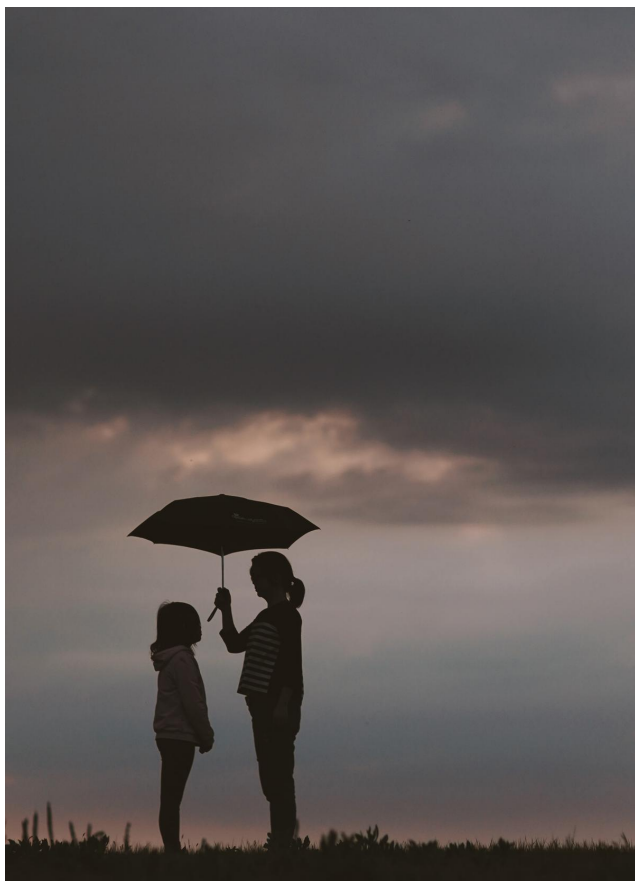
The increase in women's age of entry into a first marriage or union, as well as increases in the availability and use of contraception, are contributing factors to decisions regarding how many children to have and when to have them. Women are having fewer children in total, 2.5 children on average in 2020 compared to 2.8 children 25 years ago, and they are having them later: the average age at which mothers are giving birth has risen from age 27.5 to age 28.1 over the last 25 years. Along with the increase in the age at which women first get married and have children, there has also been an increase, from 7.6% in 2000 to 9.2% in 2020, in the proportion of women who never have children.

Data since the mid-1990s show that there are more households with lone mothers and children than there are households with lone fathers and children. While the prevalence of lone-father households has remained stable over time, at between 1% to 2%, that of lone-mothers has risen in all regions with available data, reaching 8% to 10% in Northern Africa and Western Asia, sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean. Increases in the prevalence of one-parent households is linked to increases in divorce and separation and in the number of children born outside marriage.

Gender disparities in longevity in favour of women have implications for living arrangements as well as for the health and well-being of older persons, including the family

members who care for them. Among older persons aged 65–69 worldwide, there are currently about four widows for every widower — 29% of women versus 7% of men. Given that women are less likely than men to remarry after a divorce or death of their spouse, women aged 65 and older (24%) are twice as likely as older men (12%) to live alone or to be in the care of other family members, who are, in most cases, other female relatives. Longevity, although an overall positive outcome, therefore, calls for the provision of services that often exist in cultural contexts where the care burden for older persons falls on unpaid female relatives, with financial and other implications for the welfare of all involved.

Women and girls in forced displacement [UNHCR & IDMC]



Key points

- By the end of 2019, 79.5 million people (26 million refugees, 45.7 million internally displaced people and 4.2 million asylum-seekers) had been forcibly displaced worldwide as a result of persecution, conflict, violence or human rights violations, an increase of 8.7 million people over 2018.
- There are approximately equal numbers of women and men among refugees, asylum-seekers and internally displaced persons worldwide.
- Among refugees in Northern America and Europe and Eastern Asia and South-Eastern Asia, women and girls comprise about 40% of the total population, with a pronounced sex imbalance among adults (35% of refugees above the age of 18 are women in these two regions).
- Among internally displaced people, approximately 50% are women and girls: about 13% are girls aged 0–4, 23% are girls aged 5–14 years old, 19% are young women aged 15–24, and 8% are women aged 60 and older.
- Although displacement is a traumatic experience, it may also be a space for redefining and negotiating pre-existing roles, which can lead to an improvement of women's previous circumstances and social status.

Background

By the end of 2019, the world's forcibly displaced population remained at a record high, with a total of 79.5 million individuals having been forcibly displaced worldwide as a result of persecution, conflict, violence or human rights violations, an increase of 8.7 million people over 2018. This population includes 26 million refugees, 45.7 million internally displaced people and 4.2 million asylum-seekers.¹ Overall, based on available data, there appear to be approximately equal numbers of women and men among refugees, asylum-seekers and internally displaced persons reported to UNHCR.

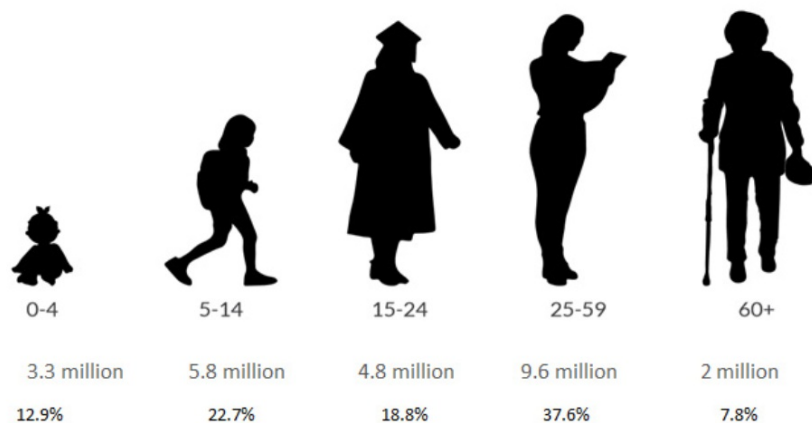
Among the refugee population, in 2019, the lowest proportions of women were among refugees hosted in Northern America and Europe and in Eastern Asia and South-Eastern Asia, where slightly less than 40% were women. This sex imbalance was most pronounced among adults in those two regions, with only around 35% of all refugees above the age of 18 being women, while there were marginally more boys than girls under age 18 (see figure I). In contrast, the highest proportion of girls and women among refugee populations (52%) was in sub-Saharan Africa. Approximately 25% of all refugees hosted in sub-Saharan Africa, Northern Africa and Western Asia, Central and Southern Asia and Latin-America and the Caribbean were girls under the age of 18.

Figure I: Demographic characteristics of the refugee population: 2019 (Percentage)

Source: UNHCR, Global Trends: Forced Displacement 2019, Geneva, 2020 (<https://www.unhcr.org/5ee200e37.pdf>).

Note: The refugee population is reported by location according to the regional groupings under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) indicator framework (<https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2019/regional-groups/>). There is no reliable demographically disaggregated data available for refugees hosted in Oceania, including Australia and New Zealand, the respective SDG region is therefore missing from this figure.

By the end of 2019, an estimated 45.7 million people were internally displaced due to armed conflict, generalized violence or human rights violations, as reported by the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre for 61 countries and territories.² An additional 5.1 million people were internally displaced as a result of disasters across 95 countries and territories. This is an increase over the total of 41.3 million displaced people reported at the end of 2018.³ In particular, according to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, there were 3.3 million internally displaced girls under age 5 at the end of 2019; 5.8 million were aged 5–14; 4.8 million aged 15–24; 9.6 million aged 25–59; as well as 2 million women aged 60 and older (see figure II). Current data suggest that the proportion of women and girls among internally displaced persons is often higher than among the national population. The higher numbers of forcibly displaced women compared to men are often linked to socioeconomic factors and local conflict dynamics. In the case of armed conflict, this may be explained by the fact that men often stay behind to fight, while women tend to flee for safety along with dependent family members.⁴

Figure II: Internally displaced girls and women by age: 2019 (Estimated number and percentage)

Source: Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, Global Report on Internal Displacement 2020, April 2020 (<https://www.internal-displacement.org/publications/2020-global-report-on-internal-displacement>).

In such circumstances, women face significantly different challenges than men in terms of livelihood needs and access to economic opportunities, including financial strains and difficulties resulting not only from displacement itself but also from gender norms, which may impose specific **household responsibilities** and/or prevent them from **working**. Internal displacement also has an impact on women's ability to find shelter and security, to access services such as education and health care and to participate in decision-making processes.⁵ A recent study conducted by the Government of Colombia⁶ revealed that conflict and forced displacement exacerbates discrimination and violence against women, leaving forcibly displaced women more exposed to **sexual** and **domestic** violence and labour exploitation. It also showed that forcibly displaced women often face greater obstacles in access to education and **land ownership**, as well as in making their voices heard in public and political spheres.

In situations of forced displacement, women's economic activities are significant and crucial, often contributing to the livelihood of their families and communities and to the strengthening of their economic stability. However, as observed in some studies, women may also be empowered in such scenarios as there may be more space for them to participate in decision-making and in activities outside the home. Although displacement is a traumatic experience, it may also be a space for redefining and negotiating pre-existing roles, which can lead to an improvement of women's previous circumstances and social status. A recent report assessed the impact of displacement on the gender roles and relations of women and girls who were forced to move from a rural area to a peri-urban area in Pakistan. Before displacement, livelihood opportunities had been limited for women, who were mostly able to engage in activities related to household and agricultural work. After moving, women were obliged to look for alternative sources of income, such as sewing, which allowed them to earn money and to manage their earnings independently. In addition, the perception of the importance of girls' education, which was previously regarded as superfluous, was altered owing to displacement. Other life-changing transformations were possible due to greater access to amenities such as running water, cooking gas and electricity, which reduced the amount of time women and girls dedicated to domestic chores.⁷

However, in order to increase and maintain women's livelihood opportunities, further transformation needs to take place within the household, the community and within institutions. This should be accompanied by the long-term and continuous development of non-economic aspects, such as women's access to education, and the implementation of laws and policies supporting women's empowerment. Increased availability of disaggregated data on internal displacement is also crucial to a better understanding and response to the needs of displaced women and girls, as well as to inform improved policymaking. These measures could not only enable women and girls to overcome challenges associated with displacement, but also provide them with ways to benefit from it.

Sources

- Levine, S., et al., The impact of displacement on gender roles and relations: the case of IDPs from FATA, Pakistan, Humanitarian Policy Group, March 2019 .
- Government of Colombia, "Women and Internal Conflict in Colombia", presentation, February 2020 .
- 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 1001, No. 14691 .
- Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, Women and girls in internal displacement, March 2020 .
- Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, Global Report on Internal Displacement 2020, April 2020 .

- Expert Group on Refugee and Internally Displaced Persons Statistics, International Recommendations on IDP Statistics, Background document to the 51st session of the Statistical Commission, March 2020 .
- Expert Group on Refugee and Internally Displaced Persons Statistics, International Recommendations on Refugee Statistics, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, March 2018 .
- 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees, United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 189, No. 2545 .
- Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Mid-Year Trends 2019, February 2020 .

Definitions

About the data

- **Share of women among refugees:** Women as a percentage of all refugees.
- **Share of children among refugees:** Population aged 0–17 as a percentage of all refugees.
- **Number of women and girls living in internal displacement as a result of conflict and violence:** The number of internally displaced women in different age groups is estimated using national sex and age distribution data. For each country considered, the percentage of women in each group is applied to the number of people living in internal displacement as a result of conflict and violence.⁸
- **Children:** Children are defined as all those aged 0–17.
- **Refugee:** According to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees⁹ and the 1967 Protocol thereto,¹⁰ a refugee is someone "who, owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his or her nationality, and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself or herself of the protection of that country". The term also comprises people falling under various regional instruments complementing the international refugee protection standards such as the Organization of African Unity Convention governing the specific aspects of refugee problems in Africa¹¹ and the Cartagena Declaration on Refugees.¹²
- **Asylum seeker:** An asylum seeker is defined as someone "who is claiming or applying for protection as a refugee and who has not yet received a final decision on his or her claim. It may also be someone "who has not yet submitted an application for refugee status recognition (has not yet formalized the administrative requirements in national law) but may nevertheless be in need of international protection".¹³
- **Internally displaced person:** Internally displaced persons are people "who have been forced to leave or abandon their homes, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized border".¹⁴

Coverage

Women, men and children in refugee, asylum seeking or displaced person status in countries worldwide, organized by regional groupings under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) indicators framework.¹⁵

Availability

Demographically disaggregated data on refugees and asylum-seekers reported to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in 2019 varied widely between countries and population groups. In 2019, 123 countries reported sex-disaggregated data for refugees, and 129 for asylum-seekers. For refugees and refugee-like populations, sex-disaggregated data was available for 81% of the population. The coverage of sex-disaggregated data for asylum-seekers was 42%. The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre reported that, in 2018, only 14% of the countries and territories for which data was collected on internally displaced persons published information disaggregated by sex and age. Statistics on forced displacement are often limited in terms of disaggregated data. Case studies are the main source of detailed information on refugees, asylum seekers and internally displaced persons.¹⁶

1. Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Refugee Population Statistics Database, 2020 .
2. Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, Global Report on Internal Displacement 2020, April 2020 .
3. Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, Women and girls in internal displacement, March 2020 .
4. Ibid.
5. Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, Women and girls in internal displacement, March 2020 .
6. Government of Colombia, Women and Internal Conflict in Colombia, presentation, February 2020 .
7. Levine, S., et al., The impact of displacement on gender roles and relations: the case of IDPs from FATA, Pakistan, Humanitarian Policy Group, March 2019 .
8. As per the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), Population Division, World Population Prospects 2019, New York, 2019 . ([back to text](#))
9. 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 1001, No. 14691 .
10. 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees, United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 189, No. 2545 .
11. United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 1001, No. 14691 .
12. Cartagena Declaration on Refugees, November 1984 .
13. Expert Group on Refugee and Internally Displaced Persons Statistics, International Recommendations on Refugee Statistics, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, March 2018 .
14. United Nations, Statistical Commission, Fifty-first session, International Recommendations on Internally Displaced Persons Statistics, March 2020 .
15. United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), Statistics Division, regional groupings under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) indicator framework .
16. To bridge this gap, the United Nations Statistical Commission, at its forty-seventh session, in 2016, established the Expert Group on Refugee and Internally Displaced Persons Statistics to produce international recommendations to improve statistics on these populations.

Jordan: child marriage



Key points

- During the period 1997–2012, marriage of girls before age 18 decreased from 13.5% to 8.4%; marriage of girls before age 15 decreased from around 1% to almost zero over the same period.
- The five-fold increase in the rate of marriage of girls younger than age 15 observed during the period 2012–2017 resulted from a number of factors, including poverty and population growth owing to the influx of foreigners into the country as a result of armed conflicts in neighbouring countries.
- Of the 77,700 marriage contracts issued in 2017, 13.4%, involved girls under age 18. After the adoption of new regulations in 2018, the number of child marriage contracts dropped significantly, by 27% compared to 2017.

Background

Child marriage is a form of violence against girls, which deprives them of their legitimate human rights, including their right to education, to make an informed choice of a life partner and to build positive family relationships. Lack of such rights has a negative effect on the quality of girls' lives, their reproductive health and their ability to find decent work.

Current situation

After years of significant and steady decrease, child marriage spiked in 2017

Analysis of data from the Population and Family and Health Survey in Jordan shows that there was a significant and steady decrease in the percentage of women married before age 15 and before age 18 during the period 1997–2012 (see figure I):¹ child marriage before age 18 decreased from 13.5% to 8.4% while marriage before age 15 decreased from around 1% to almost zero (0.3%). That decrease was due to amendments made to the Provisional Personal Status Law No. 82 in 2001 to increase the minimum age of marriage to 18.

However, early marriage among women aged 20–24, particularly those who married before age 15, increased significantly in recent years (a five-fold increase between 2012 and 2017), from almost zero to 1.5%. During the same period, the proportion of women aged 20–24 who married before age 18 registered a moderate increase, from 8.4% to 9.7%. The increase in child marriage in Jordan between 2012 and 2017 resulted from a number of factors, including poverty and population growth owing to the influx of foreigners into Jordan as a result of armed conflicts in neighbouring countries.²

Source: Government of Jordan, annual statistical report of the Supreme Judge Department, 2017
<https://sjd.gov.jo/EchoBusV3.0/SystemAssets/PDFs/AR/202017%20الحصاء%20القضائية%20الجزائرية%20الغرف%20المختصة%20بالقضايا%20المدنية%20والجنائية.pdf>

About the data

Definitions

- **Child marriage:** Proportion of women aged 20–24 who were married or in a union before age 15 and before age 18. It is calculated by dividing the number of women aged 20–24 who were first married or in a union by age 15 or age 18 by the total number of women aged 20–24 in the population.

Coverage

The indicator covers the proportion of women aged 20–24 who were first married or in a union by age 15 and by age 18. Information is presented at the national level.

Footnotes

1. Government of Jordan, Department of Statistics, Jordan Population and Family Health Survey 2017-18, DHS Program, Maryland, March 2019.

2. For example, 7.5% of Jordanian women aged 20–24 got married before age 18, compared to 36.6% of women migrants from the Syrian Arab Republic, see Government of Jordan, Department of Statistics, and World Health Organization (WHO), International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF), 2019; see also [United Nations Children's Fund \(UNICEF\), A Qualitative Study on the Underlying Social Norms and Economic Causes that Lead to Child Marriage in Jordan, New York, 2019](#) and Government of Jordan, Department of Statistics, Jordan Population and Family Health Survey 2017-18, DHS Program, Maryland, March 2019.

Composition of population by age and sex



Key points

- As of 2020, there are fewer women than men in the world: 3.8 billion women (49.6%) and 3.9 billion men (51.4%). The ratio of men to women is of significance because it has implications for the demographic and economic situation of societies.
- The ratio of men to women varies widely by geographical region and subregion, with some regions having a surplus and others a deficit, ranging from 93 men per 100 women in Europe to 110 men per 100 women in Western Asia.
- Globally, men outnumber women until around the age of 50, and thereafter there are more women than men (for example, 92 men for every 100 women aged 65–69, and 47 men for every 100 women aged 90–94) as a result of the lower mortality rate for women than for men.
- Over the past 30 years, the sex ratio at birth has remained constant worldwide, ranging between 107 and 108 male births to 100 female births, although it is significantly higher in some countries, including Azerbaijan and China (113:100), Viet Nam (112:100), Armenia (111:100) and India (110:100).
- Since 2000, the share of older persons (aged 65 and older) in the total global population by sex has increased from 8% to 10% for women and from 6% to 8% for men, while the share of children (aged below 15) has declined from 31% to 25% for girls and from 32% to 26% for boys: all of these changes have broad social and economic implications.

Background

Information on the distribution of the population by age and sex is critical for describing any population or group within the population and for taking stock of factors of population change, including fertility, mortality and migration. This information is also used to make projections of the age and sex structure of the population.^{1 2}

One recognized way to determine the relative distribution of the female and male populations is by use of sex ratios. Estimates of the sex ratio of the population provide important information on the relative numbers of men to women in a given population. Sex ratios, which show the surplus or shortage in relative numbers of men compared to women, can be calculated at birth or for selected age segments. In general, the sex ratio at birth tends to be in favour of men but turns in favour of women in later years of life. This is mainly because women tend to live longer than men for a variety of reasons, including the inherent biological advantage of women as well as behavioural differences between the sexes.³

Current situation

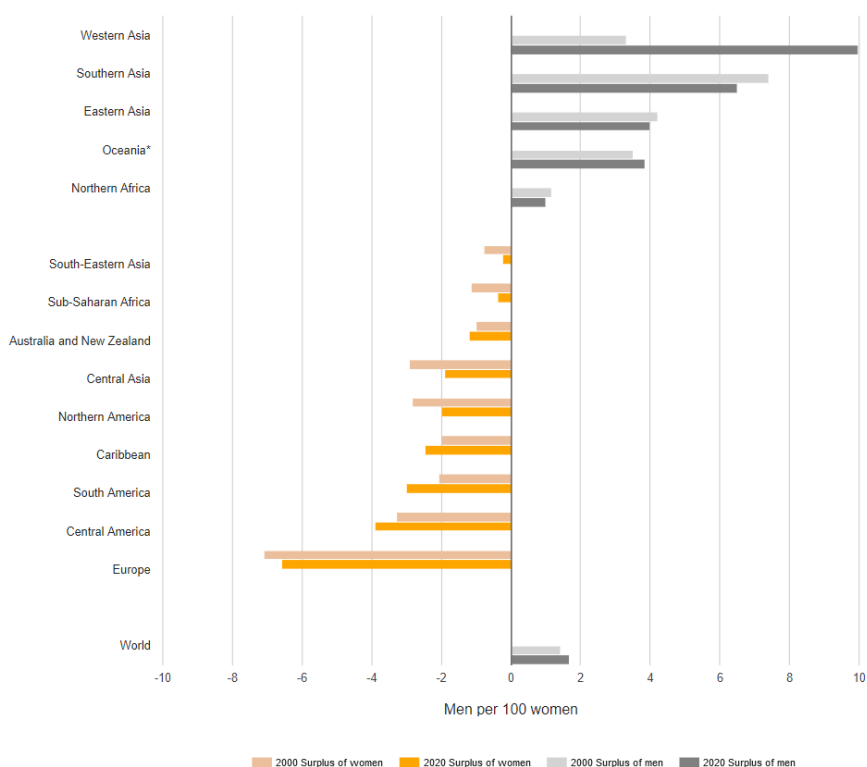
Substantial differences among regions in relative numbers of men and women

In 2020, United Nations population projections estimate that there are 3.8 billion women and 3.9 billion men worldwide, in other words, that women constitute slightly less than half of the global population (49.6%). For the world as a whole, there were more men than women of all ages: 101 men for every 100 women in 2000, and an

estimated 102 men for every 100 women in 2020,⁴ meaning that men outnumber women and that the difference between the two is getting slightly wider. The ratio of men to women is significant because of its impact on societies worldwide, including their future demographic and economic situations.

There are wide variations among regions and subregions in the ratio of men to women: some have a surplus while others a deficit of men in their total population (see figure I). As of 2020, Europe has the largest deficit of men (93 men per 100 women), while the reverse is true in Western Asia (110 men per 100 women). During the period 2000–2020, the relative deficit of men was reduced in: Central Asia (from 97 to 98 men per 100 women); sub-Saharan Africa (from 99 to 100 men per 100 women); and Northern America (from 97 to 98 men per 100 women). In contrast, there was a significant increase in the surplus of men compared to women in Western Asia (from 103 to 110 men per 100 women). Within certain regions there are substantial variations by subregion: for example, there were 101 men per 100 women in Northern Africa compared to 110 men per 100 women in Western Asia.

Figure I: Surplus or deficit of men per 100 women by region: 2000 and 2020



Source: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), Population Division, World Population Prospects 2019 (online edition) (<https://population.un.org/wpp/Download/Standard/Population/>).

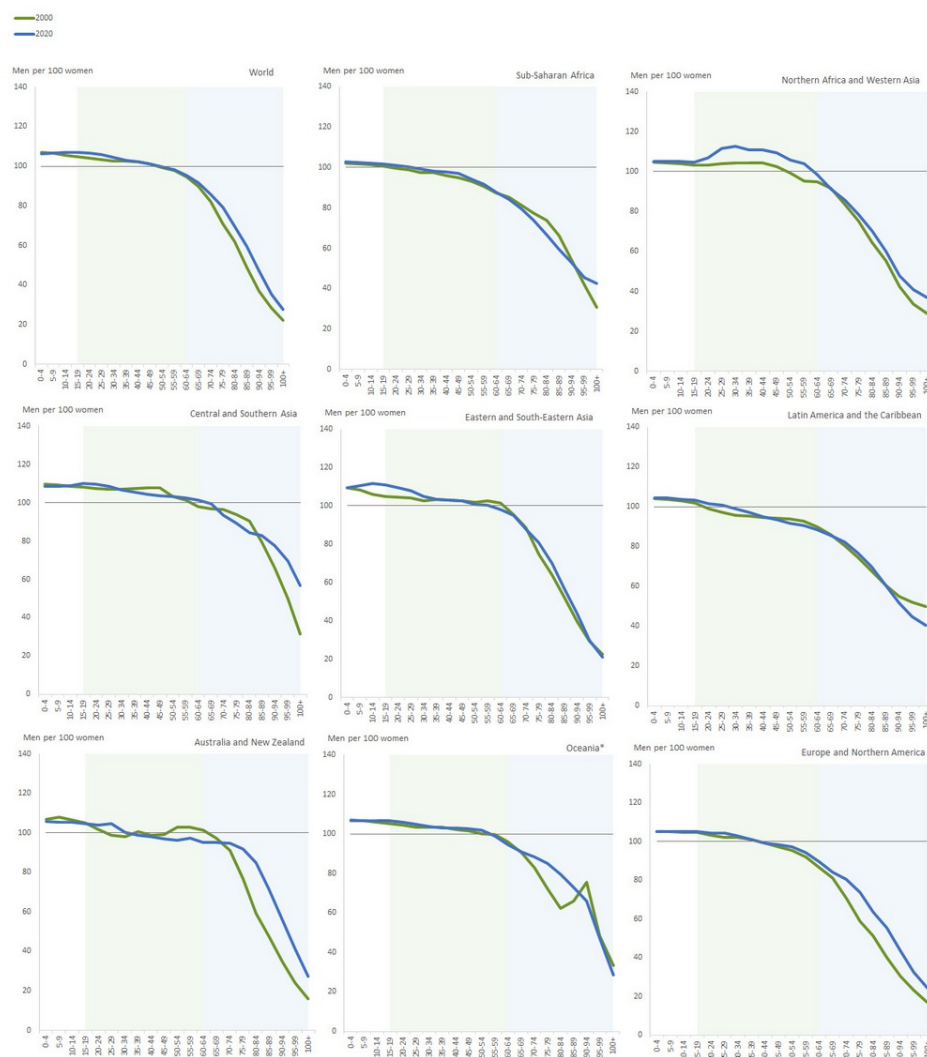
Note: Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand).

Globally, men outnumber women until around age 50 (see figure II). After that age, higher mortality rates for men compared to women continue to be observed and the share of women increases rapidly. For example, in 2020, at the global level, the sex ratio was: 92 men per 100 women in the 65–69 age group; 70 men per 100 women in the 80–84 age group; and 47 men per 100 women in the 90–94 age group.

During the period 2000–2020, the age at which women outnumber men has increased in most regions, from

ages 15–19 to ages 30–34 in sub-Saharan Africa and from ages 60–64 to ages 65–69 in Central and Southern Asia. There was a decline, however, in the age at which women outnumber men in Eastern and South-Eastern Asia (from ages 65–69 to ages 60–64), while the cross-over age remained unchanged for Europe and Northern America (ages 44–45).

In general, the timing of the cross-over from a male surplus to a female surplus is related to multiple factors, including sex differentials by age in levels and patterns of mortality. On average, women live longer than men, and this is true for every country and plays an important role in how the sex ratio changes with age throughout adulthood. Differences in the ratios of men to women are linked to causes of death ([communicable diseases](#), [non-communicable diseases](#) and [external factors](#)), which vary depending on age, sex and geographical region. Possible explanations of the differences across regions in the age of the cross-over to a surplus of women over men include societal biases, which lead to inequalities faced by women at all stages of the life cycle, as well as large-scale migration, particularly labour migration of men compared to women in adult working ages. The latter may explain the demographic profile for Northern Africa and Western Asia, which is characterized by a much higher number of men than women in adult working ages, peaking to unusually high levels in the 30–34 age group.

Figure II: Age-specific sex ratios, worldwide and by region: 2000 and 2020

Source: UNDESA, Population Division, World Population Prospects 2019 (online edition) (<https://population.un.org/wpp/Download/Standard/Population/>).

Note: *Excluding Australia and New Zealand. Horizontal line (-) indicates an equal number of men to women. Shaded areas distinguish children, adults and older persons.

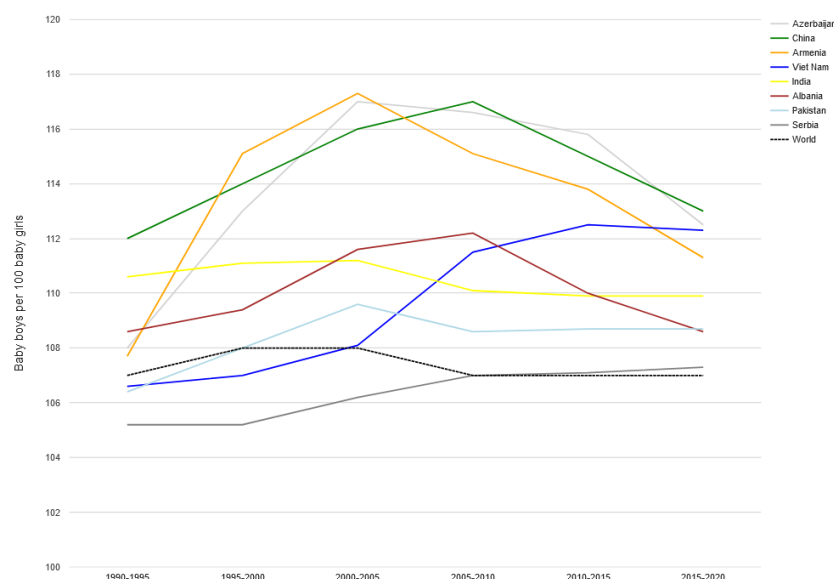
Sex ratios at birth in favour of boys have increased in some countries over the years

Globally, the sex ratio at birth has remained mostly unchanged over the past 30 years, ranging between 107 and 108 male births to 100 female births during the periods 1990–1995 to 2015–2020.⁵ The biological level of the sex ratio at birth tends to be close to 105 boys per 100 girls, with a standard sex ratio at birth reported at between 103 to 107 boys per 100 girls, allowing for regional variations. In some populations, the sex ratio in favour of boys at birth exceeds the standard values. Sex-selective abortion, reflective of long-standing cultural preferences for sons, is a major explanatory factor.⁶

While the sex ratio at birth has remained unchanged and close to the global average for most regions and countries, there are some significant differences. For example, in the Eastern and South-Eastern Asia region, this

ratio increased from 109 boys per 100 girls in 1990–1995 to 112 boys per 100 girls in 2005–2010 and stands at 110 boys per 100 girls for the period 2015–2020. Similarly, in Central and Southern Asia, the sex ratio at birth was 109 male births per 100 female births in 1990–1995, peaking at 110 boys per 100 girls between 1995–2005, and has remained at 109 boys per 100 girls from 2005–2020. These two regions include countries that currently have the highest ratios of male to female babies during the period 2015–2020 (see figure III): China (113: 100), India (110: 100), Viet Nam (112: 100) and Pakistan (109: 100). Countries in other regions that have shown a substantial change in the sex ratio at birth over this period include Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Serbia, where the ratio is reported at ranges from 107 to 113 male babies per 100 female babies, indicating that more parents are selecting the sex of their offspring in favour of sons.

Figure III: Imbalanced sex ratios at birth in selected countries: 1990–2020

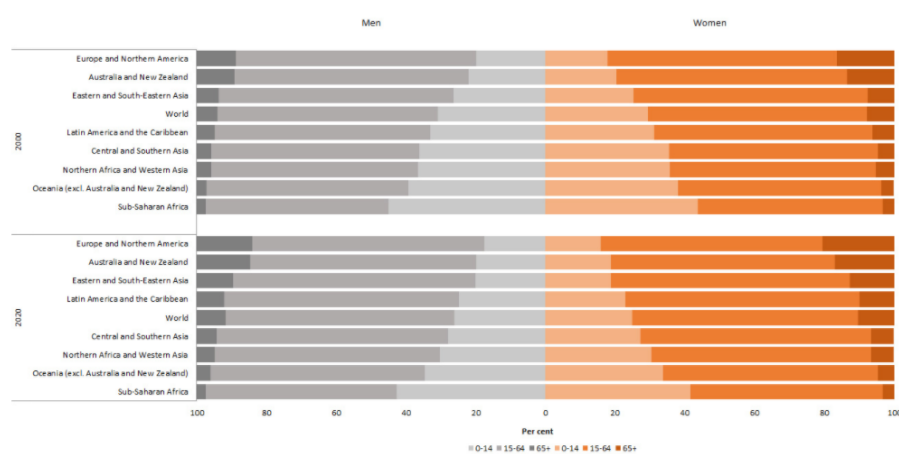


Source: UNDESA, Population Division, World Population Prospects 2019 (online edition) (<https://population.un.org/wpp/Download/Standard/Population/>).

Substantial progression in population ageing by sex over the years

In recent decades, there have been significant shifts in the share of the population in three major age groupings: children (0–14 years); adults (15–64 years); and older persons (ages 65 and over). At the global level and for most regions, the population has transitioned to an older age structure, particularly for the female population (see figure IV). The share of the population, both female and male, aged below 15 declined from 32% to 25% between 1995–2020, although males still outnumber females.⁷ During the same period, women aged 65 and older constituted the fastest growing segment of the population, from 8% to 10% for women compared to 6% to 8% for men. The **older population** is clearly dominated by women in 2020: at the global level, the sex ratio is 92 men per 100 women in the 65–69 age group; 70 men per 100 women in the 80–84 age group; and 47 men per 100 women in the 90–94 age group.

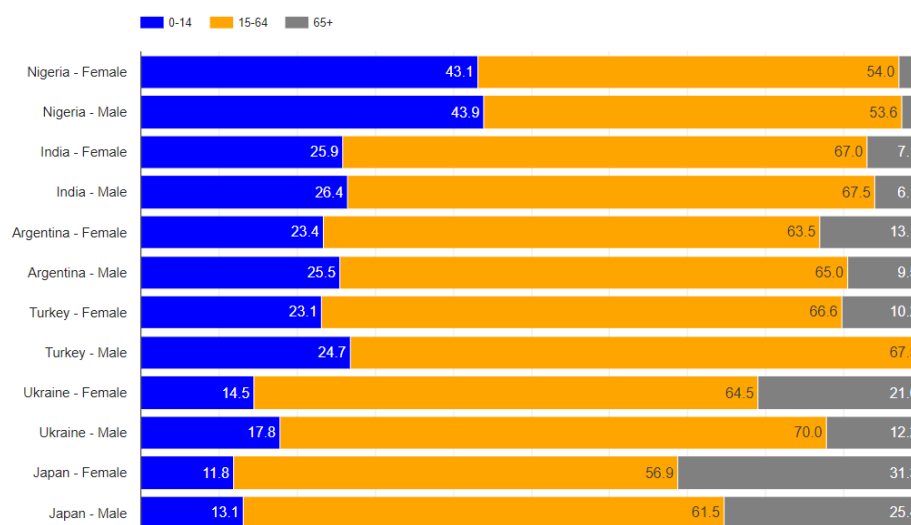
In all regions, except sub-Saharan Africa, populations show evidence of a shift towards an older age structure for both sexes between 2000–2020. The ageing of the world's population and the attendant differences in proportions between females and males have implications for the **living arrangements**, healthcare, **life-long learning**, and the psychological well-being of **older persons**.

Figure IV: Population distribution by broad age groups and sex: 2000 and 2020 (Percentage)

Source: UNDESA, Population Division, World Population Prospects 2019 (online edition)
[\(https://population.un.org/wpp/Download/Standard/Population/\)](https://population.un.org/wpp/Download/Standard/Population/)

Differences in selected countries in population distribution by sex and age grouping: 2020

There are noticeable differences in the proportions of women and men by broad age categories in the populations of selected countries in 2020 (see figure V). For example, overall, Japan has the largest share of older women (31%) and older men (25%) (65 years and older) as well as to the smallest share of girls (12%) and boys (13%) below age 15 among its total population. In contrast, the population in Nigeria has the largest proportion of people aged below 15 (43% for girls and 44% for boys), and the smallest proportion of people aged 65 and older (3% for both women and men). In all selected countries, however, the share of women among older persons aged 65 and over is larger than that of men.

Figure V: Population distribution by age groupings and sex: select countries: 2020 (Percentage)

Source: UNDESA, Population Division, World Population Prospects 2019 (online edition)
<https://population.un.org/wpp/Download/Standard/Population/>.

About the data

Definitions

- **Total population of a country or other defined area:** Estimate of the total count that falls within the scope of a census or survey. In this narrative, estimates correspond to de facto population in a country, area or region as of 1 July of the year indicated
- **Distribution of the population by age and sex:** Proportionate numbers of persons by sex in selected age categories of the population.
- **Sex ratio:** Number of male births per one female birth.⁸

Coverage

The analysis of the total population covers all women and all men divided into three broad categories: children, adults, and older persons. Analysis of the sex ratio covers all women and all men by age.

The information is presented for countries worldwide and by regional groupings under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) indicators framework.⁹

Footnotes

1. United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), Statistics Division, United Nations Demographic Yearbook review: national reporting of age and sex-specific data -implications for international recommendations, April 2004 (ESA/STAT/2004/1) .
2. United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, World Population Prospects 2019, Methodology of the United Nations Population Estimates and Projections. Accessed on 22 September 2020.
3. World Health Organization (WHO), Global Health Observatory, Female life expectancy: Situation and trends . Accessed on 17 July 2020.
4. UNDESA, Population Division, World Population Prospects 2019 (online edition) .
5. UNDESA, Population Division, World Population Prospects 2019, (online edition) .
6. Attané, I. and Guilmoto, C. Z. (eds.), "Watering the Neighbours' Garden: The Growing Demographic Deficit in Asia", Committee on International Cooperation in National Research in Demography, Paris, 2007; Bongaarts, J., "The implementation of preferences for male offspring", Population and Development Review, vol. 39 (2), 2013; Guilmoto, C.Z., "The sex ratio transition in Asia", Population and Development Review, vol. 35 (3), 2009.
7. UNDESA, Population Division, World Population Prospects 2019 (online edition) .
8. United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, World Population Prospects 2019, Glossary of Demographic Terms . Accessed on 22 September 2020.
9. Regional groupings under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) .

Life expectancy at 65 and 80 years by sex



Key points

- Over the past two decades, older women have experienced more gains in longevity than older men. Women at age 65 are expected to outlive their male counterparts by about 3 years (women are expected to live an additional 18.3 years and men an additional 15.6 years), and by almost 1.5 years for women at age 80.
- In sub-Saharan Africa, Central and Southern Asia and Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand), women's survival advantage over men is lower than one year at age 65; overall, these regions have the lowest life expectancy at older ages.
- Increased longevity coupled with unequal survival rates between older women and men call for gender-sensitive approaches to ensure the provision of social services and protections for them.
- In many cultural contexts, the care burden for older persons falls on unpaid female relatives, which has financial and other implications for their welfare.

Background

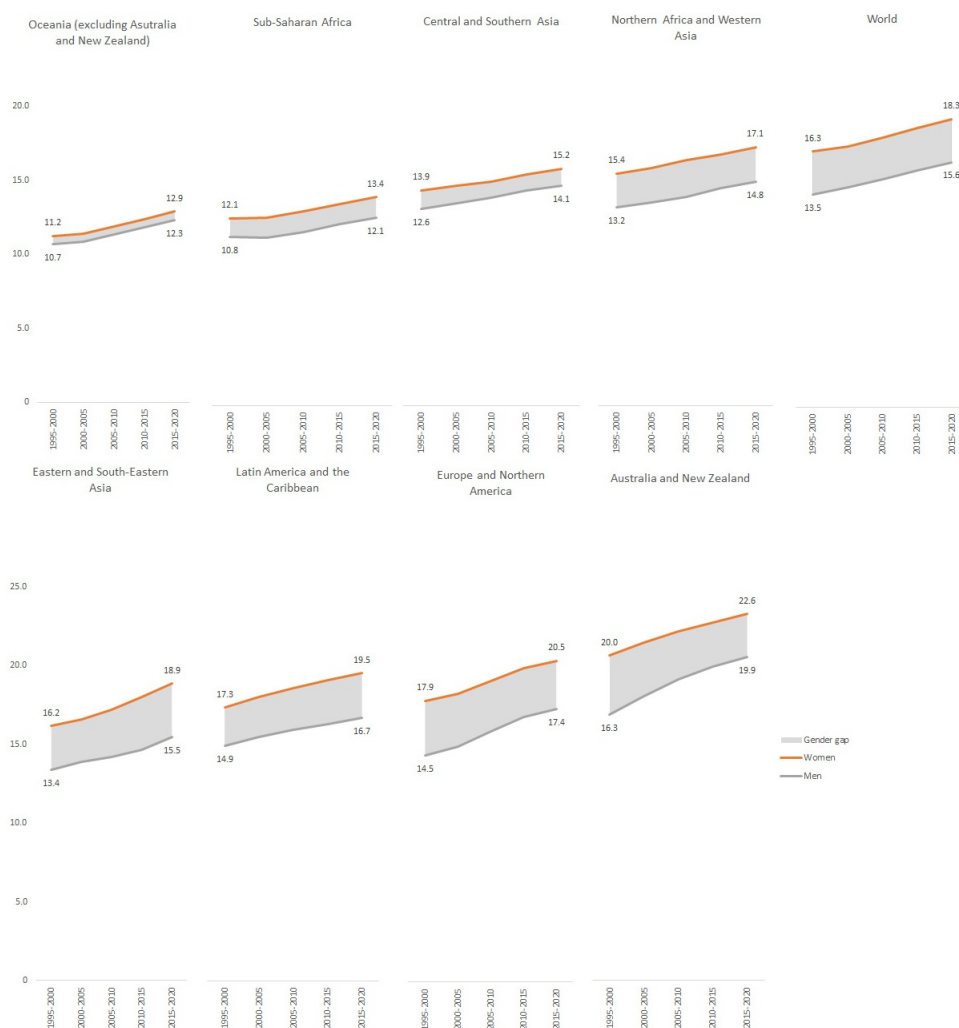
Within the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Sustainable Development Goal 3 expresses commitment to "ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages".¹ Over the years, social commitments to improve the lives of populations worldwide have resulted in recognizable gains in reducing mortality and accompanying increases in survival, as well as in life expectancy, in most countries.

Increases in survival and longevity for older persons

Women's survival advantage (gender gap) has recorded a slight increase over the past two decades. Recent United Nations estimates² show that, for the world as a whole, women at age 65 are expected to outlive their male counterparts by about 3 years (women are expected to live an additional 18.3 years and men an additional 15.6 years), and by almost 1.5 years for women at age 80.

The gender gap in life expectancy at age 65 is estimated at about 3 to 4 years in all geographical regions, except Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand) (1 year), Central and Southern Asia (1 year) and sub-Saharan Africa (1 year). These are also the regions where life expectancy at age 65 is the lowest: on average, women in these regions are expected to live an additional 13 years and men an additional 12 years (see figure I).

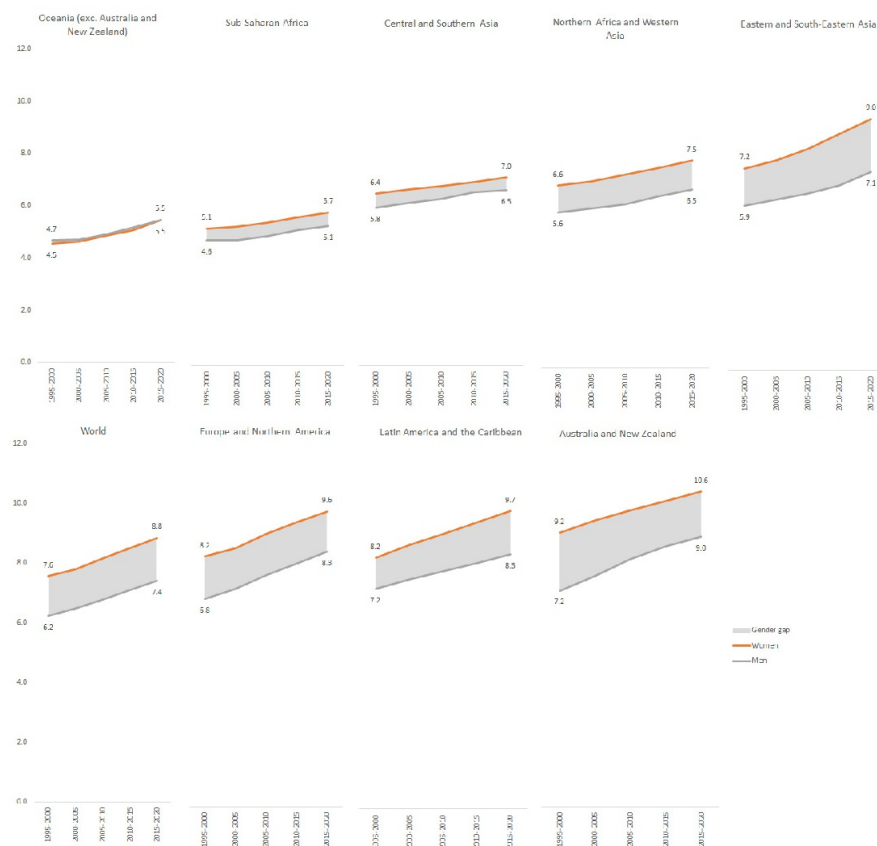
Figure I: Life expectancy at age 65 by sex and major geographical region: 1995–2020



Source: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), Population Division, World Population Prospects 2019, Rev. 1, online edition (<https://population.un.org/wpp/>).

The gender gap in life expectancy among the population aged 80 and older is highest in Australia and New Zealand and in the Eastern and South-Eastern Asia region (about 2 years). In addition, Australia and New Zealand, the countries with the highest life expectancy both at age 65 and at age 80 for both women and men, have experienced a decline in the gender gap in favour of males over the last two decades. The reverse has been observed in Eastern and South-Eastern Asia. In Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand), men at age 80 have a slightly longer expected number of years to live than women of the same age (see figure II).

Figure II: Life expectancy at age 80 by sex and major geographical region: 1995–2020



Source: UNDESA, Population Division, World Population Prospects 2019, Rev. 1, online edition (<https://population.un.org/wpp/>).

The observed increases in survival and longevity into advanced ages call attention to the need for adequate policies and programmes to enable older persons to live decent and fulfilled lives. At advanced ages, older persons require greater care and assistance in their daily lives,³ and this is even more so the case for women, who tend to live longer than men, are likely to outlive their spouses or partners and are thus disproportionately represented in the **older population**. Older women are also more likely than older men to have a **disability**⁴ and are more vulnerable to poverty.⁵

Because women tend to outlive their spouses, and oftentimes without economic independence, they tend to become more dependent on the support of others. Research shows that, globally, the bulk of the provision of care for older persons falls on female family members, usually on an unpaid basis, with a consequent socioeconomic stress on the caregivers, including on their mental and physical health.⁶ In the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the pledge to leave no one behind, more needs to be done to ensure economic security for the population later in life, particularly for older women, including those who provide care for them.

About the data

Definitions

Life expectancy at age x is the number of years a person at age x is expected to live if current mortality patterns remain constant in the future. Life expectancy at age 65 or age 80 of a given period is the number of additional years a person at those ages is expected to live if exposed throughout the remainder of life to age-specific mortality rates of that period.

Coverage

The present analysis covers the global population at age 65 and age 80 and above by sex and corresponding life expectancy. Information is presented by regional grouping under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) indicators framework.⁷

Availability

Data for these indicators have been provided by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division.⁸

Footnotes

1. United Nations, Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, General Assembly resolution 70/1, adopted on 25 September 2015 .
2. United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), Population Division, World Population Ageing 2019: Highlights, New York, 2019 .
3. United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), Long-term care for older people – A new global gender priority, Policy Brief No. 9.
4. Ibid.
5. United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), Bringing Older Women to the Forefront of Global Discussions .
6. UN-Women, Long-term care for older people – A new global gender priority, Policy Brief No. 9. .
7. Regional groupings under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) indicators framework .
8. United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), Population Division, World Population Ageing 2019: Highlights, New York, 2019 ; UNDESA, Population Division, World Population Prospects 2019, Rev. 1, online edition .

Divorced, separated and widowed women and men



Key points

- Women are more likely than men to remain unmarried after a marriage is dissolved through divorce or separation, or through widowhood in older age.
- At the global level, across all regions, the proportion of currently divorced and separated persons aged 45–49 is higher among women than men. This proportion has remained relatively constant worldwide since the 1980s, from 4.5% to 5% for women, and from 3% to 3.2% for men.
- The highest proportion of currently divorced or separated persons live in developed regions (between 8% and 10%).
- Globally, there are about four widows for every widower: 29% of women aged 65–69 are widowed, as compared to 7% of men.
- Since the early 1980s, there has been a steeper decline in proportion of widowed women aged 65–69 years (11 percentage points) compared to men (2 percentage points). Despite this substantial decline, the global widowhood gender gap currently stands at 22 percentage points against women.
- The following regions have a gender gap in widowhood of over 25 percentage points: Northern Africa and Western Asia, sub-Saharan Africa and Central and Southern Asia, which are also the regions with the highest proportion of widowed women (at least 30%).
- In general, countries in Europe and Northern America have a narrow widowhood gender gap (ranging between 3 and 9 percentage points) in comparison to countries in sub-Saharan Africa where the gap ranges between 40 to 49 percentage points.
- The striking differences in rates between women and men and the differences in regional rates are due to a variety of factors, including: gender differentials in age at marriage, since women generally get married at a younger age than men; remarriage rates, since women are less likely than men to remarry following a marital dissolution, including through widowhood; and survival rates, which are in favour of women due to the overall lower female mortality rate.
- There has been a steep decline over the past 40 years in the proportion of widows to widowers, reflecting both improved overall mortality rates and the fact that men are living to older ages compared to the past. Other factors include increased age at marriage, in particular for women, and the decrease, as a result, in the age gap between spouses, which has reduced the chances of wives losing their husbands at younger ages.

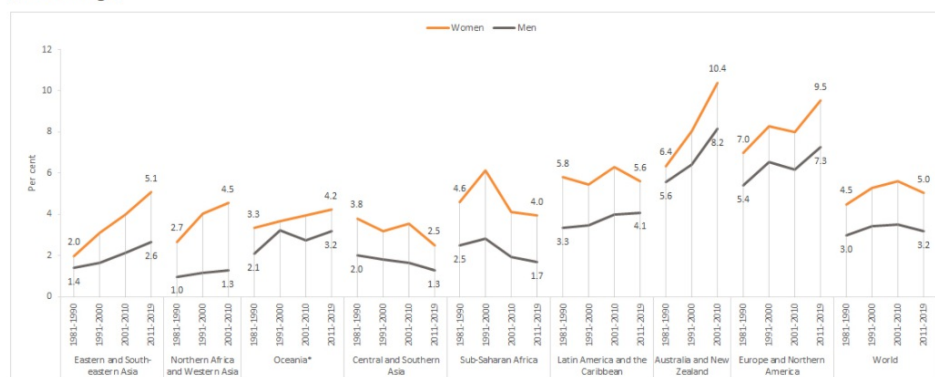
Background

Over the past decades, the increase in divorce rates has been one of the most visible features of change in the family structure.² Marital dissolution, particularly through divorce and separation, can have long-lasting consequences, not just for couples but also for children and other dependent family members. Women are less likely to remarry after divorce, separation or widowhood, and often find themselves in more vulnerable social economic situations. Over recent decades, there have been major differences in the rates of marital dissolution (divorce, separation and widowhood) between women and men, including within geographical regions

Women are more likely than men to be currently divorced, separated or widowed

As reported by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women),² one visible feature of family change is the small but steady increase in the proportion of women and men whose marriages have been terminated as the result of divorce or separation, as well as a decline in marital dissolution through widowhood. In the last 40 years there has been a slightly higher increase in the proportion of currently divorced or separated women than men aged 45–49, both globally and in most geographical regions (see figure I). Worldwide, the proportion of currently divorced and separated persons aged 45–49 has remained relatively constant since the 1980s: from 4.5% to 5% for women, and from 3% to 3.2% for men. There has also been a decline in the proportion of widowed persons (aged 65–69) during the same time period, down from 40.4% to 29.2% for women, and from 9.2% to 7% for men (see figure III). The downward trend in widowhood has been steeper for women than for men, and the gender gap has been reduced from 31.1 to 22.3 percentage points. It is possible that the decline in the rates of widowhood for women is due to the fact that men are living longer owing to better overall health and improved health care.

Figure I: Proportion of divorced or separated persons aged 45–49 by sex and region: 1981–2019 (Percentage)



Source: Census data from UNDESA, Population Division, World Marriage Data 2019.

Note: Unweighted averages

Divorce and separation

Current proportions of divorced and separated persons are highest in Australia and New Zealand (10.4% for women and 8.2% for men) and in Europe and Northern America (9.5% for women and 7.3% for men), and generally low in developing regions, except in Latin America and the Caribbean (5.6% for women and 4.1% for men) (see figure I). In all geographical regions, women aged 45–49 are more likely than men in the same age group to be currently divorced or separated; this gender gap has been sustained and, in some cases, has increased over time during the period from the early 1980s to the late 2010s. Globally, the gender gap has remained constant at 1.5 to 1.9 percentage points during this period. Over the last 40 years, the largest increase in the gender gap in divorce and separation was in Eastern and South-Eastern Asia, from 0.6 to 2.4 percentage points, due to a steeper increase in the divorce rate for women than for men.

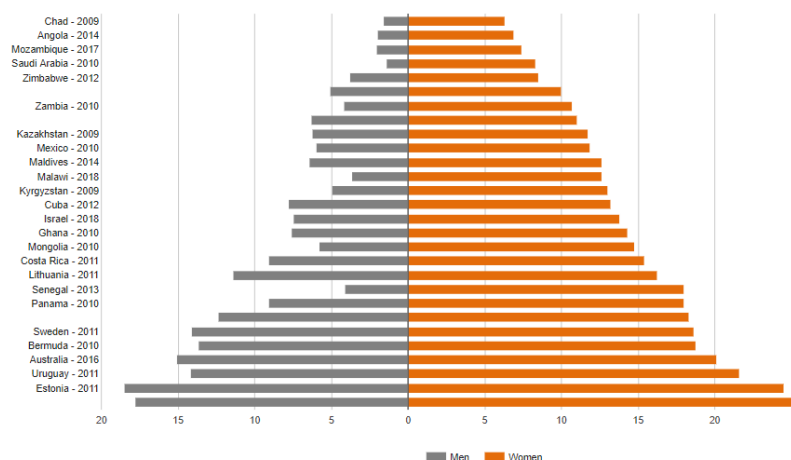
Cultural differences among geographical regions and subregions may account for the observed differences, and

there may be stigma attached both to marital dissolution and remarriage in some contexts. In its report, *Families in a Changing World*, UN-Women attributes the higher rates of women than men who are currently divorced or separated to the fact that men are more likely than women to remarry after divorce.

In some countries, the proportion of women aged 45–49 who are currently divorced or separated is significantly higher than that of men in the same age group, resulting in a large gender gap, ranging from between 5% to 15% (see figure II). This is the case, in particular, for selected countries in sub-Saharan Africa (Senegal, 13%), Latin America and the Caribbean (Panama, 9%), and, to some extent, in Europe and Northern America (Estonia and the Russian Federation, 6%).

As highlighted in the UN-Women report *Families in a Changing World*, while larger gender gaps in divorce and separation could indicate that women are able to sustain themselves financially through paid work after marital dissolution, there is also a chance they may be left in an economically vulnerable situation.

Figure II: Proportion of divorced or separated persons aged 45 to 49 by sex in selected countries with the widest gender gaps: 2009–2018 (latest available)



Source: Census data from UNDESA, Population Division, World Marriage Data 2019.

Widowhood

While widowhood among older persons is an inevitable fact of life, there are striking differences in rates between women and men, as well as noticeable regional differences resulting from a variety of factors, including gender differentials in [age at marriage](#), remarriage rates, [mortality](#) and [survival rates](#). In general, women get married at a younger age than men, thereby creating a gap in the ages of spouses. In addition, women are less likely than men to remarry following a marital dissolution, including through widowhood. Furthermore, survival rates into advanced ages are in favour of women due to lower female than male mortality rates. As a result of all these factors, there is a higher proportion of widows than widowers.³

In all regions, the proportion of older widows is higher than that of older

widowers

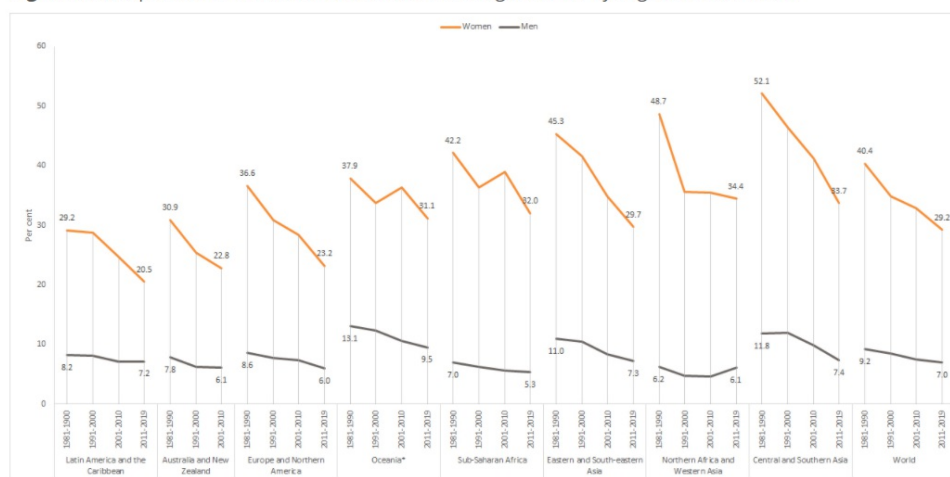
Proportionately, among older persons aged 65–69, there are more widowed women than men (see figure III). Globally, the proportion of widowed women in this age group (29%) is about four times that of men (7%). The decline in these proportions, at the global level, since the early 1980s, has been steeper for women (11 percentage points) than for men (2 percentage points). Nevertheless, there is still a global widowhood gender gap of 22 percentage points.

At the regional level, marked differences are notable. For instance, in countries in Northern Africa and Western Asia, sub-Saharan Africa and Central and Southern Asia there is a gender gap of over 25 percentage points in the proportion of widowed women and men, and these regions also have the highest proportion of widowed women (32% or more). Europe and Northern America and Australia and New Zealand have the lowest rates of widowed women (23%) compared to other regions.

Since the early 1980s, there has been a decline in the rates of widowed persons (aged 65–69), particularly women, in all geographical regions. The largest decline in the proportion of widows aged 65–69, ranging between 10% and 19%, has been recorded in Central and Southern Asia (from 52.1% to 33.7%), Eastern and South-Eastern Asia (from 45.3% to 29.7%), Northern Africa and Western Asia (from 48.7% to 34.4%) and sub-Saharan Africa (from 42.2% to 32.0%). Trends in female widowhood, particularly in countries in sub-Saharan Africa, where there was a decline in the 1990s followed by an increase in the 2000s and a subsequent decline, raise the issue of the likely contribution to this phenomenon of excess male mortality due to HIV/AIDS.⁴

Declines over the years in the rates of widowed persons reflect improved mortality conditions and the likelihood that men will live longer than in the past. Other contributing factors include women marrying men who are not significantly older than themselves, thereby reducing the chances of wives losing their husbands at much younger ages.⁵

Figure III: Proportion of widowed women and men aged 65-69 by regions: 1981–2019



Source: UNDESA, Population Division, World Marriage Data 2019.

Note: Unweighted averages

[Show Data](#)

[Download to CSV](#)

Countries in focus

The mean **age at marriage** has increased over the years, more so for women than for men and as a result, the age gap between spouses has decreased. For instance the age gap decreased in Guinea-Bissau from 9.3 to 6.2 years (1991–2014); in Bangladesh from 7.3 to 5.8 years (1981–2011); in the Gambia from 8.8 to 7.8 years (2000–2013); in Ghana from 6.3 to 4 years (1993–2014); and in Mali from 9.2 to 7.1 years (1987–2018).

In spite of reduced levels of widowhood for both women and men over the years in all regions, there are still wide variations in the gender gap among countries. A focus on selected countries with the smallest and largest gaps in widowhood for the population aged 65–69 years (see figure IV) shows that countries in Europe and Northern America have a narrow widowhood gender gap (between 3 and 9 percentage points) in comparison to countries in sub-Saharan Africa (between 40 and 49 percentage points). This could be due to the higher survival rates of women over men, coupled with a generally wider age gap between spouses (especially among older persons), and the lower probability that women will remarry after the death of a spouse.

Figure IV: Proportions of widowed women and men aged 65–69 and related gender gap for selected countries with smallest and largest gaps: 2005–2017 (latest available)



Source: Census data from UNDESA, Population Division, World Marriage Data 2019.

About the data

Definitions

- **Divorce:** Final legal dissolution of a marriage, which confers on the parties the right to remarriage under civil, religious and/or other provisions, according to the laws of each country.
- **Judicial separation:** Disunion of married persons, according to the laws of each country, without conferring on the parties the right to remarry.⁷
- **Separated persons:** For the purposes of the present analysis, separated persons are persons who are legally married (legally or consensually) but not living together.⁸
- **Widowed persons:** Individuals whose marriages have been dissolved through the death of a spouse and who have not remarried.⁹
- **Rates of marital dissolution (divorce, separation and widowhood):** Proportion of women and men who are currently divorced, separated or widowed.

Coverage

Divorced and/or separated women and men aged 45-49 who are currently not remarried; and widowed women and men aged 65-69 who are currently not remarried. The information is presented at the global level and by regional groupings under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) indicator framework.¹⁰

Footnotes

1. Harkonen, J., "Divorce: Trends, Patterns, Causes, and Consequences", in Treas, J., Scott, J. and Richards, M., (eds.), *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to the Sociology of Families*, London and New York, 2014.
2. United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), *Progress of the World's Women 2019-2020: Families in a Changing World*, New York, 2019.
3. Christiane Delbes and Joelle Gaymu, "The Shock of Widowhood on the Eve of Old Age: Male and Female Experiences", *Population*, vol. 57, Issue 6, 2002.
4. UNDESA, Statistics Division, *The World's Women 2015: Trends and Statistics*, New York, 2015 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.15.XVII.8).
5. Westoff, C.F., "Trends in marriage and early childbearing in developing countries", *DHS Comparative Reports*, No. 5, July 2003.
6. UNDESA, Population Division, *World Marriage Data 2019* (last accessed on 29 July 2020).
7. United Nations, *Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System: Revision 3*, New York, 2014.
8. United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), Population Division, *World Marriage Data 2019*, New York, 2019 (POP/DB/Marr/Rev2019).
9. United Nations, *Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System: Revision 3*, New York, 2014.
10. *Regional groupings under the Sustainable Development Goal indicators*.

One-parent households



Key points

- According to data collected since the mid-1990s, lone-mother parenting is on the rise in all developing regions, increasing from 5% to 8% in Northern Africa and Western Asia; 7% to 10% in sub-Saharan Africa; and 8% to 10% in Latin America and the Caribbean. The proportion of lone-father households has remained stable over the same period, at between 1% to 2%, resulting in a 7% to 9% gender gap in the prevalence of one-parent households in developing regions.
- There are wide variations among countries in the prevalence of one-parent households, even within the same region (for example, 3% of lone-mother households in Senegal compared to 14% in Burundi).
- Over three quarters of one-parent households are headed by mothers and they tend to be more vulnerable to poverty than two-parent and lone-father households.
- Changes in marriage and fertility patterns are having an impact on the living arrangements of children. The increase in the prevalence of one-parent households is linked to increases in divorce and separation and in the number of children born outside marriage.
- The majority of households with children are still households with both parents. In selected countries in the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), 22% to 40% of households have children living with both parents, 5% to 10% of households have children living with a lone-mother and 1% to 3% of households have children living with a lone-father.
- Households with childless couples are also prevalent in OECD countries, with shares ranging from 15% in Poland and Slovenia to 26% in Canada: in the United States of America childless couples (25%) are more prevalent than couples living with children (24%).
- The general lack of adequate time series data on one-parent households, particularly in developed countries, has hampered the generation of estimates for monitoring the phenomena over time and for informed policy formulation.

Background

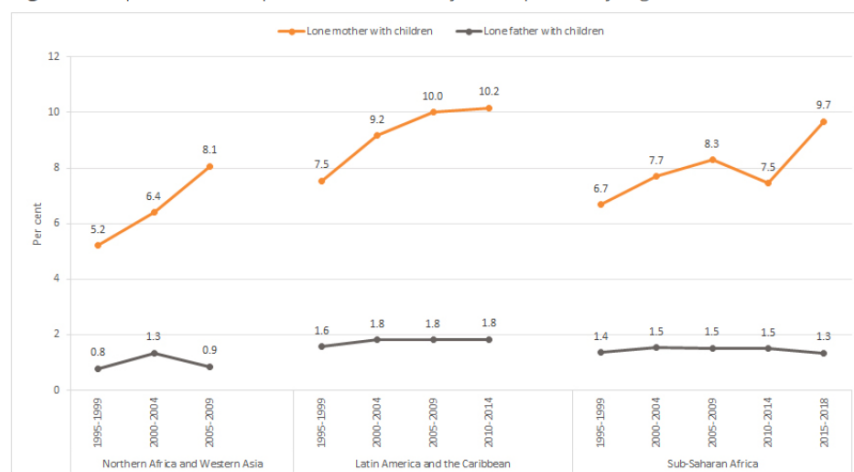
Household composition has important consequences for the well-being of families and individuals, and lone-mother households tend to be more vulnerable to poverty than two-parent and lone-father households. With the increase in [divorce and separation](#) and the number of children born outside marriage, one-parent households are more common than in the past. Understanding patterns of household composition and associated changes over time are thus relevant for efforts to achieve SDG 1, to end poverty in all its forms everywhere, SDG 3, to ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages, and SDG 5, to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.¹

One-parent households are predominantly headed by women

Available data show significant differences by sex in the proportion of one-parent households (see figure I): in the period 2011–2018, at least three quarters of one-parent households with children aged under the age of 18 were headed by lone-mothers.² The higher incidence of one-parent households headed by women compared to those headed by men could be due to the fact that, in general, mothers are awarded custody of children in the

event of divorce and/or separation.³

Figure I: Proportion of one-parent households by sex of parent, by region: 1995–2018 (Percentage)



Source: UNDESA, Population Division, Household Size & Composition 2019 (<https://population.un.org/Household/index.html#/countries/840>) (accessed on 6 July 2020).

Note: Unweighted averages. Data for 10 countries in Northern Africa and Western Asia (1995–2009); 23 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean (1995–2014); and 38 countries in sub-Saharan Africa (1995–2018).

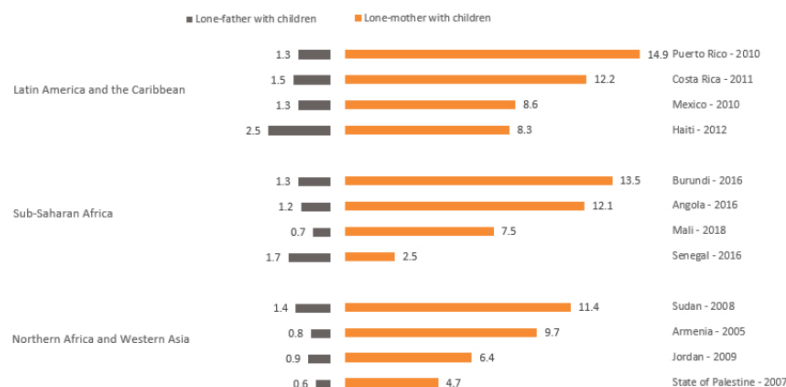
In all developing regions with available data (Latin America and the Caribbean, Northern Africa and Western Asia, and sub-Saharan Africa), the prevalence of one-parent households, especially those headed by a lone-mother, has increased since the mid-1990s: from 8% to 10% in Latin America and the Caribbean; from 7% to 10% in sub-Saharan Africa; and from 5% to 8% in Northern Africa and Western Asia.

In the same regions, data show that the proportion of lone-father households has not changed significantly over time, remaining substantially lower than lone-mother households, at around 2% in Latin America and the Caribbean, 1.5% in sub-Saharan Africa and 1% in Northern Africa and Western Asia, resulting in a 7% to 8% gender gap in the prevalence of one-parent households in those regions.

Within regions, there are wide differences in the proportion of lone-mother households among countries (see figure II). For example: in sub-Saharan Africa, Burundi has the highest proportion (14%) and Senegal (3%) the lowest, revealing a significant regional gap of about 11 percentage points; in Northern Africa and Western Asia, the gap between the countries with the highest proportion (Sudan, 11%) and the lowest (State of Palestine, 5%) is 6 percentage points; and in Latin America and the Caribbean, Haiti has the lowest proportion (8%) and Puerto Rico the highest (15%), resulting in a gap of 7 percentage points.

Regardless of the level, however, in all of the above countries the proportion of lone-mother households is much higher than lone-father households and the gender gap ranges from 0.8 percentage points in Senegal to a high of 13 percentage points in Puerto Rico.

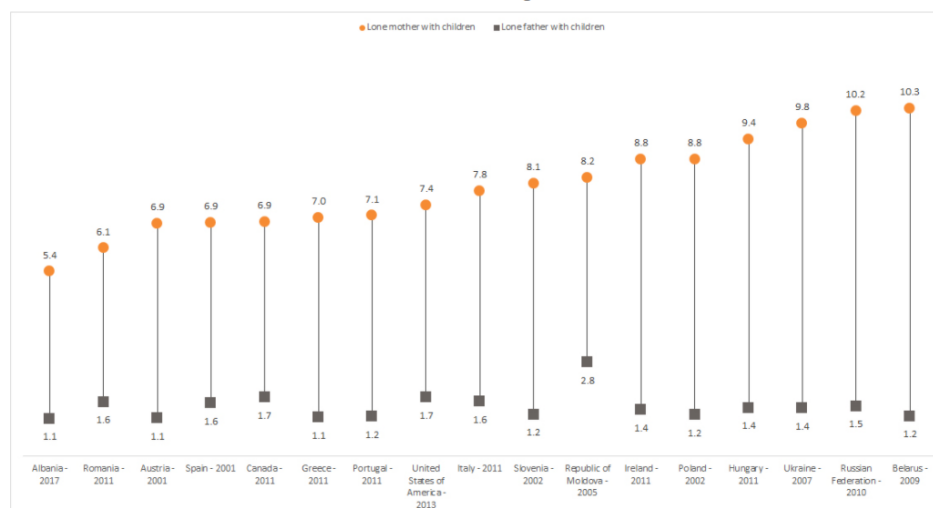
Figure II: Proportion of lone mother households and lone- father households (highest and lowest) by region: 2005–2018 (latest available) (Percentage)



Source: UNDESA, Population Division, Household Size & Composition 2019 (<https://population.un.org/Household/Index.html#/countries/840>) (accessed on 6 July 2020).

Based on data from 2001–2017 for countries in Europe and Northern America, wide variations in the proportion of one-parent households are also noticeable, in particular lone-mother households and the resulting gender gaps. The percentage of lone-mother households in the region ranged from a low of 5.4% in Albania to 10% in Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine. The percentage of lone-father households ranged from 1% in the majority of countries to almost 3% in the Republic of Moldova. The gender gap in the proportion of lone-mother and lone-father households was between 4% and 9%, with the highest gap reported in Belarus and the Russian Federation. At 3%, the Republic of Moldova had the highest proportion of single-father households, followed by Canada, Italy, Romania, the Russian Federation, Spain and the United States at 2% (see figure III).

Figure III: Proportion of one-parent households by sex of parent in selected countries in Europe and Northern America: 2001–2017 (latest available) (Percentage)



Source: UNDESA, Household Size & Composition 2019 (<https://population.un.org/Household/index.html#/countries/840>) (accessed on 14 August 2020).

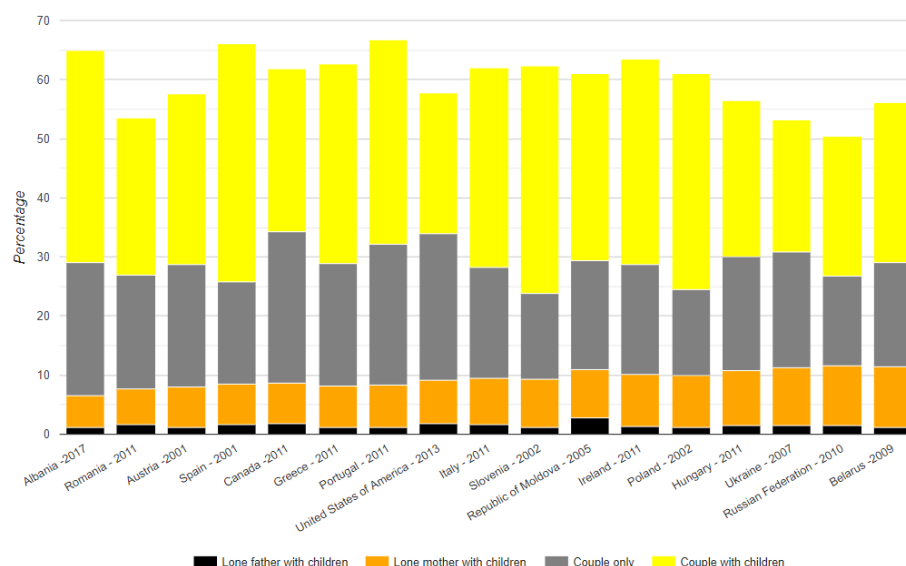
In 17 countries with available data in the Europe and Northern America region, there were more couples-with-

children than one-parent households (ranging from 22% in Ukraine to 40% in Spain), although a significant proportion of households included children that lived with a single parent, in particular with a lone-mother (ranging from 5% in Albania to 10% in Belarus) (see figure IV). Households composed of couples without children were also prevalent in all countries, with share ranges between 15% in Poland and Slovenia to 26% in Canada. In the United States, childless-couple households (25%) were slightly more common than households made up of couples with children (24%) and the percentage of lone-mother households with children (7%) and lone-father households with children (2%) reflected regional trends. The observed distribution of households with or without children, particularly in OECD countries, may be linked to changes in marriage and fertility patterns.⁴ The relatively low levels of couples with children should therefore be interpreted keeping in mind the associated low levels of fertility in those countries.

Information on the incidence of lone parenting should be examined in the context of the welfare of the persons involved, both children and parents. Statistics show that, globally, lone-mothers with at least one child under the age of 6 are more likely to be in the **labour force** (65.8%) than mothers living with a partner and a young child (48.7%), presumably because lone-mothers bear the sole responsibility for providing for the household.

These statistics reveal the extent of the economic pressure of the care burden placed on lone-mothers in providing for themselves and for their children, which may have implications on the welfare of both mothers and children. At present, there are insufficient sampled data to produce reliable labour force estimates on the welfare of lone-father households, possibly owing to the fact that they are less common.⁵

Figure IV: One-parent households and households of couples with and without children in selected countries in Europe and Northern America (latest available) (Percentage)



Source: UNDESA, Population Division (2019), Household Size & Composition 2019 (<https://population.un.org/Household/index.html#/countries/840>) (accessed on 14 August 2020).

About the data

Definitions

- **Proportion of households in which children live with only one parent:** lone-mother households or lone-father households, defined as their percentage among all household types. Household types include: (a) couple households: (i) with children, (ii) without children; (b) one-parent households: (i) lone-mother households, (ii) lone-father households; (c) one-person households; and (d) other types of households.
- **Oceania (excl):** Refers to Oceania excluding Australia and New Zealand throughout the publication.

Availability

Data are available for 88 countries for the period 2001–2018.

Footnotes

1. United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), Population Division, Patterns and trends in household size and composition: Evidence from a United Nations dataset, New York, 2019 (ST/ESA/SER.A/433); UNDESA, Statistics Division, The World's Women 2015: Trends and Statistics, New York, 2015 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.15.XVII.8).
2. UNDESA, Population Division (2019), Household Size & Composition 2019 (accessed on 6 July 2020).
3. UNDESA, Statistics Division, The World's Women 2015: Trends and Statistics, New York, 2015 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.15.XVII.8).
4. Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Society at a Glance 2019: OECD Social Indicators, Paris, 2019.
5. International Labour Organization (ILO) and the United Nation Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), Spotlight on Goal 8: The Impact of Marriage and Children on Labour Market Participation, 2020.

Finland: mean age at birth of first child by sex; total fertility rates; living arrangements for children



Key points

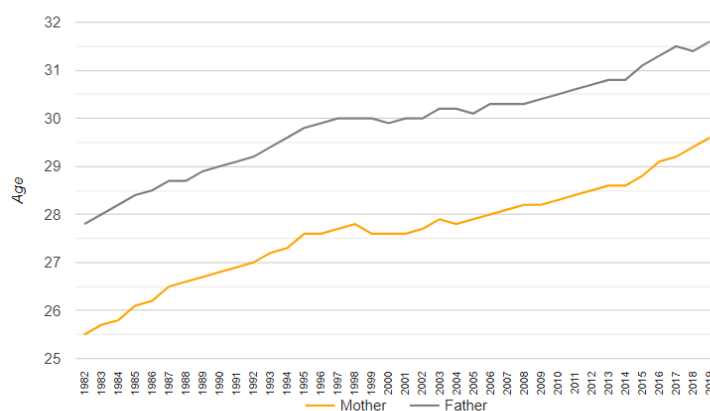
- The total fertility rate in Finland has declined since 2010, from 1.87 children per woman in 2010 to 1.35 children per woman in 2019, the lowest historically recorded rate.
- A growing proportion of Finnish women and men aged 15–49 live alone without a spouse, and this has contributed significantly to the postponement, or prevention, of childbearing: the proportion of women aged 28–32 living without a spouse was 20% in 2019, compared to 14% in 1999. The corresponding proportion of men aged 30–34 was 28% in 2019 compared to 20% in 1999.
- In 2019, first-time mothers in Finland were 2 years older, on average, than first-time mothers in 2000; first-time fathers were also older than the average age 20 years ago: the age difference between parents has remained at around 2 years over the last decades.
- A married couple with children is the most common family model in Finland, representing 57% of all families in 2019. Nevertheless, the number and proportion of one-parent families is on the rise. Lone-mother families represented 17% of families with children in 2000 and 20% in 2019; lone-father families represented 2% of families with children in 2000 and 3% in 2019.
- The average age of mothers at the birth of their first child has increased.

Current situation

Over the course of the last few decades, women's average age at the beginning of childbearing has increased. In 2019, first-time mothers in Finland were older than had previously been the case: the average age of first-time mothers in 2019 was 29.6 years, compared to 27.6 in 2000 (see figure I). This is connected to decreasing female fertility rates for the birth of the first child among women under age 30, coupled with increasing rates of fertility in older age groups.

On average, men are two years older than women when they become parents for the first time. In 2019, men became fathers for the first time at age of 31.6. Like mothers, first-time fathers were older than in previous decades: the difference in the ages of first-time mothers and first-time fathers has remained at around two years over the last decades.

Figure I: Mean age at first birth for first-time mothers and fathers: 1985–2019

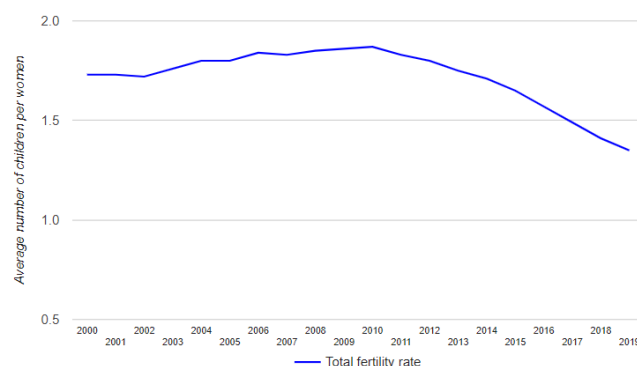


Source: Statistics Finland, Birth rate (https://www.stat.fi/tup/maahanmuutto/perheet/syntyvyyks_en.html).

Total fertility rate has been declining since around 2010

In Finland, the total fertility rate has declined remarkably since 2010, when it was 1.87 children per woman — by 2019 the fertility rate was at an all-time low, at 1.35 children per woman. Compared to the rate in 2000, the birth rate fell in the first two decades of the twenty-first century (see figure II). The decline has been connected to the postponement of childbearing to older ages. As reported above, in 2019 the mean age of women giving birth for the first time was 29.6 years, and for first-time fathers the mean age was 31.6 years.

Figure II: Total fertility rate: 2000—2019



Source: Statistics Finland, Birth rate (https://www.stat.fi/tup/maahanmuutto/perheet/syntyvyyks_en.html).

The mean age at first birth is increasing - why?

Since the 1970s, on average, women have been giving birth to their first child at later ages than previously recorded — this during a period of time when women's participation in education and the labour force has continued to grow exponentially. In the Family Barometer 2017,¹ women, unlike men, expressed concern over career breaks caused by combining childbearing and employment, possibly because having children was considered either undesirable or inappropriate in the work environment, in particular for women in fixed-term employment.² To address this situation, women have adopted different ways of working, including part-time work, in order to schedule family leave: the demands of fixed-term employment on women have been a contributing factor in the decision to postpone childbearing.³

Traditional obligations for women, such as childcare and other family responsibilities, on the one hand and the demands of working life and career on the other have been perceived as contradictory and difficult to coordinate. In general, employers have not been expected to anticipate the situation of women of reproductive age, and jobs that were family-friendly were rare and sought after. For men, having children has not been seen as a reason for absence from work nor for adding childcare to their responsibilities in the home.⁴

It has also been suggested that the upswing in the number of small families and delayed childbearing are evidence of new kinds of problems and challenges, including difficulties in conceiving children and unwanted childlessness.⁵ In addition, a growing proportion of Finnish women of childbearing age live alone, without a spouse, as do a growing number of men in the same age bracket, and this has contributed significantly to the trend towards postponing, or preventing, childbearing. For example, in 2019, 20% of women aged 28—32 and 28% of men aged 30—34 lived alone without a spouse, compared to 14% of women and 20% of men in 1999.

Living arrangements for children aged 18 and below

Married couples with children are the most common family model in Finland, representing 57% of all families with children in 2019. Although there has been a steady decline over the years in this type of family, both in absolute and relative terms, other types of families with children are still far less prevalent.

In 2019, **one-parent families** represented almost one-fourth (23%) of all families with children. Families of mothers and children represented about 20% of all families with children. Even though the number of families with a single father and children has

grown, the number is still very low, and such families make up only 3% of all families with children. Nevertheless, the overall number and the share of one-parent families is on the rise. In 2000, 17% of families with children were composed of mothers and children and 2% were composed of fathers with children.

Source

- [Statistics Finland, Families with underage children by type in 1950–2019 \(corrected on 24 August 2020\)](#)

About the data

Definitions

- **Mean age at first birth:** Refers to the mean age of parents when having their first child: having children refers to biological children not to adopted or foster children.
- **Total fertility rate:** Mean (average) number of children a woman would have by age 50 if she survived to age 50 and was subject, throughout her life, to the age-specific fertility rates observed in a given year. The total fertility rate is expressed as the number of children per woman aged 15–49.⁶
- **Living arrangements⁷ of children from birth to age 17:** Refers to the place of residence where the children are registered: the information does not necessarily describe the everyday practices of families.⁸

Coverage

Women of childbearing age (conventionally ages 15–49) in Finland. Living arrangements for children cover children from birth to age 17. Analysis is at the national and subnational level.

Availability

Information on the mean age at first birth by sex is based on the Finnish Population Register.⁹ The main source for producing Finnish population statistics is the Population Information System, which is maintained by the Digital and Population Data Services Agency. Data on fathers are based on population data in the statistical reference period, according to which the names of fathers have been recorded for nearly 98% of children in the Population Information System.

Footnotes

1. Family Barometer (Perhebarometri).
2. Rotkirch, A., Tammisalo, K., Miettinen, A. and Berg, V., "Miksi vanhemmuutta lykataan? Nuorten aikuisten näkemyksiä lastensaannista", Perhebarometri (Family Barometer), University of Helsinki, 2017.
3. Sutela, H., "Maaraaikainen työ ja perheellistyminen Suomessa 1984–2008", Tutkimuksia 259, Statistics Finland, Helsinki, 2013.
4. Rotkirch, A., Tammisalo, K., Miettinen, A. and Berg, V., "Miksi vanhemmuutta lykataan? Nuorten aikuisten näkemyksiä lastensaannista", Perhebarometri, University of Helsinki, 2017.
5. Klemetti, R. and Raussi-Lehto, E., Edista, ehkaise ja vaikuta – Seksuaali- ja lisääntymisterveyden toimintaohjelma 2014–2020, Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare, Helsinki 2014.
6. United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), Population Division, World Fertility Data 2019.
7. In family statistics, children comprise the following persons living with their parents: biological children, adopted children, including biological children and adopted children of one of the spouses (foster children and children in the care of the family are not classified as children).
8. For example, in case of divorce, the child is only included in the family of one parent even if the parents, in practice, have joint custody. Children's **shared residence** was studied in the ad hoc module of the Labour Force Survey carried out by Statistics Finland in 2018. Data on shared residence were published on 17 June 2019. According to the results, there were altogether around 110,000 children living in two homes and 40,000 of those children resided for equal amounts of time in both homes.
9. In Finland, the last population registration was carried out on 1 January 1989. Since then, the Population Information System has been updated by notifications of changes. Annual notifications of changes in the population are expected by the last day of January of the following year.

Average number of children; age at childbirth; and childlessness



Key points

- Globally, the mean age at childbearing went up slightly between 1995 and 2020, from age 27.5 to 28.1: women have children at relatively young ages in Latin America and the Caribbean (27.3 years) and Central and Southern Asia (27.5 years); women have children at relatively more advanced ages in Australia and New Zealand (30.8 years).
- Globally, the average number of children born per woman declined slightly from 2.8 in the period 1995–2000 to 2.5 during the period 2015–2020 and most regions experienced a decline over the period.
- The sharpest decline in the average number of children born per woman was observed in sub-Saharan Africa (from 5.9 to 4.7 children per woman), while a slight increase was observed in Europe and Northern America (reaching the lowest observed average of 1.7 children).
- The use of contraception among women of reproductive age is most prevalent in Eastern and South-Eastern Asia (60%) and Australia and New Zealand (58%) and lowest in sub-Saharan Africa (29%) and Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand) (28%).
- Childlessness is highest in Australia and New Zealand (14.4%) and in Europe and Northern America (12.2%) and lowest in sub-Saharan Africa (8.1%) and Central and Southern Asia (5.6%). The prevalence of childlessness has increased in the past two decades, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa (47% increase) and Australia and New Zealand (46% increase).

Mean age at childbirth

The Beijing Platform for Action, adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995, recognized the basic right of all couples and individuals to decide freely and responsibly the number, spacing and timing of their children and to have the information and means to do so. How many children and when to have them are decisions that have implications on many facets of women's and men's lives.

In order to ensure the desired family size, women and men often use contraception, either to space or limit the number of children. To understand the implications of these factors from the point of view of societal change, it is important to examine both the mean age at childbearing, which provides useful information about the timing of births by age of the mother, and the determinants of childlessness, given the link between fertility to population growth.

The mean age of childbearing is of significance because of its effect on the growth rate of the population, which has important implications for the size of future populations.² The time between one generation and the next is directly affected by the ages at which women bear children, including the distribution of births across the reproductive agespan.

Substantial differences among regions in the mean age at childbirth

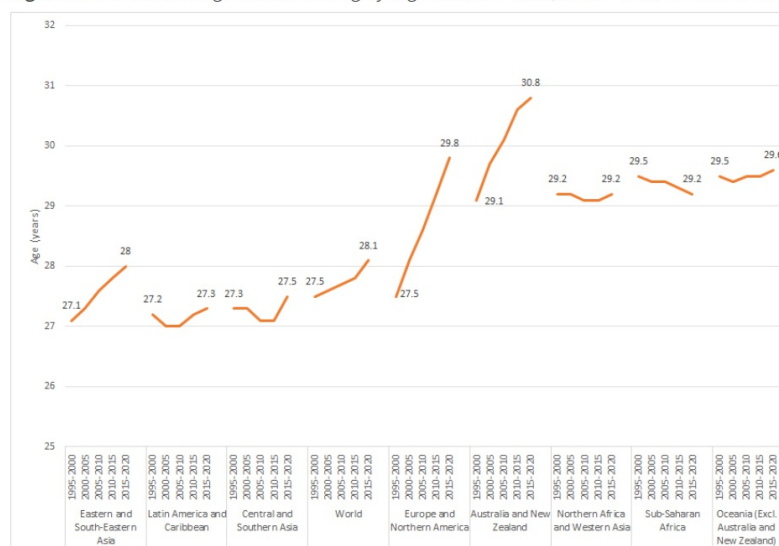
Globally, during the period 1995–2020, the mean age at childbearing went up slightly, from age 27.5 to 28.1 (see figure I). The rise in the mean age, often described as fertility postponement, is primarily due to a progressively later start to childbearing.³

There are regional differences in both levels and trends of the mean age at childbearing. The pattern in both Central and Southern Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean has followed a similar trend (a U shape), and these two regions have the lowest mean age at birth (age 27). In sub-Saharan Africa, Northern Africa and Western Asia and Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand), the mean age has been fairly constant, at around age 29. The mean age at childbearing is highest in Australia and New Zealand and Europe and Northern America, and it has increased noticeably in both regions in 2020 (to age 30.8 and age 29.8, respectively).

The observed upswing in the mean age at childbearing is likely due to women postponing the timing of their first births coupled with a reduction in the total number of births per woman due to fertility control through the use of contraception. This

increase in the mean age reduces the age span within which women are having their children, thereby leading to a reduction in the total number of births per woman. Data on total fertility rates over time (see figure II) show a general downward trend over the past three decades during which time the mean age at childbearing has increased.

Figure I: Female mean age at childbearing by region: 1995–2000, 2000–2010 and 2015–2020



Source: Based on data from United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), Population Division, World Population Prospects 2019, online edition (accessed on 26 June 2020) (<https://population.un.org/wpp/>).

Average number of children born per woman (total fertility rate)

The timing of the first birth and the total number of children a person might have is dependent on age at marriage or **entry into a union**, education and employment opportunities, gender roles and expectations, access to family planning and the social and economic context in which the parents live.

Women are having fewer children over the childbearing years

Globally, the average number of children born per woman declined slightly from 2.8 during the period 1995–2000 to 2.5 during the period 2015–2020 (see figure II). Most geographical regions show a decline in birth rates, but with marked differences. In general, regions with high fertility have experienced a sharper decline in fertility than in those with lower levels of fertility.

Sub-Saharan Africa (from 5.9 to 4.7) and Central and Southern Asia (from 3.6 to 2.4) show the sharpest decline in the average number of children born per woman during this period. On the other hand, regions with low fertility levels (below 2 children per woman, on average), such as Europe and Northern America, Australia and New Zealand and Eastern and South-Eastern Asia, show minimal changes over the same time period. In fact, data show that there has been a slight increase in the average number of children born per woman since the mid-1990s in some European countries,⁴ including Belarus, Germany and the Russian Federation.⁵ The pattern of increasing fertility in recent years has also been observed in Australia and New Zealand, and to some extent in: China, Hong Kong Special Administrative Region; Japan; and Mongolia. It should be borne in mind, however, that in most of these countries, fertility levels, even with the slight increase, have remained below the replacement level of 2.1 children per woman.

Trends in the average number of children born per woman should be considered in conjunction with trends in the mean age at birth as well as the use of contraception, as both factors influence the lifetime fertility of women. Analysis of the mean age at childbearing shows an upward trend in the period since the mid-1990s, resulting in a shorter span of childbearing. Concomitantly, available information on country experiences (see figure III) shows an inverse relationship between

contraceptive use and levels of fertility.

Figure II: Average number of children per woman, by geographical region: 1995–2000, 2005–2010, and 2015–2020



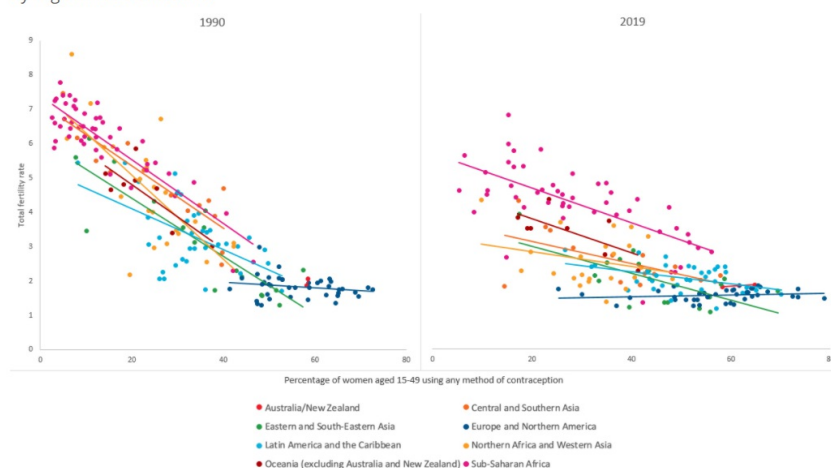
Source: Based on data from UNDESA, Population Division, World Population Prospects 2019, online edition (accessed on 26 June 2020) (<https://population.un.org/wpp/>).

Use of contraception

A major contributor to the observed changes in levels of fertility is the use of contraception. The availability and use of contraception contribute to the ability of women and men to decide freely on the number, timing and spacing of their children. There is a strong inverse relationship between contraceptive use and the level of fertility, represented by the total fertility rate (see figure III) over the past three decades. With the increase in the use of contraception, fertility levels have fallen in all regions in the period 1990–2019.⁶ In general, regions with lower levels of fertility have higher proportions of women that are using contraception.

The observed decline in births in high fertility regions (sub-Saharan Africa and Central and Southern Asia) attests to the link between the increased use of contraception and observed changes in levels of fertility. The observed variations and spread among countries in sub-Saharan Africa, Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand) and Central and Southern Asia help to explain why, in spite of the decline in births, levels of fertility are still higher there than in other regions. In the case of sub-Saharan Africa, the persistently higher levels of fertility compared to observed levels of contraceptive use may be partly due to the fact that many family planning programmes in the region are promoted as birth-spacing programmes.⁷

Figure III: Total fertility rate compared to prevalence of contraceptive use among women aged 15–49 by region: 1990 and 2019



Source: Prepared by UNDESA, Population Division (correspondence with the Population Division on 25 June 2020)

The **COVID-19** crisis could leave significant numbers of women and couples without access to essential sexual and reproductive health care. Globally, it had been estimated that 77% of women of reproductive age (15–49 years) would have their needs for family planning met with the use of **modern contraceptive methods** in 2020. However, considering the potential impact of COVID-19 on method-specific use, this could fall to 71%, resulting in around 60 million fewer users of modern contraception worldwide in 2020 if these disruptions last for a whole year. Overall declines in contraceptive use will depend on the methods used by women and their partners and on the types of disruptions experienced in individual countries. Countries should include family planning and reproductive health services in their essential services planning and should develop strategies to ensure that women and couples are able to exercise their reproductive rights during the COVID-19 crisis.⁸

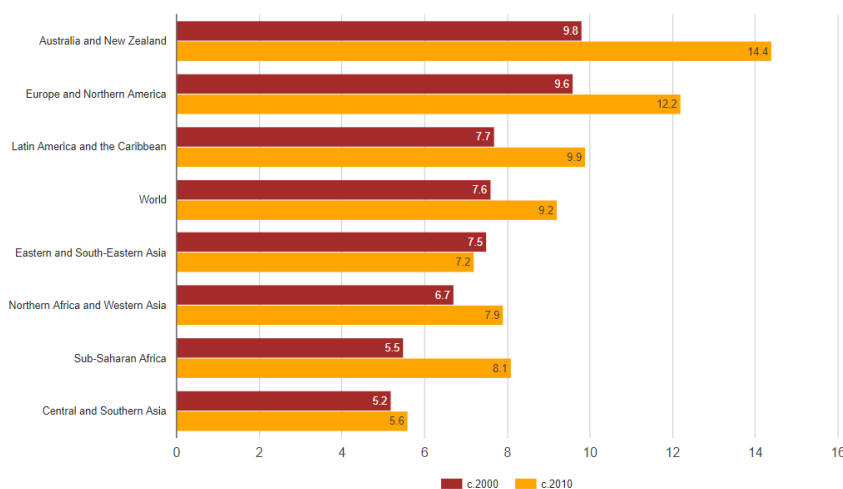
Childlessness among women aged 45–49

For a variety of reasons, some women never have children. While for some women childlessness is voluntary, for others it is not, and the lack of offspring may be a cause of emotional distress to them and to their families. In other cases, research shows that childlessness may be linked to women's level of education and employment opportunities. This is because highly educated women may postpone childbearing to later ages because of real or perceived obstacles to balancing work life and childrearing or not finding a partner.⁹ This perpetual postponement may result in not having any children at all.

Childlessness on the increase

The prevalence of childlessness has increased in the past few decades (see figure IV). Globally, the proportion of childless women aged 45–49 increased from 7.6% to 9.2% over the last two decades. Europe and Northern America and Australia and New Zealand have much higher proportions of childlessness than other regions. All major geographical regions, except Eastern and South-East Asia, which recorded almost no change, show an increase in the incidence of childlessness over this time period. Proportionately, the increase in childlessness has been highest in sub-Saharan Africa, where the proportion jumped from 5.5% to 8.1% over the last two decades (a 47% increase), and in Australia and New Zealand where the percentage of childless women is over 14% according to most recent data (a 46% increase compared to two decades ago). Other regions with substantial increases in childlessness over the past two decades include Europe and Northern America, where the increase was from 9.6% to 12.2% (a 27% increase), and Latin America and the Caribbean, which showed an increase in childlessness from 7.7% to 9.9% (a 29% increase). There was a smaller increase, however, in the Central and Southern Asia region, from 5.2% to 5.6% (an 8% increase).

Figure IV: Proportion of childless women aged 45–49, by geographical region: c.2000 and c.2010 (latest available) (Percentage)



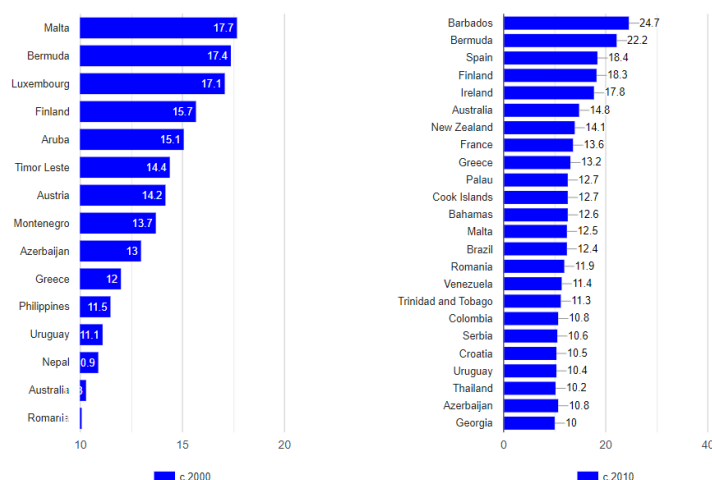
Source: UNDESA, Statistics Division, UNdata (<http://data.un.org/Data.aspx?d=POP&f=tableCode:40>) (accessed on 12 May 2020).

Note: Unweighted averages

There are very wide variations among countries in definitive childlessness, that is, among women who have reached the end of the reproductive period. Data on countries with the highest (above 10%) proportions of childlessness over the last two decades show that, generally (see figure V), Australia and New Zealand and countries in Europe and Northern America have much higher proportions of childlessness than other regions. Countries in sub-Saharan Africa and in Northern Africa and Western Asia have the lowest proportion of women without children (below 5%), although childlessness is growing at a fast pace in sub-Saharan Africa (see figure IV).

Around 2000, there were 15 countries with over 10% of women aged 45–49 without children. More than half of those countries and territories were in Europe and Northern America: Austria, Bermuda, Finland, Greece, Luxembourg, Malta, Montenegro and Romania. Countries and territories with high proportions of childless women in other regions in 2000 included Nepal (Southern Asia) and the Philippines (South-Eastern Asia), both with 11%; Azerbaijan (Western Asia) with 13%; and Aruba (Caribbean) with 15%.

Figure V: Countries and territories with highest proportions of childless women aged 45—49 years: c.2000 and c.2010 (latest available) (Percentage)



Source: UNDESA, Statistics Division, UNdata (<http://data.un.org/Data.aspx?d=POP&f=tableCode:40>) (accessed on 12 May 2020).

In 2019, two decades later, the list of countries with at least 10% of childlessness has grown to 24 countries and territories, most of which are in Europe and Northern America, with the highest rates of childlessness in Bermuda, Croatia, Finland, France, Greece, Ireland, Malta, Romania, Serbia and Spain. Countries and territories with high proportions of childless women in other regions include Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) and Brazil (South America), both at around 12%, the Bahamas (Caribbean), the Cook Islands and Palau (Oceania, excluding Australia and New Zealand), all with around 13%.

The observed rates of childlessness and changes over time are a reflection of how changes in social norms coupled with the availability of modern methods of contraception and family planning have worked together to de-link sex from biological reproduction.¹¹ As a result, women have greater **control over their own sexuality** and reproduction with far-reaching implications for their health and their capacity to control the most intimate decisions that affect their lives. It should be noted that, in societies where women are expected to marry and have children, preferably at a young age, and where childbearing is highly valued, being childless may be shunned and may be far from being voluntary.¹²

About the data

Definitions

- **Female mean age at childbearing:** Mean (average) age of mothers at the birth of their children if women were subject throughout their lives to the age-specific fertility rates observed in a given year.¹³
- **Total fertility rate:** mean (average) number of children a woman would have by age 50 if she survived to age 50 and was subject, throughout her life, to the age-specific fertility rates observed in a given year. The total fertility is expressed as the number of children per woman.¹⁴
- **Childlessness** is measured as the proportion of women aged 45–49 who have never had a child. Childlessness may be intentional or not.
- **Contraceptive use:** percentage of women aged 15–49 who report that they themselves or their partners are currently using at least one contraceptive method of any type.¹⁵

Coverage

Estimates of the total fertility rate are calculated for women aged 15–49. The mean age at childbearing is calculated for women of childbearing ages (conventionally aged 15–49). The analysis of childlessness covers the female population aged 45–49. The information is presented for countries worldwide and by regional groupings under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) indicators framework.¹⁶

Footnotes

1. United Nations, Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4–15 September 1995 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II, para. 94.
2. UNDESA, Population Division, 2019: "Potential impact of later childbearing on future population", Population Facts, No. 2019/5, December 2019 (<https://www.un.org/development/desa/pd/content/potential-impact-later-childbearing-future-population>).
3. Neels, K., Murphy, M., Ni Bhrolchain, M. and Beaujouan, E., "Rising Educational Participation and the Trend to Later Childbearing", *Population and Development Review*, vol. 43 (4), December 2017.
4. UNDESA, Population Division, *World Fertility and Family Planning 2020: Highlights*, New York, 2020.
5. UNDESA, Population Division, *World Population Prospects 2019*, online edition (accessed on 26 June 2020).
6. UNDESA, Population Division, *World Fertility and Family Planning 2020: Highlights*, New York, 2020.
7. Ibid.
8. Dasgupta, A., Kantorová, V. and Ueffing, P., "The impact of the COVID-19 crisis on meeting needs for family planning: a global scenario by contraceptive methods used", *Gates Open Research, Coronavirus (COVID-19) Collection*, July 2020.
9. Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), *Doing Better for Families*, OECD Publishing, Paris, 2011.
10. OECD, Social Policy Division, Directorate of Employment, Labour and Social Affairs, *Childlessness* (accessed on 12 May 2020).
11. United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), *World's Women 2019–2020: Families in a Changing World*, New York, 2019.
12. Tabong, P.T. and Adongo, P.B., "Infertility and childlessness: a qualitative study of the experiences of infertile couples in Northern Ghana", *BMC Pregnancy & Childbirth*, vol. 13, March 2013.
13. United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), *World Population Prospect 2019*, Glossary of Demographic Terms.
14. UNDESA, Population Division, *World Fertility Data 2019*.
15. UNDESA, Population Division, *World Fertility and Family Planning 2020: Highlights*, New York, 2020.
16. Regional groupings under Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) indicators framework.

Mean age at first marriage; child marriage; and adolescent birth rate



Key points

- The age at which women and men first marry is rising in all regions worldwide: on average, women are getting married or entering into informal unions at age 23, about 3.5 years younger than men, who marry, on average, at age 26.5.
- Regions in which girls first marry at the youngest ages, Central and Southern Asia, Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand), sub-Saharan Africa, and Northern Africa and Western Asia, also report the widest gender gap in age at first marriage. In contrast, Australia and New Zealand, and Europe and Northern America have the highest female mean age at first marriage and the smallest gender gap.
- In many countries, different minimum ages for marriage for women and men are set out in legislation, introducing a gender bias into national legal frameworks. Available data show that, with or without parental consent, marriage before age 18, for both adolescent girls and boys, is not allowed by law in 54 developing countries and 48 developed countries.
- Child marriage before age 18 has slowly declined in all regions with representative data, from 26% in the early 2000s to 20% by 2019. Sub-Saharan Africa, where 35% of women aged 20–24 have been married before age 18, is the region with the highest rate of child marriage, while Central Asia has the lowest incidence (8%). Southern Asia has recorded the largest decline in child marriages before age 18, from 52% to 29% over the same time period.
- Child marriage before age 15 has gone down globally, from 8% to 5%, since the early 2000s, although sub-Saharan Africa, where 11% of girls marry before age 15, remains the region with the highest prevalence.
- While child marriage is more common among girls than boys,¹ available data for selected countries show that at least 10% of men aged 20–24 married before age 18.
- The rate of motherhood among adolescent girls, although declining in all regions, is still high, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, and to some extent in Latin America and the Caribbean. At 101 births per 1,000 women in 2020, sub-Saharan Africa has the highest rate of adolescent fertility, and Eastern Asia the lowest (7 births per 1,000). High rates of motherhood for adolescent girls should be looked at in the context of the likelihood that not all childbearing is taking place in the context of a marriage or union.

Background

Marriages and entering into unions are generally viewed as a first step in establishing a family, sharing resources and providing care, a key element among the building blocks of all societies.

The age at which women first marry or enter into union, or first become pregnant is an important indicator of their level of empowerment, as it shapes their reproductive behaviour and is linked to their opportunities for education and employment.² Girls aged 15–19 who either become pregnant or enter into marriage are more likely to give birth early and to have extended lifetime fertility,³ and are more likely to discontinue schooling,⁴ with implications for their participation in the labour market, given that education has a substantial impact on employment prospects.⁵ Child marriage, before age 18, is also a violation of a child's rights.

It is estimated that 21 million girls aged 15–19 in developing regions become pregnant, approximately 12 million of them give birth in their teenage years,⁶ and it is probable that the remaining 9 million have their pregnancies terminated. It is recognized that becoming pregnant and giving birth early in life is associated with elevated health risks for both mothers and babies. Pregnancy and complications in childbirth are the leading causes of death among girls aged 15–19 globally, with 99% of maternal deaths among women aged 15–49 worldwide reported in low- and middle-income countries.⁷ Moreover, babies born to mothers under age 20 face higher risks of low birth weight, preterm delivery and severe neonatal conditions.⁸

In response, many countries have made the reduction in the adolescent birth rate a priority.⁹ Adolescent girls who become

pregnant may be forced to discontinue schooling, thereby reducing their opportunities for socioeconomic development, in many cases leading to lower earnings, the perpetuation of poverty cycles and social and political exclusion over the course of their lifetimes,¹⁰ as well as long-term impact on their mental health.

Age at first marriage

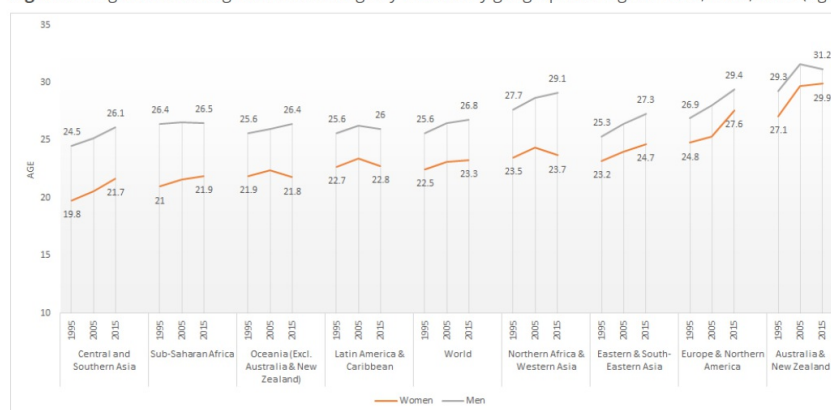
Women and men are marrying/entering into unions at later ages

Women continue to marry at younger ages than men, 3.5 years younger on average. Globally, the mean age at first marriage¹¹ for women has remained at around age 23 over the last 20 years (see figure I). During the same time period, the average age for men increased from age 25.6 to age 26.8, resulting in an increase of about half a year in the gender gap in mean age at marriage.

Central and Southern Asia, sub-Saharan Africa and Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand), the regions where women marry at the youngest ages (on average at age 22), also show a larger gender gap in mean age at first marriage (around 4.5 years), although the largest gender gap in the mean age is in Northern Africa and Western Asia (5.4 years). In contrast, the gender difference in mean age at first marriage in Australia and New Zealand and Europe and Northern America, where women marry, on average, at age 30 and age 28, respectively, is less than 2 years.

In terms of change over time, during the period 1995–2015, the mean age at first marriage increased for both women and men in all regions, with few exceptions and with different magnitude. Women in Europe and Northern America, and Australia and New Zealand showed the highest increase (3 years) in mean age at first marriage, followed by women in Central and Southern Asia (2 years). In Europe and Northern America and in Australia and New Zealand there was also a reduction in the gender gap in age at first marriage.

Figure I: Singulate mean age at first marriage by sex and by geographical region: 1995, 2005, 2015 (Age)

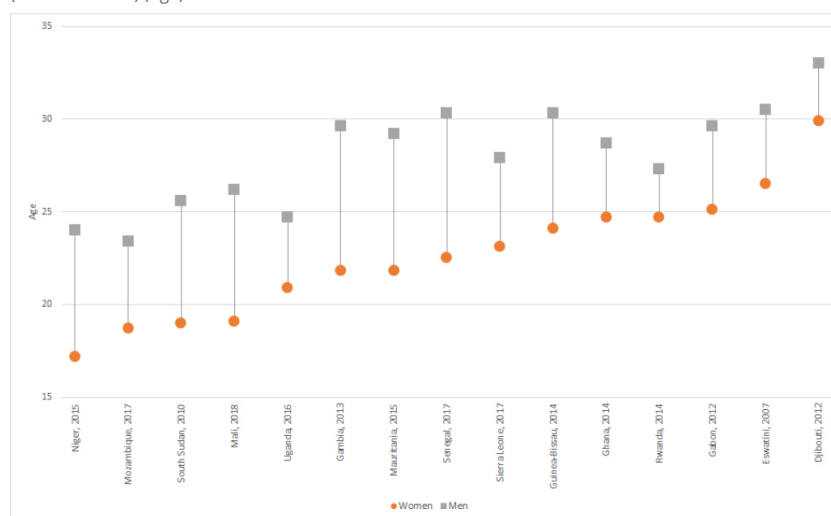


Source: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), Population Division, World Marriage Data 2019 (<https://population.un.org/MarriageData/index.html#/home>).

It is worth noting that the observed gender gaps in the singulate mean age at first marriage at regional levels mask intraregional differences in nuptiality patterns between women and men. Available data for selected countries with women's lowest and highest ages at marriage in sub-Saharan Africa (see figure II) show significant disparities across countries within the region. For example, there is 13-year difference in women's mean age at marriage between Niger (17 years) and Djibouti (30 years).

Differences between countries are also noticeable in the gender gap in the mean age at marriage, ranging from 3 years in Rwanda and Djibouti to a high of 8 years in Senegal and the Gambia. This information is useful for studies about the socioeconomic outcomes for women and men, taking into account their ages at first marriage, as well as the differences in age between spouses.

Figure II: Singulate mean age at first marriage by sex in sub-Saharan Africa, by country: 2007–2018 (latest available) (Age)



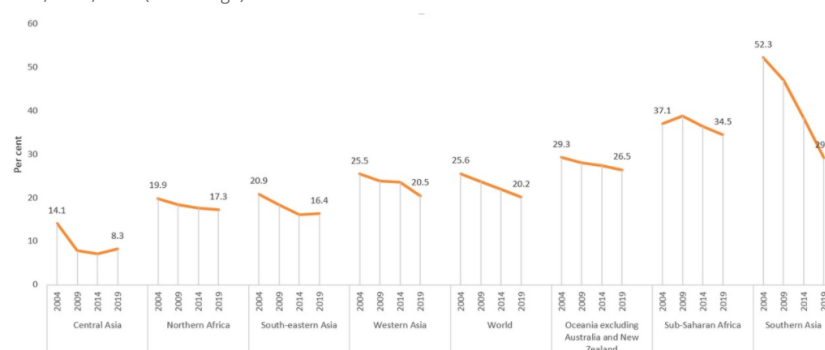
Source: UNDESA, Population Division, World Marriage Data 2019 (<https://population.un.org/MarriageData/index.html#/home>).

Child marriage

Marriage before the age of 18 is a violation of a child's rights. The development of girls who are married in childhood may be compromised by their withdrawal from education, stunted career prospects and social isolation, and, commonly, by early pregnancy and its attendant risks.¹² Child brides may enter unions that put them at risk of *intimate partner violence*, or in which they are not empowered to exercise autonomy in decisions affecting their lives, including their *reproductive health*.¹³ Child marriage can also result in early pregnancy and have negative consequences for the health and survival of mothers and babies. Research also shows a significant negative association between very early marriage (before age 15) and the overall psychological well-being of women.¹⁴

National legislation in many countries prohibits child marriage, although legal protections are far from universal, often allowing for exceptions to the minimum age at marriage. Furthermore, legislation in some countries sets different minimum ages for marriage for women and men, introducing a gender bias into the legal framework. Available data also show that not all countries or territories have laws banning marriage before age 18. With or without parental consent, marriage before age 18, for both women and men, is not allowed by law in 54 developing countries and 48 developed countries.¹⁵

Figure III: Percentage of women aged 20–24 who were first married or in a union before age 18: 2004, 2009, 2014, 2019 (Percentage)



Source: United Nations Economic and Social Council, Progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals, Report of the Secretary General – Supplementary information (E/2020/57).

Note: Analysis is based on a subset of 91 countries world-wide covering 77% of the global population of women aged 20–24. Regional estimates represent data covering at least 50% of the regional population. Data coverage was insufficient to calculate regional estimates for Europe and Northern America; Latin America and the Caribbean; and Australia and New Zealand.

Despite a general downward trend, child marriage is still prevalent in selected regions

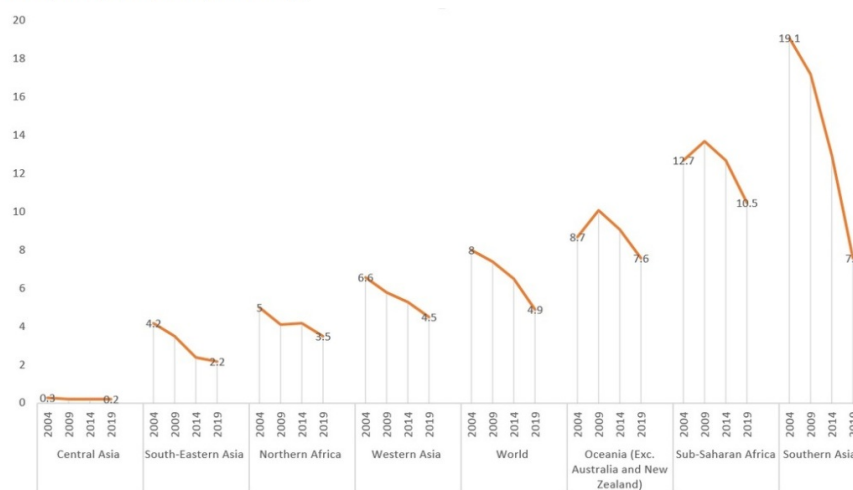
Worldwide, about 5% of women aged 20–24 were married before age 15, and girls remain disproportionately affected, with one in five young women in that age group married before age 18, compared to 1 in 30 young men.¹⁶

While child marriage still exists, it is becoming less common, and has declined at an accelerated rate since 2009 (see figure III). The most significant progress has been observed in Southern Asia, where the level of child marriage has fallen by more than a third, from nearly 50% in 2009 to 29% in 2019. The highest rates of child marriage are in countries in sub-Saharan Africa, where the prevalence is (35%); only modest progress has been made since 2009.¹⁷

In 2019, worldwide, an estimated 5% of women aged 20–24 had been married or in a union before age 15, representing a 3 percentage point decline from the estimated level in 2004 (see figure IV).

In 2004, the Southern Asia (19%) and sub-Saharan Africa (13%) regions had the highest proportions of women married before age 15, while countries in Central Asia had the lowest proportions (0.3%). By 2019, however, while in Southern Asia there had been a significant decline in the proportion of women married before age 15 (11 percentage points, reaching around 8%), child marriage had declined at a more modest rate in sub-Saharan Africa (2 percentage points) and was still reported at around 11%.

Figure IV: Proportion of women aged 20–24 who were married or in a union before age 15 by region: 2003, 2008, 2013, 2018 (Percentage)



Source: United Nations Economic and Social Council, Progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals, Report of the Secretary General – Supplementary Information (E/2020/57).

Note: Analysis is based on a subset of 91 countries world-wide covering 77% of the global population of women aged 20–24. Regional estimates represent data covering at least 50% of the regional population. Data coverage was insufficient to calculate regional estimates for Europe and Northern America; Latin America and the Caribbean; and Australia and New Zealand.

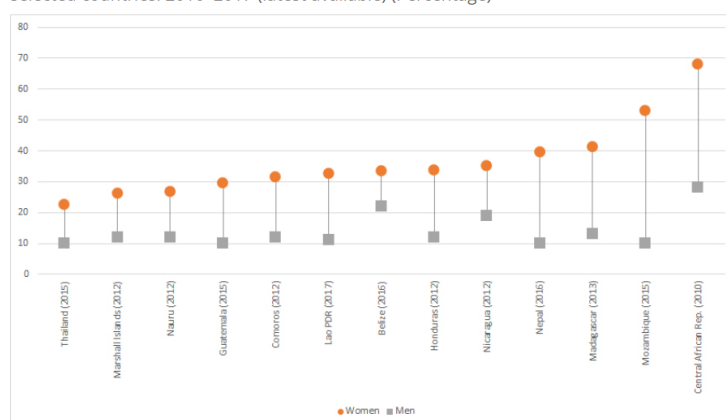
Early marriage for boys

Although more is known about early marriage for women, there is substantial evidence about early marriage for men. Available data for selected countries show that the proportion of men aged 20–24 who married or entered into a union before age 18 is at least 10% (see figure V). While more information is needed to verify both the magnitude and trends, this data show that in some countries, such as the Central African Republic (28%), Belize (22%) and Nicaragua (19%), sizeable proportions of the male population are married while still too young to take care of a family. Child grooms may have to assume adult responsibilities for which they may not be prepared, including early fatherhood, which may result in additional economic pressure to provide for

the household, and, as with girls, constraints on their access to education and their opportunities for career advancement.¹⁸ It should be noted that child marriage is a human rights violation for boys just as it is for girls.

The international community, through SDG target 5.3, is seeking to eliminate child marriage by 2030. While the world has made progress towards this goal, reaching it will require coordinated action and additional investment. To end child marriage by 2030, progress must be 17 times faster than the progress made over the last decade.

Figure V: Proportions of women and men aged 20–24 who were married or in a union before age 18 in selected countries: 2010–2017 (latest available) (Percentage)



Source: UNICEF global databases, 2020 (<https://data.unicef.org/topic/child-protection/child-marriage/>) (accessed on 29 January 2020).

Adolescent birth rate

Adolescent fertility on the decline

Globally, adolescent fertility has declined from 56 births per 1,000 adolescent women (aged 15–19) in 2000 to 41 births per 1,000 in 2020 (see figure VI).¹⁹ The level of adolescent fertility has declined substantially over the past 20 years in all geographical regions, matching levels and trends in the decline of child marriage, although with marked regional variations.

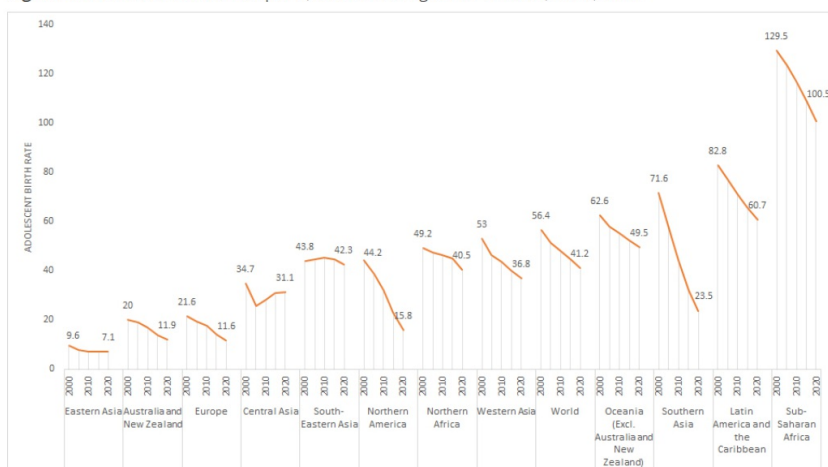
While the birth rate among adolescent girls in sub-Saharan Africa declined from 130 to 101 per 1,000 between 2000 and 2010, the level has remained higher than in any other region. Southern Asia registered the largest drop, from 72 to 24 births per 1,000 adolescent girls, while Latin America and the Caribbean registered a decrease from 83 to 61 births per 1,000 – the second highest rate after sub-Saharan Africa in 2020. At the other end of the spectrum, Eastern Asia (7 births per 1,000), Australia and New Zealand (12 births per 1,000), Europe (12 births per 1,000) and Northern America (16 births per 1,000) had the lowest adolescent fertility rates in 2020. Observed disparities across and within regions in the levels of the adolescent birth rate, as well as differences across and within countries, indicate that large numbers of young people do not have access to means of controlling their fertility, with important implications for their well-being.²⁰

It should be noted that while the estimated global adolescent fertility rate has declined, the actual number of children born to adolescents has not.²¹ This is mainly due to the fact that in some regions of the world there is a large and growing population of adolescent girls aged 15–19. For example, in the period 1995–2020, the population in this age range in sub-Saharan Africa, the region with the highest adolescent birth rate, increased from an estimated 30 million to 58 million. Consequently, although the adolescent fertility rate is declining in the region, the number of babies being born to adolescent mothers may not be declining. The increase in the numbers of adolescent girls as a result of the population momentum, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, may lead to difficulty in providing the requisite social and health services, including sexual and reproductive health services.

There are major risks associated with **adolescent childbearing**. Complications in pregnancy and childbirth are the leading cause of death among girls aged 15–19 globally,²² and the risk is highest for girls under age 15. It should be noted that many pregnancies are unwanted, but the affected adolescents may not have access to the requisite knowledge or sexual and reproductive health services to prevent pregnancies. Furthermore, many adolescent pregnancies are terminated, often in contexts where it is illegal to terminate a pregnancy.

Preventing pregnancy among girls under age 15 is an important measure to insure that they receive adequate education and life-long livelihood opportunities, including access to reproductive health care. Addressing very early fertility is critical for breaking the cycle of deprivation brought about through early childbearing, including the widely recognized potential health, social and economic disadvantages that young mothers face.²³

Figure VI: Adolescent birth rate per 1,000 women aged 15–19: 2000, 2010, 2020



Source: United Nations, Report of the Secretary-General on progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (document E/2020/57) (<https://undocs.org/E/2020/57>).

About the data

Definitions

- **Mean age at first marriage**, also known as the singulate mean age at marriage (SMAM), is the average age at first marriage among those who ever married or entered into a union before age 50.
- **Child marriage** refers to any formal or informal union between a child under age 18 and an adult or another child.²⁴ Although Sustainable Development Goal indicator 5.3.1²⁵ captures only child marriage among girls, "child marriage" refers to unions in which a girl or boy under age 18 lives with a partner as if married. Informal unions are generally defined as those in which couples live together (cohabitate) as if married but for which there has been no formal civil or religious ceremony.
- **Gender gap in age at first marriage** is the difference between women and men in the age at first marriage.
- **Adolescent birth rate** is the annual number of births to girls aged 10–14 or adolescents aged 15–19 per 1,000 women in those age groups.

Coverage

Estimates of the mean age at first marriage cover women and men ever married before age 50.

Measurement of child marriage covers women aged 20–24 who were first married or in a union: (a) under age 15; and (b) under age 18.

Analysis of the adolescent birth rate covers only births to women aged 15–19.

The information is presented for countries worldwide and by regional groupings under the Sustainable Development Goals.²⁶

Footnotes

1. The higher rate of marriage among adolescent girls compared to adolescent boys implies that the former get married to or form unions with older men.
2. UNICEF, *Ending Child Marriage: Progress and prospects*, New York, 2014.
3. United Nations Department of Economic and Social Development (UNDESA), Population Division, "Fertility among very young adolescents", *Population Facts*, No. 2019/1, April 2019.
4. Lloyd, C.B. and Mensch, B.S., "Marriage and childbirth as factors in dropping out from school: an analysis of DHS data from sub-Saharan Africa", *Popul Stud (Camb)*, 2008; 62(1).
5. Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), "How does education affect employment rates?", in *Education at a Glance 2012*, Paris, 2012.
6. Darroch, J., Woog, V., Bankole, A. and Ashford, L.S., *Adding It Up: Costs and Benefits of Meeting the Contraceptive Needs of Adolescents*, Guttmacher Institute; New York, 2016.
7. Neal, S., Matthews, Z., Frost, M. et al., "Childbearing in adolescents aged 12–15 years in low resource countries: a neglected issue. New estimates from demographic and household surveys in 42 countries", *Acta Obstetrica et Gynecologica Scandinavica*, 2012; 91 (9); *Every Woman Every Child, The Global Strategy for Women's, Children's and Adolescents' Health 2016–2030*, Geneva, 2015.
8. World Health Organization (WHO), *Global Health Estimates 2015: Deaths by Cause, Age, Sex, by Country and by Region, 2000–2015*, Geneva, 2016.
9. UNDESA, Statistics Division, E-Handbook on Sustainable Development Goals Indicators' page (dashboard on SDG indicator 3.7.2) (accessed on 27 March 2020).
10. UNDESA, Population Division, *Adolescent Fertility since the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo*, New York, 2013.
11. Defined as the singulate mean age at marriage (SMAM).
12. In its [resolution 29/8](#), adopted in 2015, the United Nations Human Rights Council recognized child marriage as "a harmful practice that violates, abuses and impairs human rights and is linked to and perpetuates other harmful practices and human rights violations", reinforcing [United Nations General Assembly resolution 69/156 on child, early and forced marriage](#).
13. UNICEF, *Child marriage around the world* (infographic).
14. John, N.A., Edmeades, J., Murithi, L., "Child marriage and psychological well-being in Niger and Ethiopia", *BMC Public Health*, vol. 19, No. 1029 (August 2019).
15. UNDESA, *Minimum Set of Gender Indicators portal* (accessed on 8 July 2020).
16. UNICEF, "115 million boys and men around the world married as children", press release, June 2019.
17. UNICEF, *Child Marriage: Latest trends and future prospects*, New York, 2018.
18. Gastón, C.M., Misunas, C. and Cappa, C., "Child marriage among boys: a global overview of available data", *Vulnerable Children and Youth Studies*, vol. 14, Issue 3, 2019.
19. UNDESA, Statistics Division, *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2019*, New York, 2019.
20. UNDESA, Population Division, *World Fertility 2019: Early and later childbearing among adolescent women*, New York, 2020 (ST/ESA/SER.A/446).
21. UNDESA, Statistics Division, *Global SDG Indicators Database*.
22. *Every Woman Every Child, The Global Strategy for Women's, Children's and Adolescents' Health 2016–2030*, Geneva, 2015.
23. UNDESA, Population Division, "Fertility among very young adolescents", *Population Facts*, No. 2019/1, April 2019.
24. United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), "Child marriage threatens the lives, well-being and futures of girls around the world".
25. Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) indicator 5.3.1 measures the proportion of women aged 20–24 years who were married or in a union before age 15 and before age 18.

26. Regional groupings under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Proportion of older women; proportion living alone



Key points

- The survival advantage of females over males results in a higher share of women than men among older persons. Globally, at least three out of every five persons (62%) aged 80 and over are women and just over a half (54%) of those aged 65 and over are women.
- The share of women among older persons aged 80 and over is the highest in Europe and Northern America (64%) and the lowest in Central and Southern Asia (55%).
- Three out of four older persons over the age of 80 in Belarus, Kazakhstan, the Russian Federation and Ukraine are women.
- Analysis of living arrangements for older persons is important as an indication of the level of support that is available to them.
- Women over age 65 are generally about twice as likely as older men to live alone in developed countries and three times as likely to live alone in developing ones.
- More than 30% of older women (around 18% of men) in Australia and New Zealand and in Europe and Northern America live alone, compared to 13% of older women (4% of men) in Central and Southern Asia and 19% of older women (6% of men) in Northern Africa and Western Asia.

Background

The proportion of women among the total population of older persons gives an indication of the relative mortality rates of women and men until advanced ages. An analysis of the living arrangements of older persons provides information about who they live with, whether alone or with others, and is important as an indication of the level of support that is available to them. In the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002, the living arrangements of older persons were identified as a topic requiring more attention and research.¹

Women comprise more than a half of the total older population worldwide

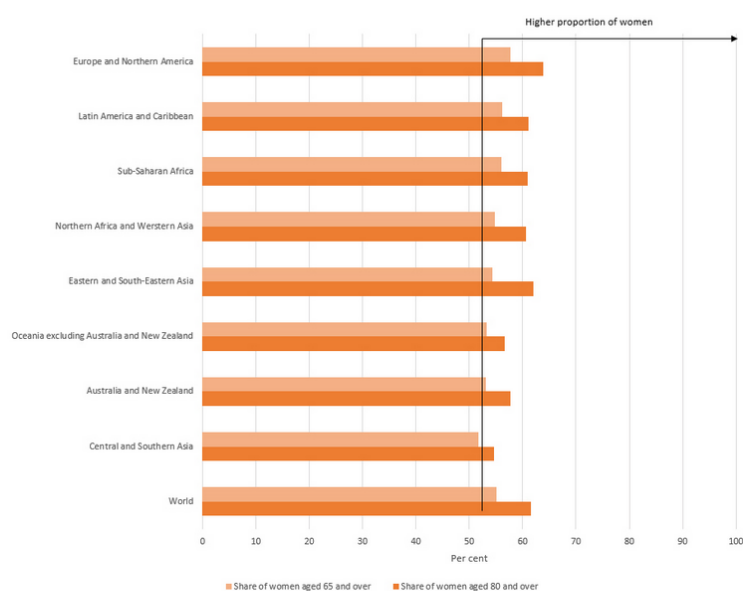
Women comprise more than a half of all older people throughout the world (see figure I). Globally, the share of women among the population aged 65 and older is 54%, and at the regional level, the share ranges from 51% in Central and Southern Asia to 56% in Europe and Northern America. The proportion of women among the population aged 80 and older is even higher both at the global level (62%), and at the regional level (ranging from 55% in Central and Southern Asia to 64% in Europe and Northern America). This high proportion of women among the older population is due to their survival advantage over men.²

Increasing life expectancy at older ages has implications for the living arrangements as well as the health and well-being of older people.³ In particular, data show that older women are more likely than older men to live alone due to: (a) their higher **life expectancy**; (b) higher prevalence of widowhood among women; and (c) higher prevalence of remarriage among men after **widowhood or divorce**.

As the length of life and thus the proportion of older persons in the population increase in many countries, it is important to examine whether this is accompanied by sustained health, decent quality of life and sufficient social and economic resources. Research shows that both the prevalence and severity of disability increase with age. In Australia, data show that older women are more likely than older men to have a profound or severe disability: 66.4% of women aged 90 years and over, compared with 48.9% of men aged 90 years and over.⁴ This points to the fact that as more women live to advanced ages, they require greater care and assistance in activities related to daily living, and long-term care always has costs, even when such care is provided by family members on an unpaid basis.

Since all regions are experiencing growth in the proportion of older persons at advanced ages, the need for long-term care will be critical, including in countries where crucial preconditions for care and healthy ageing, such as universal access to water, sanitation and electricity, as well as robust primary health-care systems, are often lacking.⁵ In addition, as people live longer, and women in particular, they are at higher risk of living in poverty. For instance, in sub-Saharan Africa, households headed by older women are more likely to be poorer than households headed by older men; and in more developed countries, older women in one-person households are more likely than older men to be living in poverty.⁶

Figure I: Share of women among people aged 65 and older and 80 and older, by region: 2019 (Percentage)



Source: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), Population Division, World Population Prospects 2019, Online Edition (<https://population.un.org/wpp/>).

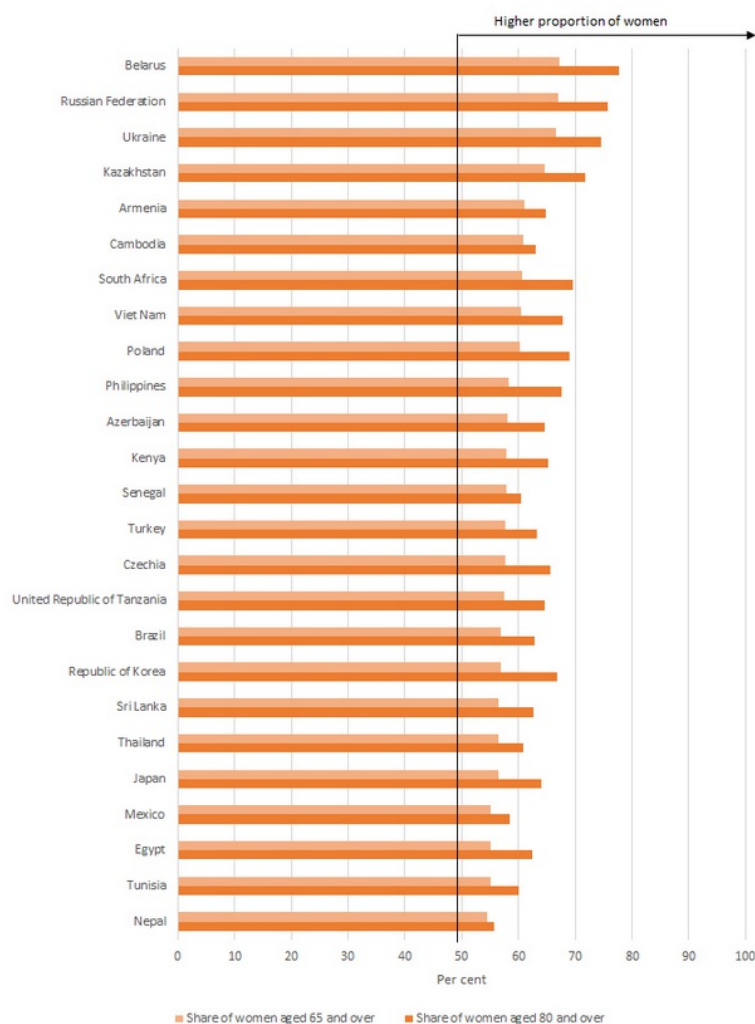
Note: The vertical line (-) indicates the same number of women and men.

National differences in the proportion of women among older persons

Certain countries have higher shares of women in their population of older persons (see figure II). Among the 25 countries with a proportion of women aged 65 years and older that is higher than the global average of 54%, the following have at least 60%: Armenia, Belarus, Cambodia, Kazakhstan, Poland, the Russian Federation, South Africa, Ukraine and Viet Nam. In five of those countries (Belarus, Kazakhstan, the Russian Federation, South Africa and Ukraine), the share of women among those aged 80 and over is at least 70%, pointing to a much higher

female than male survival rate among older persons in those countries.

Figure II: Share of women among people aged 65 and older and 80 and older in selected countries: 2019 (Percentage)



Source: UNDESA, Population Division, World Population Prospects 2019, Online Edition (<https://population.un.org/wpp/>).

Note: The vertical line (-) indicates the same number of women and men.

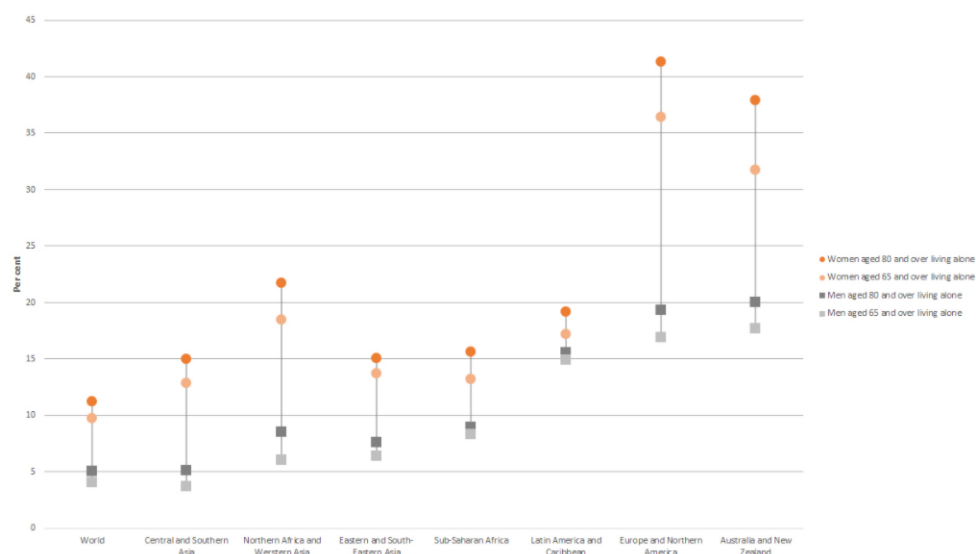
Older women are twice as likely as older men to live alone

Globally, a significant proportion of the population aged 65 and older live alone (see figure III), in particular women. Worldwide, 24% of women and 12% of men aged 65 and older, and 27% of women and 14% of men aged 80 and over live alone. In addition to the differential in the mortality rate between older women and men, it appears that marital status is a major determinant of the differences in living arrangements between the two groups.⁷

The proportion of persons living alone among people aged 65 and older varies widely among regions, ranging

between 13% in sub-Saharan Africa to 36% in Europe and Northern America, with developed regions generally having higher proportions of persons aged 65 and older living alone than developing ones. Nonetheless, in all the regions, a higher proportion of older women than older men live alone. While less than 9% of men aged 65 and older live alone in four regions (Central and Southern Asia, Eastern and South-Eastern Asia, Northern and Western Asia, and sub-Saharan Africa), the proportions of women aged 65 and older living alone in these regions range from 13% to 19%. However, the proportion of older women living alone is much higher in Australia and New Zealand (32% of women versus 18% of men) and in Europe and Northern America (36% of women versus 19% of men), about twice that of older men. The gender gap is very small, however, in countries in Latin America and Caribbean, with 17% of women and 15% of men aged 65 and older living alone.

Figure III: Proportion of the population aged 65 and older and 80 and older living alone by sex and by region: 2019 (Percentage)



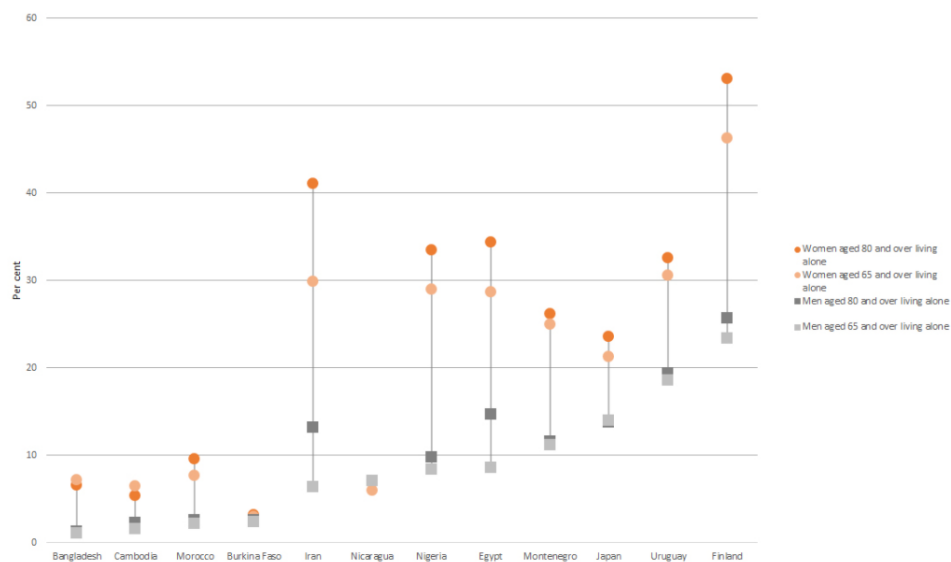
Source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2019). Database on the Households and Living Arrangements of Older Persons 2019.

Note: Unweighted averages.

National differences in the living arrangements of older persons

There are wide variations in the percentage of persons aged 65 and older living alone, even within geographical regions (see figure IV). For example, while 30% of older women and 6% of older men in the Islamic Republic of Iran live alone, in Bangladesh 7% of women and 1% of men in the same age range live by themselves. In Uruguay, 31% of women and 19% of men aged 65 years and over live alone, compared to 6% of older women and 7% of older men in the same age range in Nicaragua. Similarly, the proportion of persons aged 80 and older in one-person households in Finland (53% women and 26% men) is significantly higher than in Montenegro (26% women and 12% men).

Figure IV: Proportion of people aged over 65 and over and 80 and over living alone by sex, by selected countries: 2019 (Percentage)



Source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2019). Database on the Households and Living Arrangements of Older Persons 2019.

About the data

Definitions

- **Share of women aged 65 and over and aged 80 and over as a percentage of all older persons in the same age groups:** Provides information on the relative proportion of older women to older men
- **Share of women aged 65 and over and aged 80 and over living alone as a percentage of all older persons living alone:** Provides information on the living arrangements of older persons.

Coverage

Population aged 65 and over and aged 80 and over worldwide and by regional groupings under the Sustainable Development Goals indicators framework.⁸

Footnotes

1. Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002, adopted at the Second World Assembly on Ageing, Madrid, 8–12 April 2002.
2. Ritchie, H. and Roser, M., "Gender Ratio", Our World in Data, June 2019 (online).
3. United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), Population Division, "Living arrangements of older persons around the world", Population Facts, No. 2019/2, April 2019.
4. Australian Bureau of Statistics, Disability, Ageing and Carers, Summary of findings, 2018.
5. United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), "Long-term care for older people: A new global gender priority", Policy Brief No. 9, 2017.
6. UNDESA, Programme on Ageing, "Income Poverty in Old Age: An Emerging Development Priority", Briefings Series.
7. Population Division, "Living arrangements of older persons around the world", Population Facts, No. 2019/2, April 2019.
8. Regional groupings under the Sustainable Development Goals.

Chapter 2

Health

Introduction

Health outcomes for women and men are affected by gender inequalities and norms

Good health is a fundamental human right and a necessary precondition for individual and societal development. Differences in the health of women and men are determined by three interrelated factors: development, biology and gender. Each of these factors contributes to distinct health trajectories for individuals throughout the life cycle.

Medical and technological improvements and changes in behaviour in favour of healthier living over several decades are extending the lives of both women and men. In the case of women, maternal and reproductive health needs are increasingly being addressed through improved health systems and the delivery of services, including health care before, during and after childbirth, and access to modern methods of contraception. The risk of maternal death has been reduced globally by 38% between 2000 and 2017, with the greatest reduction achieved in Southern Asia (reduction of 59%). However, despite a 40% reduction in maternal mortality in countries in sub-Saharan Africa since 2000, the region accounted for roughly two-thirds of global maternal deaths in 2017.

Since 2000, there has also been a decline in smoking rates among both women and men, although worldwide men are still 4.5 times more likely to smoke than women: in Eastern and South-Eastern Asia men are almost 13 times more likely to smoke. The risk of dying prematurely from any of the four major non-communicable diseases (cardiovascular disease; cancer; diabetes; and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease) has decreased between 2000 and 2016, reaching 21.6% for men and 15% for women.

Gender inequalities, norms and expectations are determining factors in the health outcomes of women and men. For women, early marriage, together with poor access to information and education and lack of decision-making power within the family or in a couple relationship, increase the exposure of adolescent girls and adult women to sexually transmitted infections, including HIV, which is still a major concern, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, where 58% of all new HIV infections are reported among women. The intersections between infectious diseases, including HIV, and structural inequalities cannot be overstated. In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, efforts must be made to mitigate and overcome interruptions in health services and supplies. Models show that if no action is taken, a six-month complete disruption in HIV services, including antiretroviral therapy, could lead to more than 500,000 additional deaths in the period 2020–2021 in sub-Saharan Africa from AIDS-related illnesses, including tuberculosis.

Gender norms and expectations also contribute to early pregnancy and high fertility, increasing the likelihood of maternal death, which is still the leading global cause of death among young women (15–29), particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, accounting for over two-thirds of all maternal deaths in 2017. In addition, reduced access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights during the COVID-19 pandemic will bring the estimated proportion of women of reproductive age that have their needs for family planning satisfied with modern contraceptive methods down from 76.8% to 71% globally. In this context, emerging research suggests that

COVID-19 pandemic-related worries may influence how women feel about having children and may impact their plans about when and/or how many children to have.

Traditional gender roles also have a harmful effect on men. Adolescent boys and young men often take up habits and risky behaviours that are associated with stereotypical ideas of masculinity. About 73% of all deaths from road traffic injuries occur among young men under age 25, and men are the victims in 84% of intentional homicides in the population under age 29. Despite its downward trend, suicide remains a leading cause of death in some regions and is a global concern that includes a strong gender component. Suicide attempts are about two to four times more frequent among women, though men are more likely to use lethal means, resulting in higher suicide mortality rates among the male population. Men also smoke tobacco and drink alcohol to a much greater extent than women. These risky behaviours contribute to non-communicable diseases later in life. At age 50 and older, men are at a higher risk of dying from cancer than women, with mortality rates that are at least twice as high for several types of cancer (trachea, bronchia, lung, oesophagus, liver, stomach and bladder). Men over age 50 are also significantly more likely than women to die from ischaemic heart disease or cirrhosis of the liver. Marked gender differences in health and mortality patterns are also present in older ages: women aged 70 and older are between 20% and 30% more likely than men to die from Alzheimer's disease and other types of dementia. Women face a double burden: not only they are at higher risk of dementia as they live into older ages, they are also likely to be the main caregivers as partners, daughters and daughters-in-law.

Women's health in their reproductive years



Key points

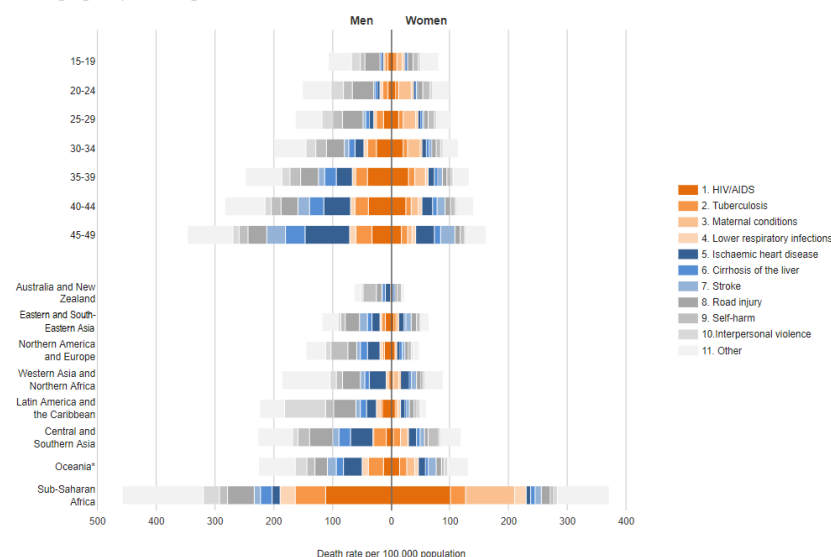
- In 2016, at the global level, maternal conditions were the leading cause of death among young women (aged 15–29); for young men in the same age bracket road injuries were the leading cause of death.
- The leading causes of death among women aged 15–49, both at the global level and in sub-Saharan Africa, are HIV/AIDS and maternal conditions. Within the same age group, men's causes of death are globally dominated by road injuries and ischaemic heart disease.
- In 2017, the life-time risk of dying from maternal causes in sub-Saharan Africa was 1 in 37; in Central and Southern Asia it was 1 in 260; and in Latin America and the Caribbean it was 1 in 630.
- During the period 2000–2017, the greatest overall reduction in maternal mortality was achieved in countries in Southern Asia, with a reduction of 59% in the number of deaths (from 384 to 157 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births).
- The risk of maternal death can be reduced through better access to modern methods of contraception, and by ensuring that women have access to high-quality care before, during and after childbirth, with an approach that is sensitive to cultural diversity. There has been significant improvement in reducing maternal mortality worldwide, with increased access to skilled care at delivery, the increase in contraceptive prevalence and the decline in fertility.
- There are marked regional disparities in access to modern contraceptive methods, as well as births attended by skilled personnel, with the lowest access to both being in Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand) and sub-Saharan Africa, which is also the region with the highest maternal mortality rate.
- Emerging research suggests that Coronavirus-19 (COVID-19) pandemic-related worries may influence how women feel about having children. Women may be changing their plans about when and/or how many children to have.

Background

Women's reproductive years begin at puberty and the onset of **menstruation** and end with menopause, spanning, on average, ages 15–49. Women's health status during this period is dominated by issues related to their **sexual and reproductive health**. During this period, women and men are likely to form families and enter the labour force, and are considered, on average, too young to die. Nevertheless, all types of diseases affect the health of people in this age group.

As reported by the World Health Organization (WHO):¹ (a) maternal conditions (group 1) represent a leading cause of death for women aged 15–49, both at the global level and in developing regions; (b) the risk of death from communicable diseases (also in group 1) is highest among women and men at ages 35–39, when the global death rates from HIV/AIDS peak for both women and men; (c) mortality from non-communicable diseases (group 2) increases with age, and is higher among men; and (d) deaths due to injuries (group 3) are prominent among men aged 15–49, particularly road accidents, as are deaths from suicide and interpersonal violence.

Figure I: Deaths due to leading causes of death among people aged 15-49 per 100,000 population by sex, age group and region: 2016



Source: World Health Organization (WHO), Health Topics, Global Health Estimates 2016 (https://www.who.int/healthinfo/global_burden_disease/en/).
Note: Oceania* means Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand); regions are organized in ascending order of the mortality rate among people aged 15-49.

Current situation

Central and Southern Asia are the only regions showing a gender difference in the top leading cause of death among people aged 15-49: self-harm for women and road injury for men

In 2016, among women aged 15-49, the leading causes of death at the global level and in sub-Saharan Africa were HIV/AIDS and maternal conditions. Within the same age group, at the global level men's causes of death were dominated by road injuries and ischaemic heart disease.

At the regional level, the top leading causes of death among people aged 15-49 were: self-harm (in Australia and New Zealand, and Northern America and Europe, for both women and men), road injury (in Eastern and South-Eastern Asia, for both women and men), and interpersonal violence (in Latin America and the Caribbean, for both women and men). Central and Southern Asia showed a gender difference in the top leading cause of death among people aged 15-49: self-harm for women and road injury for men.

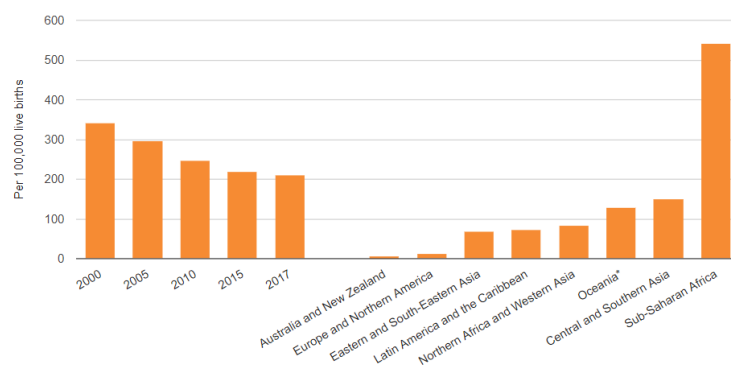
Globally, in 2017, an estimated 295,000 women died during pregnancy and childbirth

Worldwide, maternal conditions were the top cause of death among women aged 20–24 in 2016. The risk of dying from maternal causes is related to the risk of getting pregnant and to the obstetric risk of developing a complication and dying while pregnant, during childbirth or within 42 days postpartum. In resource-poor settings, fertility rates are higher and the risks of dying in labour are greater,² and thus the risk of dying from maternal causes is greatly amplified. In 2017, the lifetime risk of dying from maternal causes in sub-Saharan Africa was one in 37, in Central and Southern Asia it was one in 260, and in Latin America and the Caribbean it was one in 630 (see figure II).

Significant progress has been made in reducing maternal mortality since 2000. During the period 2000–2017, the global maternal mortality rate declined by 38% (from an estimated 342 to 210 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births). Over the same period, the greatest overall reduction in the rate was achieved in Southern Asia, with a reduction of 59% in the number of maternal deaths (from 384 to 157 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births). Four other regions roughly halved their maternal

mortality rates during this same period: Central Asia (by 52%), Eastern Asia (by 50%), Europe (by 53%) and Northern Africa (by 54%). All four regions, with the exception of Northern Africa, already had relatively low maternal mortality rates in 2000 (less than 100 per 100,000 live births).³ In 2017, sub-Saharan Africa and Southern Asia accounted for approximately 86% (254,000) of the estimated global maternal deaths, with sub-Saharan Africa alone accounting for roughly two-thirds (196,000) of maternal deaths, while Southern Asia accounted for nearly one-fifth (58,000).⁴ Despite its high maternal mortality rate in 2017, sub-Saharan Africa achieved a 40% reduction in maternal mortality in the years since 2000.

Figure II: Maternal mortality ratio by region: 2000-2017



Source: WHO, Trends in maternal mortality: 2000 to 2017: estimates by WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA, World Bank Group and the United Nations Population Division, Geneva, 2019 (https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/Maternal_mortality_report.pdf).

Note: Oceania* means Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand). Regional values are for 2017; regions are organized in ascending order by the maternal mortality ratio.

Wide variations in the maternal mortality ratio and lifetime risk suggest that most maternal deaths are preventable

Women die as a result of complications during and following pregnancy and childbirth. Most of these complications develop during pregnancy and are preventable or treatable. Other complications may exist before pregnancy but worsen during pregnancy, especially if not managed as part of a woman's health care.⁵ The major complications, which account for nearly 75% of all maternal deaths, are severe bleeding, infections, high blood pressure during pregnancy, complications from delivery and unsafe abortions.⁶

In addition to the tragic loss of life, maternal deaths have negative effects on families, including on the physical and mental health of family members.^{7,8} Studies have shown greatly increased mortality among children whose mothers have died.^{9,10,11} Other documented effects are of an economic nature, including catastrophic expenditures (for example, health care and funeral expenses), reduced household income and crippling debt;^{12,13,14} thus, not only are the risks of maternal death elevated by poverty, such deaths may act to reinforce the cycle of poverty in poor communities from one generation to the next.

Maternal deaths are also influenced by other factors associated with poverty, such as poor nutrition, lack of freedom over reproductive health choices and lack of access to resources. Programmes to address upstream risk factors for maternal death, including by promoting women's economic empowerment and educational attainment, are also important for the well-being of women and their families.

The risk of maternal death can be reduced through better access to modern methods of contraception and by ensuring that women have access to high-quality care before, during and after childbirth

Family planning is one of the most important aspects of reproductive health, since the use of modern contraceptive methods allows women to avoid unintended pregnancies. An unintended or unwanted pregnancy may be a pregnancy too early in life, too soon after a previous pregnancy or after a family has been established at a desired size. Like any pregnancy, unwanted pregnancies carry the risk of disability or even death, but they also have added health risks due to the possibility that a woman

may choose to have an abortion, and that it might be unsafe. Unlike abortions carried out by skilled personnel in a medically safe environment, unsafe abortions carry a very high risk of complications.

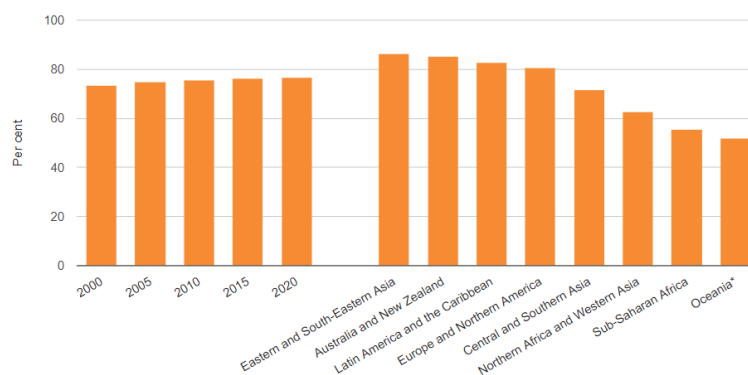
Between 2010–2014, on average, 56 million induced (safe and unsafe) abortions occurred worldwide each year,¹⁵ of which around 25 million were unsafe.¹⁶ Between 4.7% to 13.2% of maternal deaths can be attributed to unsafe abortion.¹⁷ Over half of all estimated unsafe abortions globally were in Asia. In Africa and Latin America, 3 out of 4 abortions were unsafe.¹⁸ In almost every case, death and disability could be prevented through sexuality education, use of effective contraception, provision of safe, legal, induced abortion and timely care for complications.¹⁹ A study estimated that if all women wanting to avoid pregnancy used a modern contraceptive method, the number of unintended pregnancies would drop by 70% and unsafe abortions by 74%.²⁰

At the global level, it is estimated that 76.8% of women of reproductive age had their family planning needs met with a modern contraceptive method in 2020 (see figure III). This proportion ranged from 86% in Eastern and South-Eastern Asia to about 52% in Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand) and 56% in sub-Saharan Africa, showing marked inequalities in women's access to modern contraception across regions. However, it is important to recognize that these figures are an improvement over historic percentages: in sub-Saharan Africa, 23.5% of women of reproductive age had their family planning needs met with a modern contraceptive method in 1990, and in 2010 that figure was 45.70%.²¹ In general, regions with lower levels of fertility have higher proportions of women using contraception.

Family planning and reproductive health services need to account for inequality and barriers that may limit access, such as cultural factors and ethnicity.²² Use and access to modern contraceptive methods depend, inter alia, on women's autonomy. Globally, only around 50% of women can make their own decisions on health care and contraceptive use, and can say no to sexual intercourse.

The COVID-19 pandemic could leave significant numbers of women and couples without access to essential sexual and reproductive health care. The proportion of women of reproductive age (ages 15–49) that have their need for family planning satisfied with modern contraceptive methods could fall from 76.8% to 71%, resulting in around 60 million fewer users of modern contraception worldwide in 2020. It is estimated that the most impacted regions would be Latin America and the Caribbean and sub-Saharan Africa owing to their relatively greater reliance on short-term methods, such as injectables and pills, which require frequent contact with health-care providers.²³

Figure III: Proportion of women aged 15–49 who have their need for family planning satisfied with modern methods by region: 2000–2020 (Percentage)



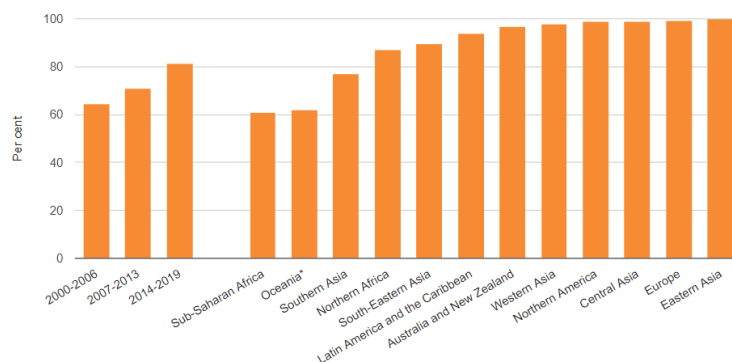
Source: UNDESA, Population Division, Estimates and Projections of Family Planning Indicators 2020, New York, 2020 (https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/theme/family-planning/cp_model.asp).

Note: Oceania* means Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand); regional values are for 2020; regions are organized in descending order of the need for family planning satisfied.

Globally, during the period 2014–2019, 81% of births took place with the assistance of a skilled birth attendant, up from 64% in the period 2000–2005; however, there are wide disparities across regions

Coverage of deliveries by skilled birth attendants ranges from 60% in sub-Saharan Africa to almost universal coverage in Europe and Northern America, Central Asia, Eastern Asia and Western Asia (see figure IV). In sub-Saharan Africa significant gains have been made since the turn of the century, with coverage ranging from 43% in the period 2000–2005 to 51% in the period 2007–2013. In-focus insight on the subject can be found in the story on skilled birth attendants in [Ghana](#).

Figure IV: Proportion of births attended by skilled personnel, by region: 2000-2019 (Percentage)



Source: Joint UNICEF/WHO global database on skilled attendants at birth, 2020 (<https://data.unicef.org/topic/maternal-health/delivery-care/>).

Note: Oceania* means Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand). Figures are based on the latest country-level data available for the periods 2000-2006, 2007-2013 and 2014-2019. Regional values are for 2014-2019; regions are organized in ascending order of births attended by skilled personnel.

Adolescent girls face higher risks of eclampsia, systemic infections and complications during childbirth than adult women

In 2018, there were an estimated 12.8 million births among adolescent girls aged 15–19, some 11% of all births worldwide.²⁴ The estimated global adolescent birth rate has declined from 56 births per 1,000 adolescent girls in 2000 to 41 births per 1,000 in 2020, representing a reduction of 27% in a 20-year span. At the regional level, adolescent birth rates are the lowest in developed regions (12 births per 1,000 adolescent girls in Australia and New Zealand, and 13 in Europe and Northern America) and the highest in sub-Saharan Africa (101 births per 1,000), followed by Latin America and the Caribbean (61 births per 1,000).

Early childbearing not only has a negative effect on the health of adolescents and their newborn children, evidence shows that adolescent mothers are at higher risks of eclampsia, systemic infections and complications during childbirth.²⁵ In addition, the stigma and stress adolescents experience may also make them less likely to complete schooling – reducing lifetime opportunities to achieve their full potential and weakening their control over resources and their future lives.^{26 27} A cause of unintended pregnancy is sexual violence, which is widespread with more than a third of girls in some countries reporting that their first sexual encounter was coerced.²⁸ Further insights about trends and levels of [adolescent fertility](#) are set out in the section on population and families.

COVID-19 may have an influence on how women feel about having children

Early evidence from a study in the United States of America²⁹ shows that pandemic-related worries about finances and job stability, as well as general unease about the future, may be having an effect on how women feel about having children. It is reported that more than 40% of women have declared having changed their plans about when to have children, or how many children to have, due to the [COVID-19 pandemic](#). Furthermore, black women (44%) and Hispanic women (48%) were more likely than white women (28%) to state that they wanted to have children later or wanted fewer children because of the pandemic.

About the data

Definitions

- **Death rate by leading causes of death among people aged 15–49:** Number of deaths due to a specific cause of death per 100,000 population aged 15–49.
- **Maternal mortality ratio (MMR), Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3, indicator 3.1.1:** Number of maternal deaths per 100,000 live births: the ratio captures the risk of death in a single live birth, including up to six weeks after pregnancy.
- **Proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel** (Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3, indicator 3.1.2): Number of births attended by skilled health personnel (doctors, nurses or midwives), divided by the total number of live births in a given time period. Having a skilled attendant at the time of childbirth is an important lifesaving intervention for both women and babies.
- **Proportion of women of reproductive age (ages 15–49) who have their need for family planning satisfied with modern methods** (Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3, indicator 3.1.2): Reported as a percentage of women of reproductive age who use any method of contraception or who have an unmet need for family planning. The numerator is the number of women (ages 15–49) who are currently using, or whose sexual partner is currently using, at least one modern method of contraception. The denominator is the total demand for family planning (the sum of the number of women who are using any method of contraception and those who are having an unmet need for family planning). Access to and use of an effective means to prevent pregnancy helps women and their partners to decide on the number and spacing of their children.
- **Adolescent birth rate per 1,000 women** (Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3, indicator 3.7.2): Adolescent birth rate is the annual number of births to women aged 15–19 per 1,000 women. Preventing births very early in a woman's life is an important measure to improve maternal health and reduce infant mortality and enhances a woman's opportunities for socioeconomic improvement.

Availability

- **Death rate by leading causes of death among people aged 15–49:** WHO calculates estimates for all its Member States with a population of more than 90,000 (184 countries). Data on causes of death are sourced from WHO, Global Health Estimates 2016 and are classified by regional grouping under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) indicators framework.
- **Maternal mortality ratio (MMR):** About one third of all countries/territories have reliable data on maternal mortality; and about half of countries have data that are adjusted for the purposes of comparability; for the remainder a statistical model has been employed. Countries are organized according to regional groupings under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) indicators framework.
- **Proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel:** Data are available for over 170 countries. The main source of data is household surveys, which are conducted every 3 to 5 years; data from administrative sources may be annual. Countries are organized according to regional groupings under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) indicators framework.
- **Proportion of women of reproductive age (ages 15–49) who have their need for family planning satisfied**

with modern methods: Data are available for 130 countries or territories for the period 2000–2019. For 103 countries or territories, there are at least two available data points. Countries are organized according to the regional groupings under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) indicators framework.

- **Adolescent birth rate per 1,000 women:** Data are available for 221 countries or territories for the period 2000–2017; there are at least two data points for 217 countries or areas. Countries are organized according to regional groupings under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) indicators framework.

Footnotes

1. World Health Organization (WHO), Health Topics, Fact sheets, The top 10 causes of death, May 2018.
2. Zimicki, S., "The Relationship between Fertility and Maternal Mortality", in Parnell, A. (ed.), *Contraceptive Use and Controlled Fertility: Health Issues for Women and Children Background Papers*, Washington, D.C., National Research Council, National Academies Press, 1989.
3. World Health Organization (WHO), Trends in Maternal Mortality: 2000 to 2017: estimates by WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA, World Bank Group and the United Nations Population Division.
4. WHO, Fact sheets, Maternal mortality, September 2019.
5. Ibid.
6. Say, L., Chou, D., Gemmill, A., Tunçalp, O., Moller, A.B., Daniels, J.D., et al., "Global Causes of Maternal Death: A WHO Systematic Analysis", *The Lancet*, vol.2, Issue 6, June 2014.
7. Bergman, A.S., Axberg, U., Hanson, E., "When a parent dies – a systematic review of the effects of support programs for parentally bereaved children and their caregivers", *BMC Palliative Care*, vol. 16 (1), August 2017.
8. Zhou, H., Zhang, L., Ye, F., Wang, H.J., Huntington, D., Huang, Y. et al., "The effect of maternal death on the health of the husband and children in a rural area of China: a prospective cohort study", *PLOS ONE*, 9 June 2016 (accessed on 17 March 2019).
9. Finlay, J.E., Moucheraud, C., Goshev, S., Levira, F., Mrema, S., Canning, D. et al., "The effects of maternal mortality on infant and child survival in rural Tanzania: a cohort study", *Maternal Child Health Journal*, vol.19, Issue 11, November 2015.
10. Moucheraud, C., Worku, A., Molla, M., Finlay, J.E., Leaning and J., Yamin, A.E., "Consequences of maternal mortality on infant and child survival: a 25-year longitudinal analysis in Butajira Ethiopia (1987–2011)", *Reproductive Health*, vol. 2015.
11. Ronsmans, C., Chowdhury, M.E., Dasgupta, S.K., Ahmed, A. and Koblinsky, M., "Effect of parent's death on child survival in rural Bangladesh: a cohort study", *The Lancet*, vol. 375, Issue 9730, June 2010 (accessed on 17 March 2019).
12. Kes, A., Ogwang, S., Pande, R.P., Douglas, Z., Karuga, R., Odhiambo, F.O. et al., "The economic burden of maternal mortality on households: evidence from three sub-counties in rural western Kenya", *Reproductive Health*, vol. 12, Supplement 1, May 2015.
13. Wang, H., Ye, F., Wang, Y. and Huntington, D., "Economic impact of maternal death on households in rural China: a prospective cohort study", *PLOS ONE*, 24 October 2013.
14. Ye, F., Wang, H., Huntington, D., Zhou, H., Li, Y., You, F. et al., "The immediate economic impact of maternal deaths on rural Chinese households", *PLOS ONE*, 6 June 2012.
15. WHO, Health Topics, Fact sheets, Preventing unsafe abortion fact sheet.
16. Ganatra, B., Gerdts, C., Rossier, C., Johnson Jr, B. R., Tunçalp, O., Assifi, A., Sedgh, G., Singh, S., Bankole, A., Popinchalk, A., Bearak, J., Kang, Z., Alkema, L., "Global, regional, and subregional classification of abortions by safety, 2010–14: estimates from a Bayesian hierarchical model", *The Lancet*, vol. 390, Issue 10110, 25 November 2017.
17. Say, L., Chou, D., Gemmill, A., Tunçalp, O., Moller, A.B., Daniels, J., Gülmezoglu, A.M., Temmerman, M. and Alkema, L., "Global causes of maternal death: a WHO systematic analysis", *The Lancet*, vol. 2, Issue 6, 1 June 2014. ([back to text](#))
18. WHO, Health Topics, Fact sheets, Preventing unsafe abortion, 2019.
19. Haddad, L., "Unsafe Abortion: Unnecessary Maternal Mortality", *Reviews in Obstetrics and Gynecology*, vol. 2 (2), Spring 2009.
20. Singh, S. et al., "The incidence of abortion and unintended pregnancy in India, 2015", *The Lancet*, vol.6, Issue 1, January 2018.
21. See United Nations Department of Economic and Social Development (UNDESA), Statistics Division, *The World's Women 2015: Trends and Statistics*, New York, 2015.
22. UNFPA, UN OHCHR and The Danish Institute for Human Rights, *Reproductive Rights are Human Rights*, 2014.
23. UNDESA, Population Division, *World Fertility and Family Planning 2020: Highlights*, New York, 2020.
24. WHO, Health Topics, Fact sheets, Adolescents: health risks and solutions.
25. Ganchimeg, T. et al., "Pregnancy and childbirth outcomes among adolescent mothers: a World Health Organization multicountry

study", BJOG: An International Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Supplement 1, March 2014.

26. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Early and unintended pregnancy and the education sector: evidence review and recommendations, Paris, 2007.

27. United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), Motherhood in childhood: Facing the challenge of adolescent pregnancy, New York, 2013.

28. Raj A, Boehmer U. Girl child marriage and its association with national rates of HIV, maternal health, and infant mortality across 97 countries. Violence Against Women 2013.

29. Lindberg, L.D., Van de Vusse, A., Mueller, J. and Kirstein, M., "Early Impacts of the Covid-19 Pandemic: Findings from the 2020 Guttmacher Survey of Reproductive Health Experiences", Guttmacher Institute, June 2020.

Women's decision-making on and equal access to sexual and reproductive health [UNFPA]



Key points

- Based on data from 57 countries, around only 50% of women make their own decisions on health care and contraceptive use and can say no to sexual intercourse.
- There are large disparities among regions, from less than 40% of women making their own decisions in Middle Africa and Western Africa, to nearly 80% in some countries in Europe, South-Eastern Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean.
- Older women, more educated women, women living in urban areas and women from wealthier households are more likely to make their own decisions. Higher levels of education, in particular, have the greatest effect on women's ability to make their own decisions on sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights.
- Most women (91%) seem to have autonomy over the decision to use contraception, but only 75% of women can decide on their own health care or say no to sex.
- While there are many countries with enabling laws on sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights, there are also many legal barriers that prevent women and adolescents from having equal access to these services and information. Such barriers are most prevalent in the case of legal access to abortion.
- On average, countries have 73% of the laws and regulations needed to guarantee full and equal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights.
- The findings are particularly encouraging when it comes to HIV: on average, countries have enacted 87% of enabling laws and regulations for HIV counselling and test services; 91% for HIV treatment and care services; and 96% for HIV confidentiality.
- The lowest level of achievement is in the provision by countries of sexuality education curricula: on average, countries have 57% of enabling laws, regulations or national policies needed to make sexuality education a mandatory component of the national school curriculum.

Background

Women's ability to make decisions on their reproductive health, contraceptive use and sexual relations is pivotal to gender equality and universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights. While a wide range of contraceptives must be made available and staff trained to provide sexuality education, all access depends on autonomy. Too often women are not able to exercise their autonomy on these issues due to harmful and discriminatory social norms and practices and their lack of agency and financial resources.

Current situation

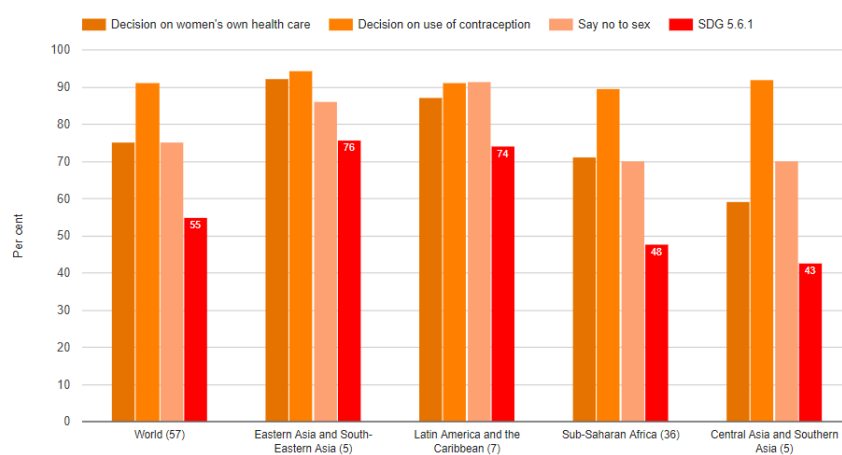
Only around 50% women can make their own decisions on health care and contraceptive use and can say no to sexual intercourse

Based on data from 57 countries, only 55% of married or in-union women aged 15–49 make their own decisions

regarding sexual and reproductive health and rights (see figure I). Data reveal large disparities among regions, from less than 40% of women in Middle Africa and Western Africa to nearly 80% in some countries in Europe, South-Eastern Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean. Analysis of the three sub-indicators shows that while 91% of women would seem to have autonomy in deciding to use contraception, only three in four women (75%) can decide on their own health care or say no to sex. Overall, gaps still exist in women's autonomy, even where high levels of individual decision-making are observed in some areas.

Levels of women's autonomy in decision-making regarding their sexual and reproductive health care also vary greatly across countries and regions. Among 57 countries with data, women in Ecuador have the highest level of autonomy, at 87%, followed by the Philippines and Ukraine, where 81% of married or in-union women have the power to take their own decisions on sexual and reproductive health care. In Mali, Niger and Senegal, countries with the lowest levels, less than 10% of married or in-union women can make their own decisions on sexual and reproductive health care.

Figure I: Proportion of women aged 15-49 who can make their own decisions regarding sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights: 2007-2018 (latest available)



Source: United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), global databases, 2020 (<https://www.unfpa.org/data>)

Note: The number of countries with comparable survey data included in the regional aggregations is presented in parentheses. Based on the Demographic and Health Surveys, Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys and other national surveys conducted in the 2007-2018 period. Decisions regarding sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights include: deciding on their own health care, deciding on the use of contraception, and can say no to sex.

Education has the greatest effect on women's decision-making on sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights

Overall, older women, more educated women, women living in urban areas and women living in wealthier households are more likely to make their own decisions over their sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights.

Age at first marriage, education level, wealth, exposure to the media, place of residence and region of the world all play a role in a woman's ability to make her own decisions on sexual relations, the use of contraception and health care. Above all other factors, education has the greatest effect on women's decision-making on sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights. Receiving at least some primary education provides a boost to women's autonomy; women who have some primary education are 38% more likely to meet SDG indicator 5.6.1

criteria than those who receive no education at all.

In general, as women get older, they are more empowered to make their own decisions. The greatest gains are seen among women aged 20–34; after age 35, while women still are much more likely than those aged 15–19 to achieve autonomy, the effect appears to level off.

Higher levels of wealth has an effect on women's autonomy, although not to the same extent as education, while between the two poorest wealth quintiles there was no significant difference in the level of women's autonomy. First marriage at age 18 or older had a slight but significant effect on women's autonomy, compared with women who were married before age 18: women who married after age 18 were 6% more likely to make their own decisions. In addition, weekly media exposure to newspapers, television or radio had a positive effect on women's empowerment: women with media exposure were 12% more likely to make their own decisions.

Country in focus: Uganda

In Uganda there has been consistent progress in women's decision-making ability in all three aspects of SDG indicator 5.6.1

In Uganda, during the period 2006–2016, women's autonomy in decision-making on sexual relations increased by 4.6 percentage points; on contraceptive use by 2.6 percentage points; and on reproductive health care by 12.6 percentage points. This trend was supported by better education and income levels, as well as by interventions such as the abolishment of user fees and the introduction of vouchers or conditional cash transfers. The activities of SASA!,¹ a prevention programme on HIV infection and violence against women, led to lower social acceptance of intimate partner violence and violence against women and greater acceptance of women's right to refuse sex. Couples have improved their communication and levels of joint decision-making. SASA! engages health workers and trains community activists who work door-to-door to raise awareness levels through discussions, training, public events, films and performances by soap opera groups.

National laws and regulations on sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights

Legal barriers still prevent access of women and adolescents to reproductive health-care services and information

Among 75 countries with data, on average, 73% of the laws and regulations needed to guarantee full and equal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights are in place (see figure II). With this access guaranteed in laws and regulations in many countries, the future focus must be on ensuring that policies, budgets and actions that can translate the laws into practice.

In national actions on HIV, in particular, on average, countries have enacted 87% of enabling laws and regulations for HIV counselling and test services; 91% for HIV treatment and care services; and 96% of laws needed for ensuring HIV confidentiality. In addition, countries have 79% of relevant enabling laws and regulations that stipulate full, free and informed consent of individuals before they receive contraceptive services, including sterilization (see figure II). This data indicate that there is a broadly supportive framework protecting women from coerced or forced practices.

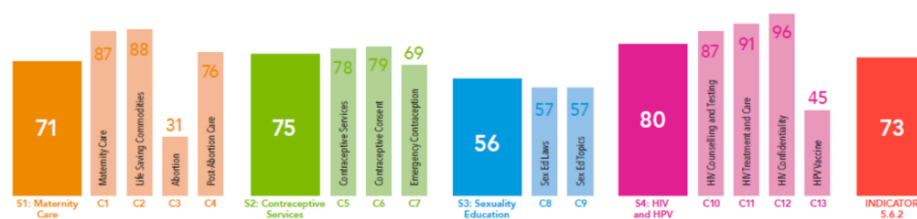
In terms of laws and regulations on sexuality education, on average, countries have only 57% of the enabling

laws, regulations or national policies needed to make a **sexuality education** a mandatory component of the national school curriculum (see figure II). In countries with those laws and regulations in place, 75% of such frameworks include all key concepts recommended by international norms and standards for sexuality education. In 90%, all but two concepts, relationships, and sexuality and sexual behaviour, are included.

In many countries, there are legal barriers to full and equal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights, the most prevalent in blocking legal access to abortion. Although abortion is legal on some or all grounds in 93% of reporting countries, in 28% of those countries a husband's consent is required in order for married women to access abortion services. Moreover, women may be criminally charged for having an illegal abortion in more than 50% of the 107 reporting countries.

Although there are laws and regulations guaranteeing access to **maternity care** in almost all countries with data (95%), 9% of those countries have restrictions based on marital status and 10% have restrictions based on age. Access to contraceptive services is also restricted in some countries. In 21% of countries, third party authorization (consent by parent, spouse, judge or medical committee) is required to access contraceptive services. Moreover, 20% of countries have multiple legal systems, for example at the state level, some of which can contradict some or all of the national laws and regulations on sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights in the country.

Figure II: Percentage of laws and regulations guaranteeing full and equal access to women and men aged 15 and older to sexual and reproductive health care, information and education that have been enacted by countries: 2019



Source: United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), global databases, 2020 (<https://www.unfpa.org/data>)

Note: Based on official responses to the United Nations Twelfth Inquiry among Governments on Population and Development. Data for SDG 5.6.2 are based on 75 countries with complete data. Data for the sections are as follows: 79 countries for section 1, Maternity Care, 104 countries for section 2, Contraceptive Services, 98 countries for section 3, Sexuality Education, and 101 countries for section 4, HIV and human papillomavirus infection (HPV).

About the data

Definitions

- **Proportion of women aged 15–49 who make their own informed decisions regarding sexual relations, contraceptive use and reproductive health care (Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5, indicator 5.6.1):**

Proportion of women aged 15–49 (married or in a union) who make their own decisions on: (a) health care; (b) use of contraception; and (c) saying no to sexual intercourse with their husband or partner if they do not want. Only women providing a “yes” answer to all three components are considered to be women who make their own decisions regarding sexual and reproductive health.²

- **Extent to which countries have laws and regulations that guarantee full and equal access to women and men aged 15 and older to sexual and reproductive health care, information and education (SDG Goal 5, indicator 5.6.2):**

The indicator is a percentage (%), on a scale of 0 to 100 (extent of national laws and regulations to guarantee full and equal access), of a country's status and progress in instituting national laws and regulations guaranteeing women such rights and levels of access. Indicator 5.6.2 measures only the existence of laws and regulations, it does not measure their implementation. Indicator 5.6.2 seeks to provide the first comprehensive global assessment of legal and regulatory frameworks on access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights.

The indicator measures the legal and regulatory environment across four broad sections of sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights: (a) maternity care; (b) contraception and family planning; (c) comprehensive sexuality education and information; and (d) sexual health and well-being. These four sections are broken down into 13 components. The total indicator score is the arithmetic mean of 13 component scores and the four section scores are the arithmetic mean of constituent component scores.³

Coverage and Availability

- **For women making their own decisions:** Married or in union women aged 15–49. As of early 2020, a total of 57 countries, the majority in sub-Saharan Africa, had at least one survey with data on all three questions necessary for calculating SDG indicator 5.6.1. Efforts to increase data coverage are under way. Current data on the indicator are derived from Demographic and Health Surveys, Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys and other national surveys conducted during the period 2007–2018.

- **For laws on equal access:** Data are reported by national Governments, including national statistics authorities and line ministries. In 2019, data from 107 countries, covering 75% of the world's population, were collected through the United Nations Twelfth Inquiry among

Governments on Population and Development.⁴ Of those 107 countries, 75 reported complete data, which allowed for the calculation of SDG indicator 5.6.2. For the 32 countries that reported partial data, data for components and sections have been calculated where possible.

Footnotes

1. [SASA!](#) is a non-governmental organization working on the prevention of violence against women and children.
2. More information on the methodology can be found at the [United Nations Population Fund \(UNFPA\) site on concepts and definitions used in determining the indicator](#) and [UNFPA, Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights, measuring SDG target 5.6, February 2020](#).
3. More information on the methodology can be found at the [United Nations Population Fund \(UNFPA\) site on concepts and definitions used in determining the indicator](#) and [UNFPA, Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights, measuring SDG target 5.6, February 2020](#).
4. [United Nations Twelfth Inquiry among Governments on Population and Development, Module II, Fertility, Family Planning and Reproductive Health](#).

Health risk factors



Key points

- Tobacco use kills more than 8 million people annually around the world: over 7 million people die from the first-hand use of tobacco and around 1.2 million non-smokers die from exposure to second-hand smoke.
- Globally, men are 4.5 times more likely to smoke than women: the gender difference is largest in Eastern and South-Eastern Asia, where men are almost 13 times more likely than women to use tobacco; the gender gap is smallest in Australia and New Zealand where the ratio is 1.3, closer to gender parity.
- Since 2000 there has been a decline in smoking rates among both sexes, although the decline has been less pronounced among men.
- In 2016, more than 3 million people died as a result of the harmful use of alcohol, representing 1 in 20 deaths worldwide: the vast majority, more than three quarters, of those deaths were among men.
- In 2018, men consumed more alcohol than women worldwide, an average of 9.8 litres per man versus 2.6 litres of alcohol per woman aged 15 and older.
- In 2016, 39% of adults aged 18 and older (39% of men and 40% of women) were overweight. About 13% of the world's adult population (11% of men and 15% of women) were obese. Women are more likely than men to be obese both as a result of biological and lifestyle factors, in particular lower rates of participation in physical activity and insufficient time for personal care and leisure.
- Emerging research shows that smoking may also be associated with a negative progression and adverse outcomes of the Coronavirus-19 (COVID-19) disease, which works to the disadvantage of men, who are more likely to smoke than women (4.5 times more likely, globally). Severe obesity has been also found to be associated with higher in-hospital mortality and, in general, worse in-hospital outcomes related to COVID-19.

Background

A health risk factor is anything that increases the likelihood of an individual developing a disease or injury. Risk factors can be demographic, social, economic, environmental, biological or behavioural in nature, although in most cases they are a combination of all of these factors.

The set of risk factors contributing most to the burden of disease is changing. In 1990, the leading risk factors for early death and disability were child wasting, short gestation for birth weight and low birth weight for gestation. In 2017, the leading factors were high blood pressure, smoking and high blood sugar.¹

There are significant differences in the prevailing risk factors affecting the health of people in developed and less developed regions. In developing regions, prominent risk factors include undernutrition, unimproved water and sanitation facilities, poor hygiene and indoor smoke from solid fuels. In developed regions, the harmful use of alcohol and tobacco, poor diet and lack of exercise contribute substantially to the burden of non-communicable diseases, although the effects of non-communicable diseases are on the rise in developing regions as well. Across regions, unsafe sex remains the main risk factor for sexually transmitted infections, and for **HIV/AIDS** in particular, while gender norms, ideals of masculinity and power relations fuel a relatively high level of unintentional injuries and **interpersonal violence**.

Morbidity and mortality rates for many diseases are aggravated by exposure to specific modifiable risk factors, including tobacco use, harmful use of alcohol, unhealthy diet, physical inactivity and polluted air.

Current situation

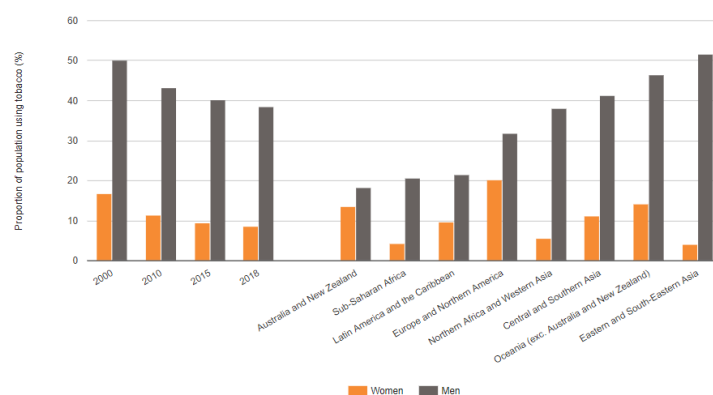
Tobacco use is a major contributor to illness and death from non-communicable diseases

Tobacco in any form kills and sickens millions of people every year: the use of tobacco is one of the biggest public health threats, killing more than 8 million people a year² around the world (up from more than 5 million deaths in 2010).³ More than 7 million of those deaths are the result of first-person tobacco use while around 1.2 million are the result of non-smokers being exposed to second-hand smoke.⁴

Tobacco use is a major risk factor for chronic respiratory and cardiovascular diseases. Among women, smoking is also associated with breast cancer.⁵ In 2018, men were 4.5 more likely to use tobacco than women. Globally, in 2018, the prevalence of smoking among men 15 years and older was 38.6%, compared to 8.5% among women of the same age. A decline in smoking rates has been observed since 2000 for both sexes, but the decline has been slower among men (23%) than among women (49%).

During the period 2000–2018, the number of male tobacco users in the world increased each year, peaking in 2018 at 1.093 million.⁶ The number of users is projected to decrease, assuming countries maintain current efforts in tobacco control.⁷ Since 2000, the number of female tobacco users has been declining in all regions (244 million in 2018, an estimated 100 million fewer than in 2000).⁸

Figure I: Prevalence of tobacco smoking among persons aged 15 or over, by sex and by region: 2000–2018 (Percentage)



Source: WHO, Secretariat of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (<https://www.who.int/fctc/en/>).

Note: Regional values are for 2018; regions are ordered according to tobacco use among the male population.

The difference in smoking prevalence between women and men is reduced in higher income countries (see figure I). For instance, in Australia and New Zealand the gender gap is lower than 5 percentage points, and in Europe and Northern America the gender gap was measured at about 11 percentage points in 2018.

The gap may be associated with women having a greater control over their own resources in high-income countries and with the marketing strategies of the tobacco industry, which target women, especially young women.⁹

The gender difference is most marked in Eastern and South-Eastern Asia, where more than 50% of men smoke, compared to only 4% of women. In all regions it is vital to reduce the use of smokeless tobacco products, especially in countries where they enjoy great popularity, for example in South-Eastern Asia, where smokeless tobacco use among women is far more prevalent than smoked tobacco use (11.5% and 1.6%, respectively).¹⁰

Smoking has also been reported as a potential risk factor for COVID-19 as it is harmful to the immune system and its ability to respond to infections, specifically, because of its effects in upregulating receptors in the airways.¹¹ In a recent review, it was reported that smoking may be associated with a negative progression and adverse outcomes of COVID-19.¹² The higher prevalence of male smokers of all ages in Italy, especially among the elderly,¹³ may explain their higher predisposition to COVID-19.¹⁴

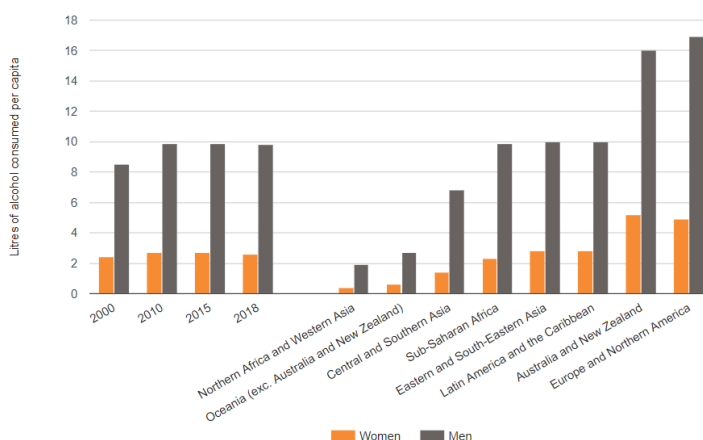
1 in 20 deaths result from harmful use of alcohol

Alcohol consumption can have an impact on the incidence of diseases, **injuries** and other health conditions, including their outcomes. The health and social harms from drinking alcohol occur through three main interrelated mechanisms: (a) toxic effects on organs and tissues (resulting, for instance, in liver disease, heart disease or cancer); (b) development of dependence, whereby the drinker's self-control over his or her drinking is impaired, often involving alcohol-induced mental disorders, such as depression or psychoses; and (c) through intoxication, that is, the psychoactive effects of alcohol in the hours after drinking.¹⁵

In 2016, more than 3 million people died as a result of harmful use of alcohol – 5% of global deaths for the year – and over 75% of those deaths were among men.¹⁶ For women, cardiovascular diseases are the most common cause of death connected to alcohol use (41.6% of all alcohol-related deaths among women), while for men, injuries (28.7%) and digestive diseases (21.3%) are the most common alcohol-related deaths.¹⁷ The differences between women and men are even greater when considering the burden of disease as expressed in disability-adjusted life years.¹⁸ Estimates for 2016 show that the number of years of life lost due to premature death and disability related to alcohol consumption is four times higher for men than for women (106.5 million years for men versus 26.1 million for women).¹⁹

In addition, the association of alcohol consumption with engagement in unprotected sex²⁰ has been shown to increase the risk of experiencing unintended pregnancy.²¹ Alcohol-attributable harms are underestimated, especially for women, as alcohol is a contributing factor to **intimate partner violence** perpetrated against women.²² The relationship between alcohol and intimate partner violence is a complex one and should be looked at within the context of broader gender inequalities and harmful gender norms and behaviours.

Figure II: Annual alcohol consumption per capita among people aged 15 and above, by sex and by region (in litres of pure alcohol): 2000-2018



Source: WHO, Global Health Observatory data platform, Global Information System on Alcohol and Health (<https://www.who.int/gho/alcohol/en/>)

Note: Regional values are for 2018; regions are ordered according to the level of alcohol consumption in the male population.

Worldwide, men consume almost four times more alcohol than women

In 2018, worldwide men consumed an average of 9.8 litres of pure alcohol per year compared to 2.6 litres among women, with no significant change observed over the last 10 years (see figure II). It is less common for women to be current²³ drinkers than men, and when they drink, they drink less than men.

Globally, the highest overall rate of alcohol consumption for both sexes is in Australia and New Zealand and Europe and Northern America, where men consume at least three times more alcohol than women (on average, 16 litres for men versus 5 litres for women) (see figure II). The lowest alcohol consumption is recorded in Northern Africa and Western Asia, where the gender difference between women and men is even more pronounced (almost five-fold).

The harmful use of alcohol not only increases the risk of one of the major non-communicable diseases, as described above,

but it also plays a role in suicide and road traffic accidents and is frequently associated with the higher mortality rates among men than women due to **these causes**.²⁴

In terms of global prevalence, in 2016, it was estimated that 53.6% of men and 32.3% of women were current drinkers.²⁵ Worldwide, in 2016, the prevalence of drinking decreased among women (from 37.3% in 2000), although estimates of the absolute number of women who are current drinkers has increased.²⁶

Alcohol consumption among women has additional implications. For example, women who drink during pregnancy may increase the risk of preventable health conditions, both for themselves and their newborn children, including stillbirth, spontaneous abortion, premature birth, intrauterine growth retardation and low birth weight. Alcohol use also increases the risk of foetal exposure to alcohol due to drinking during pregnancy or delayed recognition of pregnancy.²⁷

Obesity, a significant risk factor in mortality and morbidity due to cardiovascular diseases, diabetes and cancer, is more prevalent among women

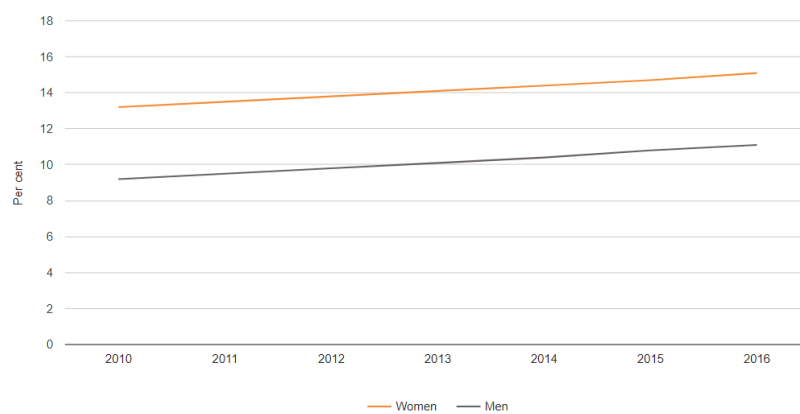
Globally, at least 2.8 million people die each year as a result of being overweight or obese.^{28,29} Excess body weight is a significant risk factor in mortality and morbidity due to cardiovascular diseases, diabetes and cancer (including breast **cancer**). Overweight and obesity are causes of increased blood pressure, high cholesterol and triglycerides levels and insulin resistance, which are themselves direct risk factors for several chronic diseases.³⁰

In 2016, 39% of adults aged 18 years and older (39% of men and 40% of women) were overweight, and about 13% of the world's adult population (11% of men and 15% of women) were obese.³¹ The prevalence of obesity is about 36% higher among women, and although the gender gap has remained steady since 2010, the trend for both women and men is moving upwards (see figure III). Based on data for the period 2001–2016, women are less likely than men to participate in physical activities (32% of women versus 23% of men).³²

In general, women have less access to **economic resources** and have an extra **household workload**, making it difficult for them to allocate adequate resources and time to exercise³³ and lead a healthy diet. In addition, in many societies, men, as opposed to women, are expected to be physically strong, which could contribute to women's lower level of physical activity.³⁴ Lack of physical activity combined with sex-related biological factors, such as women's predisposition to store fat subcutaneously and lower metabolic rates, may contribute to the prevalence of obesity in women.³⁵

In a cohort of patients hospitalized with **COVID-19** in a minority-predominant population (African-American), men with severe obesity³⁶ in older ages were independently associated with higher in-hospital mortality and in general worse in-hospital outcomes.³⁷ In a study conducted in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, an unhealthy body mass index was strongly associated with testing positive for and risk of death related to COVID-19. The gradient of risk in relation to body mass index was steeper in those under age 70 in comparison with those aged 70 and older for COVID-19-related deaths. In addition, unhealthy body mass index was more strongly related to test positivity and death in non-whites (predominantly South Asians and Afro-Caribbeans) compared with whites.³⁸

Figure III: Prevalence of obesity among adults: body mass index greater than 30 (BMI ≥ 30) (age-standardized estimate): 2010 to 2016 (Percentage)



Source: WHO, Global Health Observatory data platform, Prevalence of obesity among adults ([https://www.who.int/data/gho/data/indicators/indicator-details/GHO/prevalence-of-obesity-among-adults-bmi-30-\(age-standardized-estimate\)](https://www.who.int/data/gho/data/indicators/indicator-details/GHO/prevalence-of-obesity-among-adults-bmi-30-(age-standardized-estimate))) (accessed on 20 July 2020).

About the data

Definitions

- **Age-standardized prevalence of tobacco use among persons aged 15 and older:** Percentage of the population aged 15 and older who currently use tobacco products (smoked and/or smokeless tobacco), including: cigarettes, pipes, cigars, cigarillos, waterpipes (hookah/shisha), bidis, kretek, heated tobacco products and all forms of smokeless (oral and nasal) tobacco products. In this indicator, tobacco products exclude e-cigarettes (which do not contain tobacco), "e-cigars", "e-hookahs", JUUL and "e-pipes".
- **Total alcohol consumption per capita:** Total amount of alcohol consumed per adult (aged 15 and older) over a calendar year, in litres of pure alcohol ³⁹ (adjusted for tourist consumption).
- **Prevalence of obesity:** Percentage of the population whose calculated body mass index is greater than or equal to 30 kg/m². Body mass index is a simple index of weight-to-height, commonly used to classify overweight and obesity in adults. It is defined as a person's weight in kilograms divided by the square of his or her height in meters (kg/m²).

Availability

- **Age-standardized prevalence of tobacco use among persons aged 15 and older:** Data on the indicator are available from the World Health Organization (WHO) for all WHO member States for the period 2000–2020, according to the availability of empirical data for each country: countries are organized by regional groupings under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) indicators framework. ⁴⁰
- **Total alcohol consumption per capita:** Data are available for 190 member States of the World Health Organization (WHO).
- **Prevalence of obesity:** Data are available for 200 countries, tracking worldwide trends in body-mass index, underweight, overweight and obesity for the period 1975–2016. ⁴¹

Footnotes

1. Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation, Findings from the Global Burden of Disease Study 2017, Seattle, 2018.
2. World Health Organization (WHO), Fact sheets, Tobacco, May 2020.
3. WHO, 2010, 10 facts on gender and tobacco.
4. WHO, Fact sheet on tobacco, 2020.
5. Reynolds, P. et al, "Active smoking, household passive smoking, and breast cancer: evidence from the California Teachers Study", *Journal of the National Cancer Institute*, vol. 96, Issue 7, January 2004; Gaudet, M.M., et al, "Active smoking and breast cancer risk: original cohort data and meta-analysis", *Journal of the National Cancer Institute*, vol. 105, Issue 8, April 2013.
6. WHO, WHO global report on trends in prevalence of tobacco use 2000–2025, third edition, Geneva, 2019.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. Hitchman, S.C., Fong, G.T., "Gender empowerment and female-to-male smoking prevalence ratios", *Bulletin of the World Health Organization*, vol. 89 (3), 2011.
10. WHO, WHO global report on trends in prevalence of tobacco use 2000–2025, third edition, Geneva, 2019.
11. Cai, H., "Sex difference and smoking predisposition in patients with Covid-19", *Lancet Respiratory Medicine*, vol.8, Issue 4, April 2020.
12. Vardavas, C.I., Nikitara, K., "Covid-19 and smoking: A systematic review of the evidence", *Tobacco Induced Diseases*, vol. 18, March 2020.
13. National Health Institute, La sorveglianza Passi d'Argento, I dati per l'Italia: abitudine al fumo. [The Italian behavioural risk factor surveillance system in the elderly population, data for Italy: smoking habit] (accessed on 24 April 2020) (Italian original).
14. Michelozzi, P. et al., "Mortality impacts of the coronavirus disease (Covid-19) outbreak by sex and age: rapid mortality surveillance system, Italy, 1 February to 18 April 2020", *Eurosurveillance*, vol. 25 (19), May 2020.
15. WHO, 2018, Global status report on alcohol and health 2018, Geneva, 2018; and Babor, T. et al., *Alcohol: No Ordinary Commodity: Research and Public Policy*, first edition, Oxford Scholarship Online, 2010.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid.
18. Disability-adjusted life years (DALYs) measure the burden of disease, injury and death in a population. Alcohol-attributable DALYs may be interpreted as the number of years lost due to ill-health, disability or early death from the use of alcohol. Alcohol attributable DALYs are DALYs that would not have occurred if alcohol were not consumed in the population. (See WHO, *Global status report on alcohol and health 2018*, Geneva, 2018).
19. WHO, *Global status report on alcohol and health 2018*, Geneva, 2018.
20. Scott-Sheldon, L. et al, "Alcohol use predicts sexual decision-making: a systematic review and meta-analysis of the experimental literature", *AIDS and Behavior*, vol. 20, 19–39(2016).
21. Oulman, E. et al, "Prevalence and predictors of unintended pregnancy among women: an analysis of the Canadian Maternity Experiences Survey", *BMC Pregnancy and Childbirth*, vol. 15, 260 (2015); and Lundsberg, L. et al, "Is preconception substance use associated with unplanned or poorly timed pregnancy?", *Journal of Addiction Medicine*, vol. 12, Issue 4, July/August 2018. ([back to text](#))
22. Cherpitel, C.J. et al, Prevention of alcohol-related injuries in the Americas: from evidence to policy action, Pan American Health Organization and WHO, Washington, D.C., 2013; and Graham, K. et al, "Alcohol may not cause partner violence but it seems to make it worse: a cross national comparison of the relationship between alcohol and severity of partner violence", *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, vol. 26, Issue 8, 3 June 2010.
23. Current drinkers are defined as people who have consumed alcohol in the previous 12 months.
24. Pompili, M. et al. "Suicidal behavior and alcohol abuse", *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, vol. 7(4),

2010.

25. Current drinkers are defined as people who have consumed alcohol in the previous 12 months.

26. Ibid.

27. Connery, H.S., Albright, B.B. and Rodolico, J.M., "Adolescent substance use and unplanned pregnancy: strategies for risk reduction" *Obstetrics and Gynecology Clinics of North America*, vol. 41, Issue 2, June 2014.

28. WHO, Health Topics, Fact sheets, 10 facts on obesity.

29. According to WHO, a person with a body mass index of 25 or more is considered overweight, and a person with a body mass index of 30 or more is considered obese.

30. Finucane, M. et al, "National, regional, and global trends in body-mass index since 1980: systematic analysis of health examination surveys and epidemiological studies with 960 country-years and 9.1 million participants", *The Lancet*, vol. 377, Issue 9765, February 2011; WHO, *World Health Statistics 2011*, Geneva, 2011; WHO, *World Health Statistics 2009*, Geneva, 2009.

31. WHO, Health Topics, Fact sheets, Obesity and overweight. ([back to text](#))

32. Guthold, R., Stevens, G.A., Riley, L.M. and Bull, F.C., "Worldwide trends in body-mass index, underweight, overweight, and obesity from 1975 to 2016, a pooled analysis of 2416 population-based measurement studies in 128.9 million children, adolescents, and adults", *The Lancet*, vol. 390, Issue 10113, 16 December 2017.

33. WHO, Health Topics, Fact sheets, Physical activity, Geneva, 2018.

34. University of Pittsburg, Gender, Sexuality, & Women's Studies Program, "Unexpected social pressures from males".

35. Guthold, R., Stevens, G.A., Riley, L.M. and Bull, F.C., "Worldwide trends in body-mass index, underweight, overweight, and obesity from 1975 to 2016, a pooled analysis of 2416 population-based measurement studies in 128.9 million children, adolescents, and adults", *The Lancet*, vol. 390, Issue 10113, 16 December 2017.

36. Severe obesity is classified as a body mass index of 35 or more.

37. Palaodimos, L. et al, "Severe obesity, increasing age and male sex are independently associated with worse in-hospital outcomes, and higher in-hospital mortality, in a cohort of patients with Covid-19 in the Bronx, New York", *Metabolism: Clinical and Experimental*, vol. 108, July 2020.

38. Sattar, N. et al, "BMI and future risk for Covid-19 infection and death across sex, age and ethnicity: Preliminary findings from UK biobank", *Diabetes & Metabolic Syndrome: Clinical Research & Reviews*, vol. 14, Issue 5, September–October 2020.

39. In order to make the conversion into litres of pure alcohol, the alcohol content (% alcohol by volume) is considered to be as follows: Beer (barley beer 5%), Wine (grape wine 12%; must of grape 9%, vermouth 16%), Spirits (distilled spirits 40%; spirit-like 30%), and Other (sorghum, millet, maize beers 5%; cider 5%; fortified wine 17% and 18%; fermented wheat and fermented rice 9%; other fermented beverages 9%)

40. Regional groupings under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) indicators framework.

41. Data based on Guthold, R., Stevens, G.A., Riley, L.M. and Bull, F.C., "Worldwide trends in body-mass index, underweight, overweight, and obesity from 1975 to 2016, a pooled analysis of 2416 population-based measurement studies in 128.9 million children, adolescents, and adults", *The Lancet*, vol. 390, Issue 10113, 16 December 2017.

Leading causes of death among women and men aged 50 and older



Key points

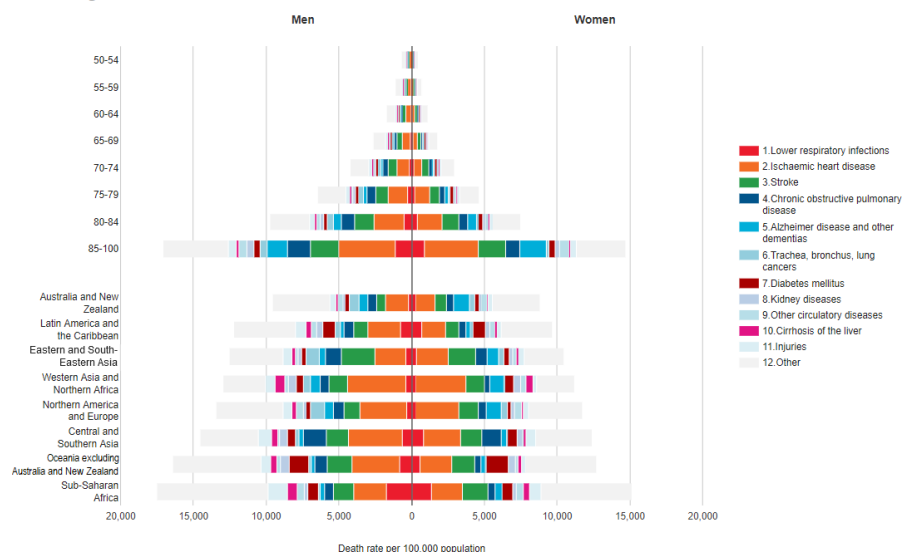
- One in five cancer deaths among women over age 50 are from breast and cervical cancer, with significant regional differences, particularly for cervical cancer. The death rate from cervical cancer is the highest in sub-Saharan Africa, and the lowest in Australia and New Zealand.
- Mortality rates from cancers among people aged 50 or older are generally higher in men than women. After age 50, mortality rates from cancer of the trachea, bronchia, lung, oesophagus, liver, stomach and bladder are at least twice as high in men as in women.
- Globally, men over age 50 are significantly more likely than women to die from ischaemic heart disease or cirrhosis of the liver: at ages 50–59 they are at least twice as likely to die from ischaemic heart disease, and at ages 50–69 they have the same gap in chances of dying from cirrhosis of the liver.
- After age 70, women are between 20% and 30% more likely than men to die from Alzheimer's disease and other types of dementia: 1 in 12 deaths among women over the age of 70 are due to this cause, compared to 1 in 20 deaths among men of the same age. The principal risk factor for Alzheimer's disease is age, with death rates in both sexes more than doubling with each 5 years over age 70. In coping with Alzheimer's disease, women face a double burden: they are both at higher risk of dementia as they grow older as well as of being the main caregivers for members of their families.

90% of women and men aged 50 and older die from non-communicable diseases

In 2016, **non-communicable diseases** (group 2), including Alzheimer's disease, other types of dementia and cancer, accounted for 90% of deaths in the population aged 50 and older (see figure).¹ Lower respiratory infections (group 1) were also common causes of death, while **injuries** (group 3) were not among the 10 leading causes of death for this age cohort. While the risk of death is higher for men at all ages, gender differences in death rates are less marked as men and women grow older.

Taken together, cardiovascular diseases² were the number one cause of death in 2016, representing 31% of all deaths worldwide.³ Men aged 50 and older were at higher risk than women of dying from ischaemic heart disease, and at ages 50–54 more than twice as likely to die from the disease. While the gender gap decreases with age, men are still more likely to die from the disease well into their early 80s. After age 85, however, both sexes are at equal risk of dying from ischaemic heart disease, with virtually no gender gap at very old ages.

Figure I: Death rates from leading causes of death at ages 50 and over per 100,000 population by sex and region: 2016



Source: World Health Organization (WHO), Global Health Estimates 2016 (https://www.who.int/healthinfo/global_burden_disease/en/).

Note: Regions are listed in ascending order relative to the mortality rate at ages 50 and older.

At the regional level, men were 51% more likely to die of ischaemic heart disease in Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand) and 44% more likely in Central and Southern Asia, although no gender difference was noticeable in Eastern and South-Eastern Asia and sub-Saharan Africa.

In Australia and New Zealand, Northern America and Europe and sub-Saharan Africa, women aged 50 and older were more likely than men in the same age bracket to die of stroke (41%, 23% and 21%, respectively), while in Latin America and the Caribbean and Eastern and South-Eastern Asia men were at greater risk of stroke.

In 2016, the risk of dying from cirrhosis of the liver⁴ was higher for men than women aged 50 and older at the global level and in all regions of the world. Men aged 50–54 were almost three times as likely as women to die from this cause, and at least twice as likely, until age 70. Although the gender gap decreases with age, globally men remain at higher risk of dying from liver disease over the life course.

While reported at lower rates in comparison to the death rate from ischaemic heart disease and cirrhosis of the liver, in 2016 men over age 50 were also more likely than women to die from chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.⁵ The gender gap was consistent across all geographic regions and was the largest in Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand), where men were almost twice as likely to die of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease than women.

In 2016, in most regions, no significant differences in mortality rates due to diabetes mellitus⁶ were reported between women and men aged 50 and older. The two regions with the lowest death rates due to diabetes mellitus were exceptions: in Australia and New Zealand, men were at higher risk (19% more likely than women), and in Eastern and South-Eastern Asia, women were at higher risk (30% more likely than men).

Lower respiratory infections are a prominent cause of death for women and men at age 70 and older worldwide; and in sub-Saharan Africa at age 50 and older

For decades, acute lower respiratory infections have been among the top three causes of death and disability worldwide, although substantial progress has been made to reduce their spread. In 2016, lower respiratory infections were the cause of approximately one million deaths in adults aged 70 and older and 2.38 million deaths among people of all ages worldwide,⁷ with a particularly high death rate reported in developing regions.

Overall, *streptococcus pneumoniae* was the leading cause of illness and death from lower respiratory infections globally— the cause of more deaths than all other aetiologies combined.⁸ The most prominent risk factors for such infections include: old age, crowded living conditions, malnutrition, HIV infection, lack of immunization, chronic health conditions and exposure to tobacco smoke or indoor air pollutants.⁹

Men aged 50 and older were at higher risk of dying from lower respiratory infections than women, and men aged 50–59 were about 58% more likely than women to die from lower respiratory infections. While the gender gap in the death rate from respiratory infections decreases slightly with age, men remain at a disadvantage over the life course (see figure I).

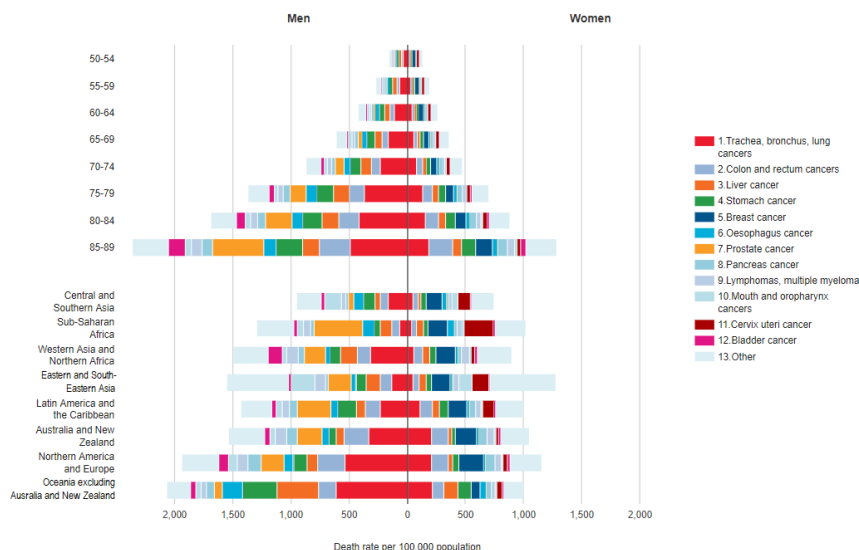
At the regional level, for both women and men, death rates due to lower respiratory infections were highest in sub-Saharan Africa; followed by Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand) for men; and Central and Southern Asia for women. The degree of the gender gap differed, depending on the region: in Australia and New Zealand and in Central and Southern Asia women aged 50 and older were more likely than men in the same age bracket to die from lower respiratory infections (29% and 21%, respectively), while in all other regions men aged 50 and older were more likely to die from such infections.

Mortality due to cancer at age 50 and older

At age 50 and older, men are at a higher risk of dying from cancer than women

In 2016, mortality rates from cancer¹⁰ were generally higher in men than women aged 50 and older, in particular cancer of the trachea, bronchia, lung, oesophagus, liver, stomach, prostate and bladder, for which death rates were at least twice as high among men than women (see figure II). The reported exception was breast cancer, which was extremely rare among men. Behavioural and dietary risks, including **tobacco use and alcohol consumption**, responsible for most of these types for cancers, are more prevalent in men than in women.

Among the population aged 50 and older, the gender gap in mortality due to cancer, to the disadvantage of men, is found in all regions. The gender difference is largest in Eastern and South-Eastern Asia, the region with the highest standardized death rates, where men aged 50 and older are twice as likely as women to die from cancer. These trends coincide with the incidence of tobacco smoking: the highest rates of tobacco smoking among men are in Eastern and South Eastern Asia. The smallest gender difference in mortality is in Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand), where men are only about 20% more likely to die of cancer than women. It is notable that women in Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand) have the highest mortality rate due to cancer compared to women in other regions.

Figure II: Deaths due to cancer per 100,000 population aged 50 and older by sex and region: 2016

Source: World Health Organization (WHO), Global Health Estimates 2016 (https://www.who.int/healthinfo/global_burden_disease/en/).

Note: Regions are listed in order of ascending mortality rate in females.

Breast cancer remains among the most common cancer and cause of death among women aged 50 and older.

Globally, one in five cancer deaths among women aged 50 and older are from breast and cervical cancer, with some significant regional differences, particularly for cervical cancer. In low-income countries, where access to health services is poor, and which have lower standardized cancer rates for other cancers, death rates from cervical cancer are high.

The death rate from cervical cancer is the highest in sub-Saharan Africa (247 deaths per 100,000 women over age 50), followed by Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand) (148 deaths per 100,000). The death rate is the lowest in Australia and New Zealand (20 deaths per 100,000), followed by Western Asia and Northern Africa (29 deaths per 100,000). Regional variations in the death rate from breast cancer are smaller. Countries in Eastern and South-Eastern Asia have the lowest death rate from breast cancer for women aged 50 and older (80 deaths per 100,000), while the death rate from breast cancer in other regions of the world ranges from 135 deaths per 100,000 in Central and Southern Asia to 208 deaths per 100,000 in Northern America and Europe.

Death rates from cancer increase with age for both women and men. The death rate for cervical cancer among women aged 50–54 stands at 17 deaths per 100,000, increases to about 29 deaths per 100,000 at ages 70–74 and reaches 34 deaths per 100,000 among women aged 85–89. In the case of prostate cancer, the upward trend in death rates among men as they age is striking: at ages 50–54, there are 14 deaths per 100,000, by ages 70–74 the death rate increases to 74 per 100,000 and by ages 85–90 it is as high as 441 deaths per 100,000.

Coronavirus-19 (COVID-19), cancer and gender

Emerging data in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland¹¹ indicate that cancer patients with COVID-19 are significantly more likely to be male. Patients with breast cancer or malignancies of the female genital tract appear to be at a much lower risk of contracting or dying from COVID-19. In multivariable analysis, this protection was attributed to the patients being women rather than to any inherently lower risk associated with these types of tumours.

Alzheimer's disease and dementia

Older age is usually characterized by an increasing and general impairment of physiological functioning, resulting in the growing risk of disease and death. More common among people later in life, Alzheimer's disease is a chronic neurodegenerative disease with an average life expectancy following diagnosis of between three to nine years.^{12, 13} Among other effects, degenerative changes in the brain lead to deterioration in memory, thinking, behaviour and the ability to perform everyday activities. The result is a loss of the skills that enable people to live independently. Worldwide, around 50 million people suffer from Alzheimer's or other types of dementia, with nearly 60% of that population living in low-income and middle-income countries. By 2030, the total number of people with dementia is projected to reach 82 million.

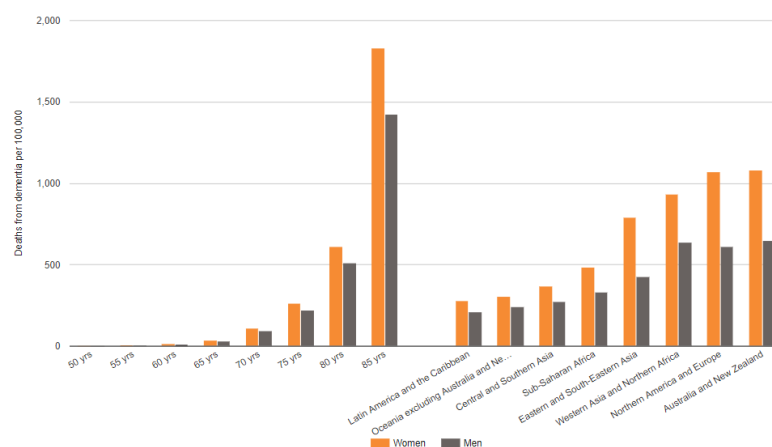
Women are more likely than men to be affected by dementia

Alzheimer's disease and other dementias account for 1 in 12 deaths among women aged 70 and older,¹⁴ compared to 1 in 20 deaths among men of the same age. The principal risk factor for Alzheimer's disease is age: death rates in both sexes double with each additional 5 years of life. The lifetime risk for Alzheimer's disease is greater among women than men, partly because more women survive to ages at which the onset of the disease is most common.¹⁵ Little is yet known about risk factors for the disease except age itself, although evidence points to risk factors that are shared with cardiovascular disease. Smoking, obesity, diabetes, high cholesterol and hypertension may increase the risk of dementia, while physical activity, a healthy diet, social activities and education may have a protective effect. There is some evidence that certain genetic factors may increase an individual's risk of having dementia.¹⁶

Of the leading causes of death among people aged 50 and older (see figure I), the single cause of death that significantly affects women more than men is Alzheimer's disease and other types of dementia. Globally, at every age bracket, women are at least 20% more likely than men to die from these causes (see figure III), and gender disparities to women's disadvantage are more marked in some regions: in Eastern and South-Eastern Asia, women aged 50 and older are 85% more likely than men to die from Alzheimer's and other types of dementia, and in Northern America and Europe women are 76% more likely than men to die from this cause.

The smallest gender gap in mortality due to Alzheimer's and other dementias is found in Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand) (24% to the disadvantage of women). These trends match the gender differences in life expectancy at older ages: among those aged 80 and older this gap is high in Eastern and South-Eastern Asia, where women outlive men by about two years, while there is practically no gap in Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand).

Figure III: Deaths due to Alzheimer's disease and other types of dementia per 100,000 population aged 50 and older by sex and region: 2016



Source: World Health Organization (WHO), Global Health Estimates 2016 (https://www.who.int/healthinfo/global_burden_disease/en/).
Note: Regions are presented in ascending order of mortality rate in females.

The quality of life of those suffering from Alzheimer's disease and their carers, most commonly female family members, can be severely impaired. Women experience a double burden: they are at higher risk of dementia as they grow older and they are also likely to be the main caregivers as partners, daughters and daughters-in-law.

Informal care of individuals with dementia is common, not only in most low-income and middle-income countries, where professional or institutional care is often not available, but is also frequent in developed countries. For instance, in the United States of America, two-thirds of primary unpaid caregivers of those with Alzheimer's disease are women, and over one-third are daughters. Alzheimer's disease takes a devastating toll: compared with caregivers of people without dementia, twice as many caregivers of those with dementia report substantial emotional, financial and physical difficulties.¹⁷

Mortality in older age: causes show marked gender differences

Even in older ages, the death rate from injuries, in particular road accidents and self-harm injuries, continues to show a distinct gendered pattern, with men aged 65 and older representing about 70% of total deaths under this category (see figure IV). At ages 65–74, men are more likely than women to die as the result of falling (58% of deaths), however, as women and men grow older (ages 75–84 and ages 85–100) the death rate from falls is approximately equal between the sexes.

Among the older population, tuberculosis takes a greater toll among older men: 66% of deaths at ages 65–74 and 69% of deaths at ages 85–100 from tuberculosis occur among men. Women at older ages continue to die from breast and cervical cancer, and they die at higher rates than men from rheumatic heart disease (see figure IV). At ages 65–74, women account for 59% of global mortality from rheumatic heart disease, and represent 57% of global mortality at ages 75–84. After age 84, deaths due to Alzheimer's disease and other types of dementia are more common among women than men — 56% of female mortality at ages 85–100. Among the oldest age group (ages 85–100), mortality due to stroke, ischaemic heart disease, cardiomyopathy, myocarditis, endocarditis and falls are equally common among women and men.

Figure IV: Female death rates worldwide as a proportion of total death rates by age and cause of death:
2016 (Percentage)

	Age (years)		
	65-74	75-84	85-100
Communicable, maternal, perinatal and nutritional conditions			
1 Lower respiratory infections	45%	43%	44%
2 Neonatal deaths			
3 Diarrhoeal diseases	53%	50%	46%
4 Tuberculosis	34%	34%	31%
5 HIV/AIDS			
6 Malaria and other vector borne diseases			47%
7 Other infectious diseases		42%	47%
8 Protein-energy malnutrition		47%	47%
9 Maternal conditions			
Noncommunicable diseases			
1 Ischaemic heart disease	40%	45%	49%
2 Stroke	42%	45%	50%
3 Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease	39%	38%	38%
4 Alzheimer and other dementias	55%	55%	56%
5 Trachea, bronchus, lung cancers	26%	27%	28%
6 Diabetes	49%	50%	48%
7 Cirrhosis of the liver	35%	38%	37%
8 Kidney diseases	43%	41%	42%
9 Other circulatory diseases	43%	47%	52%
10 Hypertensive heart disease	50%	50%	52%
11 Liver cancer	27%	30%	34%
12 Colon and rectum cancers	38%	40%	44%
13 Stomach cancer	28%	30%	35%
14 Breast cancer	99%	99%	98%
15 Other malignant neoplasms	40%	41%	43%
16 Oesophagus cancer	24%	26%	29%
17 Asthma	45%	48%	49%
18 Other digestive diseases	42%	46%	50%
19 Cardiomyopathy, myocarditis, endocarditis	38%	45%	49%
20 Pancreas cancer	42%	44%	48%
21 Prostate cancer	0%	0%	0%
22 Lymphomas, multiple myeloma	39%	40%	40%
23 Other respiratory diseases	34%	36%	42%
24 Mouth and oropharynx cancers	25%	26%	31%
25 Rheumatic heart disease	59%	57%	55%
26 Leukaemia	38%	36%	38%
27 Cervix uteri cancer	100%	100%	100%
Injuries			
1 Road injury	31%	30%	27%
2 Self-harm	35%	32%	31%
3 Falls	42%	46%	48%
4 Other unintentional injuries	36%	40%	47%
5 Interpersonal violence			
6 Drowning			39%

Female mortality as proportion total 0-19% 20-44% 45-55%

Source: World Health Organization (WHO), Global Health Estimates 2016 (https://www.who.int/healthinfo/global_burden_disease/en/).

Note: Data are presented for the 42 leading causes of death in 2016 (where the global number of deaths exceeded 280,000). These causes accounted for 89% of all deaths in 2016. The female death rate in relation to the combined male and female death rate is shown for cells where the age-specific death rate from a cause, in either sex, exceeds 1,500 per 100,000.

About the data

Definitions

- **Deaths by leading causes of death in the population aged 50 and older:** Number of deaths due to a specific cause of death per 100,000 population aged 50 and older.
- **Deaths due to Alzheimer's disease and other types of dementia per 100,000 population aged 50 and older:** Measuring the risk of dying from dementia is important in assessment of the burden of these diseases in a population. Number of deaths due to Alzheimer's disease and other dementias per 100,000 population aged 50 and older.
- **Age-standardized death rates from the 12 leading causes of cancer in the population aged 50 and older:** Measuring the risk of dying from cancer is important in assessment of the disease burden from cancer in a population. Age-standardized rates are adjusted for differences in the age distribution of a population by applying observed age-specific rates for each population to a standard population. The age-standardized rate is a weighted average of the age-specific rates per 100,000 population, where the weights are the proportions of persons in the corresponding age groups of the standard population as defined by the World Health Organization (WHO).

Coverage

WHO calculates estimates for all WHO member States with a population of more than 90,000 (184 countries).

While age 65 is generally used for statistical purposes to identify older persons, most indicators in this story refer broadly to an older population aged 50 and over.

Availability

Data on individual countries are derived from WHO Global Health Estimates for United Nations Member States organized by regional groupings under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) indicators framework.¹⁸

Footnotes

1. In 2016, non-communicable diseases accounted for 71% of global deaths among people of all ages (41 million deaths (21 million deaths among men and 20 million among women)).
2. Cardiovascular diseases are a group of disorders of the heart and blood vessels, including ischaemic heart disease, cerebrovascular disease, rheumatic heart disease and other related conditions.
3. WHO, Cardiovascular diseases (CVDs).
4. Cirrhosis of the liver refers to the replacement of normal liver tissue with non-living scar tissue, which can result in irrevocable liver failure. It is most commonly caused by Hepatitis C and prolonged excessive alcohol consumption.
5. Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) is a progressive life-threatening lung disease that causes breathlessness. The disease develops slowly and usually becomes apparent after age 50.
6. Diabetes is a chronic disease that occurs either when the pancreas does not produce enough insulin (a hormone that regulates blood sugar) or when the body cannot effectively use the insulin it produces.
7. The Global Burden of Diseases, Injuries, and Risk Factors Study 2016, Lower Respiratory Infections Collaborators, "Estimates of the global, regional, and national morbidity, mortality, and aetiologies of lower respiratory infections in 195 countries, 1990–2016: a systematic analysis for the Global Burden of Disease Study 2016", *The Lancet*, vol. 18, Issue 11, November 2018.
8. Ibid.
9. Forum of International Respiratory Societies, *The Global Impact of Respiratory Disease*, second edition, Sheffield, European Respiratory Society, 2017.
10. Cancers are a group of diseases characterized by uncontrolled growth and spread of abnormal cells (metastasis): they comprise a complex group of diseases and have a variety of causes, usually modified by an individual's genetic make-up. WHO estimates that about 30%-50% of cancers may be prevented with lifestyle modifications, such as eliminating tobacco use, being physically active, and reducing access to carcinogens in the environment.
11. Lee, Lennard, Y.W., Cazier, Jean-Baptiste, Starkey, Thomas, Briggs, Sarah E.W., Arnold, Roland, Bisht, Vartika et al, "COVID-19 prevalence and mortality in patients with cancer and the effect of primary tumour subtype and patient demographics: a prospective cohort study", *The Lancet Oncology*, August 2020 (online).
12. Querfurth, H.W. and LaFerla, F.M., "Mechanisms of disease: Alzheimer's disease", *The New England Journal of Medicine*, vol. 362, No. 4, January 2010.
13. Todd, S., Barr, S., Roberts, M., Passmore, A.P., "Survival in dementia and predictors of mortality: a review", *International Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry*, vol. 28 (11).
14. Death rates from Alzheimer's disease before age 70 are practically negligible.
15. Mielke, M.M., Ferretti, M.T., Iulita, M.F., Hayden, K., Khachaturian, A.S., "Sex and gender in Alzheimer's disease – does it matter?", *Alzheimer's & Dementia*. 2018;14(9):1101.
16. Barnes, Deborah, E. and others, "Development and validation of a brief dementia screening indicator for primary care", *Alzheimer's & Dementia*, *The Journal of the Alzheimer's Association*, vol. 10 (6), February 2014.
17. Alzheimer's Association, 2020: Alzheimer's Disease: Facts and Figures.
18. Regional groupings under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) indicators framework.

Health

Coronavirus-19, gender and health



Key points

- In 2020, COVID-19 became a global pandemic, with practically all countries and territories in the world affected: as of September 2020, approximately 32 million confirmed cases and almost 1 million deaths have been reported worldwide.
- Based on data from 38 countries and territories, there is a slightly larger proportion of boys and young men among cases of COVID-19 below the age of 20, (57% among boys aged 0–9 age and 53% among boys and young men aged 10–19). In age groups above 20 years, women account for a larger proportion of cases, for example, women represent 57% and 58% of cases in age brackets 40–49 and 50–59, respectively. Above the age of 80, women significantly outnumber men among those infected: for every single case of COVID-19 among men aged 80 and older there are 2 cases among women.
- COVID-19 has greatly increased mortality rates among men. Based on data for 38 countries and territories, men have a larger share of deaths across all age groups except among the population aged 80 and older. Between ages 20–80, men are significantly overrepresented among COVID-19 deaths: men represent above 60% of deaths in every age group, and 70% among the population aged 40–49.
- Although less likely to die from COVID-19, women face additional challenges related to the disease compared to men, including increased risk of domestic violence and abuse due to the isolation measures implemented by governments to curtail the virus spread. Women also comprise 69% of health professionals who are now on the front lines in the battle against the pandemic, facing a higher risk of infection than men in the workplace.
- A range of medications and vaccines are under development or undergoing clinical trials. Given the nature of the disease it will be important that such trials include both women and men, older people and those with comorbidities.

Background

Coronaviruses are a family of viruses that may cause illness in animals and humans. In humans, several coronaviruses are known to cause respiratory infections, which range from the common cold to more severe diseases such as Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS) and severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS). The most recently discovered coronavirus disease, COVID-19, was unknown before an outbreak that began in Wuhan, China, in December 2019. The most common symptoms of COVID-19 are fever, dry cough and tiredness. Other less common symptoms include aches and pains, nasal congestion, headache, conjunctivitis, sore throat, diarrhoea, loss of taste or smell, a skin rash or discoloration of fingers or toes.

COVID-19 has affected virtually all countries and territories, with about 32 million confirmed cases and almost 1 million deaths as of September 2020

Most people (about 80%) recover from the disease without needing hospital treatment. However, about 20% of people who contract COVID-19 become seriously ill and develop difficulty breathing. Older people and those

with underlying medical problems such as high blood pressure, heart and lung problems, diabetes or cancer, are at higher risk of developing serious illness.¹ Emerging studies also suggest that men are at higher risk for worse outcomes and death.^{2 3 4 5}

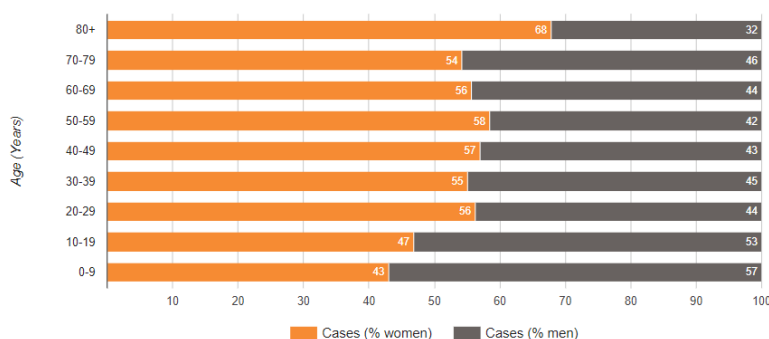
Recent data for 38 countries and territories suggest that while women above age 20 are more likely to be diagnosed with COVID-19, men in all age groups under age 80 are more likely than women to die from it

The limited availability of sex- and age-disaggregated data on COVID-19 infection and mortality hampers the analysis of the gendered implications of the disease in different age groups and the development of appropriate responses.⁶ As at 6 May 2020, only 40% of globally reported confirmed cases of COVID-19 had been reported to WHO with age and sex information.⁷ More recently available pooled data for 38 countries and territories (as of 15 September) suggest that boys and young men below age 20 account for a slightly larger share of cases of COVID-19 than women (on average, across countries with data, 57% of COVID-19 infections among those aged 0–9 are boys and 53% among those aged 10–19 are boys and young men), while between ages 20–80 women account for a slightly larger share, reaching as much as 58% of cases in the age bracket 50–59, followed by 57% in the age group 40–49 and 56% among those aged 20–29, and 60–69.

Above age 80, the share of women with COVID-19 is significantly larger: 68% of cases at age 80 and older are women and 32% are men, meaning that for every male case of COVID-19 in that age group there are more than 2 cases among women (see figure I).

It is too early to speculate as to the reasons for this age-sex pattern. The reduced share among young women could be due to their higher innate immunity or their tendency to take fewer risks than young men. The higher share of diagnosis among women later in life (after age 20), could stem from higher level of exposure among women-dominated occupations. Above age 80, larger shares are most likely due to the fact that women make up the majority of the population.

Figure I: Share of COVID-19 cases by sex and age group, 2020 (Percentage)



Source: Global Health 5050, African Population and Health Research Center and International Center for Research on Women: the COVID-19 Sex-Disaggregated Data Tracker (<https://globalhealth5050.org/>) includes data for 38 countries and territories (data obtained on 15 September 2020).

Recent data for 38 countries and territories also suggest that COVID-19

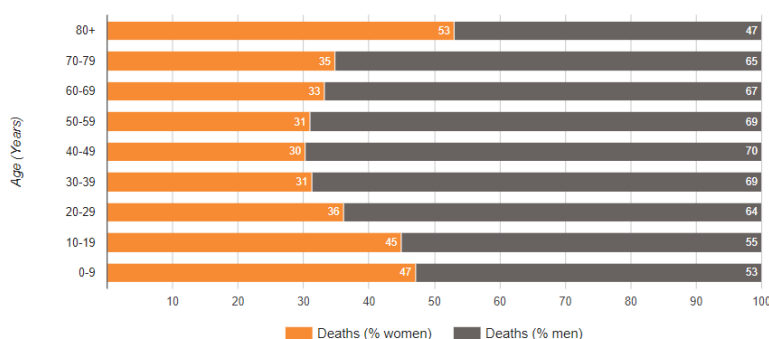
has greatly increased mortality rates among men. Men have a larger share of deaths across all age groups except among the population aged 80 and older

Countries with large older populations are at greater risk of having **large numbers of deaths** due to COVID-19 relative to their population size. Men have a larger share of deaths across all age groups, except among the population aged 80 and older (see figure II). The share of men among deaths due to COVID-19, particularly between ages 20–80, is significantly higher than that among women (above 60% in each age group), reaching 70% for men aged 40–49, 69% for men aged 30–39 and 50–59, and 67% for men aged 60–69.

After age 80, women account for slightly more than half of deaths (53%), probably due to the smaller male population in that age group.

The higher shares of men among COVID-19 deaths are especially remarkable given that women account for larger shares among those diagnosed with COVID-19 across all age groups, except for the population under age 20 (see figure I). In other words, adult women are more affected than men by COVID-19 infections, but they are able to recover, while men are more likely to succumb to the disease. Poor health outcomes in both women and men have been linked to **underlying health conditions**, such as pre-existing cardiovascular disease, diabetes, being on steroid therapy or being overweight. Traditional masculine norms which may inhibit men from seeking health care could be related to the poor outcomes observed in men. Improved outcomes in women have also been linked to enhanced immune responses.⁸

Figure II: Share of COVID-19 deaths by sex and age group, 2020 (Percentage)



Source: Global Health 5050, African Population and Health Research Center and International Center for Research on Women: the COVID-19 Sex-Disaggregated Data Tracker (<https://globalhealth5050.org/>) includes data for 38 countries and territories (data obtained on 15 September 2020).

The disruption to health services caused by COVID-19 has affected the utilization of health services and consequently outcomes for other health-related conditions

Countries that have sufficiently sensitive and timely civil registration systems have noted an increase in the number of deaths from all causes. While a high proportion of excess deaths have been attributed to COVID-19, there also appears to be an increase in the number of deaths from other causes.^{9 10} A full accounting of lives lost during the pandemic will require an extensive analysis of excess deaths across the globe in order to identify

COVID-19 deaths not reported as such,¹¹ as well as deaths from other causes that may be indirectly attributable to the disease. The latter category includes excess deaths that occur because people do not seek or cannot obtain medical care when needed during the ongoing pandemic, whether for chronic diseases, injuries, complications of pregnancy or other conditions. The precise magnitude and patterns for this trend remain to be determined.

Access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights for women and girls may be reduced during the pandemic

Governments and health-care facilities are making choices about prioritizing the provision of some health services and scaling back others.¹² Experience and evidence from previous outbreaks (including the Ebola epidemics in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea and Sierra Leone and the Zika virus disease) and other humanitarian emergencies indicate that **sexual and reproductive health services**, including pregnancy care, contraceptive services, sexual assault services and safe abortion, are likely to be scaled back.^{13 14 15} This can result in an increased risk of **maternal mortality**, unintended pregnancies and other adverse sexual and reproductive health outcomes among women and girls.¹⁶

Efforts to control COVID-19 have differing effects on women and men, but the emotional impact of the pandemic is disproportionately falling on women's shoulders.

Treatment for COVID-19 currently involves managing respiratory illness and other symptoms associated with the disease, with around 20% of diagnosed patients requiring intensive care. Women comprise the majority of the health-care workforce, especially nurses, and therefore have greater levels of exposure. Based on latest available data as of 2019 for 121 countries (excluding China and India), globally, women comprise 69% of health professionals, including medical doctors and nursing personnel.

Emerging evidence from the Asia-Pacific region¹⁷ highlights that, although data show that men are more likely to contract and die from the COVID-19, the emotional impact of the pandemic is disproportionately falling on women's shoulders in most countries. Increases in **unpaid care and domestic work, job and income loss** and the effects of the lockdown and the confinement at home, which has been associated with a potential increased risk on **intimate partner violence**, are among the factors that may be contributing to higher levels of stress and anxiety among women.

A range of medications and vaccines are under development or undergoing clinical trials. Given the gender component of the disease spread and related mortality, it will be important that such trials include both women and men, older people and those with comorbidities.¹⁸

About the data

Definitions

- **Share (%) of Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) cases by sex:** Share (%) of cases over total number of cases by age and sex.
- **Share (%) of Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) deaths by sex:** Share (%) of cases over total number of cases by age and sex.

Coverage

Women and men of all ages.

Availability

Data are available for 74 countries and territories by sex and for 38 countries and territories by sex and age group. The availability of data is critically limited; there is urgent need for more disaggregated data to facilitate gender analysis, in addition to sex and age, such as data on occupation, underlying conditions including pregnancy, testing and hospitalization.

Footnotes

1. World Health Organization (WHO), Health Topics, Q&A on coronaviruses (COVID-19), WHO, Health Topics, Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.
2. Xie, J., Tong, Z., Guan, X., Du, B., and Qiu, H., "Clinical Characteristics of Patients Who Died of Coronavirus Disease 2019 in China", JAMA Network Open, 10 April 2020.
3. Guan, W.J., Ni, Z.Y., Hu, Y., et al., "Clinical Characteristics of Coronavirus Disease 2019 in China", New England Journal of Medicine, vol.382, 30 April 2020.
4. Banerjee, A., et al., "Estimating excess 1-year mortality associated with the COVID-19 pandemic according to underlying conditions and age: a population-based cohort study", The Lancet, 12 May 2020.
5. Nikpouraghdam, M., et al., « Epidemiological characteristics of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) patients in IRAN : a single center study », Journal of Clinical Virology, June 2020.
6. WHO, Gender and COVID-19, advocacy brief, 14 May 2020.
7. Ibid.
8. Zeng, F., et al., "A comparison study of SARS-CoV-2 IgG antibody between male and female COVID-19 patients: A possible reason underlying different outcome between sex", Journal of Medical Virology, vol. 92, Issue 10, May 2020.
9. Holmes, J.L., et al., "Emergency ambulance services for heart attack and stroke during UK's COVID-19 lockdown", The Lancet, vol. 395, No. 10237, 13 May 2020.
10. The Economist, Tracking covid-19 excess deaths across countries, 15 July 2020.
11. Reporting by individual countries of the percentage of COVID 19 cases and deaths that are being accurately identified and reported as such is varied. Preliminary studies indicate that COVID-19 deaths reported by some countries comprise no more than half of the "excess deaths" observed during March, April and May 2020, when the number of deaths was far above what would have been expected based on the average number of deaths in previous years
12. WHO, Gender and COVID-19, advocacy brief, 14 May 2020.
13. Smith, J., "Overcoming the 'tyranny of the urgent': integrating gender into disease outbreak preparedness and response", Gender & Development, vol. 27, Issue 2, June 2019.
14. McKay, G., Black, B., Mbambu Kahamba, S., Wheeler, E., Mearns, S., Janvrin, A., "Not all that bleeds Is Ebola: How has the DRC Ebola outbreak impacted Sexual and Reproductive Health in North-Kivu", International Rescue Committee, 2019.
15. Camara, B.S., Delamou, A., Diro, E., Béavogui, A.H., El Ayadi, A.M., Sidibé, S. et al., "Effect of the 2014/2015 Ebola outbreak on reproductive health services in a rural district of Guinea: an ecological study", Transactions of the Royal Society of Tropical Medicine & Hygiene, vol. 111, Issue 1, January 2017.
16. WHO, Gender and COVID-19, advocacy brief, 14 May 2020.
17. United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), "Surveys show that COVID-19 has gendered effects in Asia and the Pacific", April 2020.
18. Lithander, F.E., et al., "COVID-19 in older people: a rapid clinical review", Age and Ageing, vol. 49, Issue 4, July 2020.

Gender and selected communicable diseases: HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis



Key points

- Globally, the incidence of HIV infection has declined by almost 50% since 2005, for both women and men.
- Sub-Saharan Africa remains the region most heavily affected by HIV, with a much higher incidence rate than the world average (4 times higher for men and 5 times higher for women), as well as the region where women are at higher risk of contracting HIV (58% of all new adult HIV infections), particularly young women, who run twice the risk of infection as young men.
- Globally, in 2017 men were less likely than women to take an HIV test (75% men versus 85% women), access antiretroviral therapy (55% men versus 68% women) or have suppressed their viral loads (47% men versus 59% women).
- Of an estimated 10 million cases of TB in 2018, 63% were among men and 37% among women.

Background

In developing countries, further gains in life expectancy are impeded by causes that are preventable or treatable through access to basic health services; in addition, economic, social and environmental determinants have impacts on health and wellbeing. While deaths from communicable diseases such as malaria, diarrhoea and TB are usually higher in developing countries, this situation changed drastically over the course of 2020 due to the emergence of the Coronavirus-19 (COVID-19) pandemic, a highly communicable disease that has affected developing and developed countries alike.

Current situation

Sub-Saharan Africa is the region most heavily affected by HIV and in 2018, 58% of all new adult HIV infections were among women

Globally, in 2018 there were an estimated 1.7 million new HIV infections, an incidence rate of 0.24 per 1,000 uninfected population among the total population, with a similar incidence among women and men. The rate represents a decline of almost 50% from the infection level of 0.47 recorded in 2005.

There are significant regional differences in HIV transmission. Sub-Saharan Africa is the most heavily affected region in the world, with an HIV incidence of 0.93 per 1,000 for men (almost 4 times the global average) and 1.3 per 1,000 for women (more than 5 times the global average). In addition, 58% of the all new adult HIV infections in sub-Saharan Africa were among women, and new infections among women aged 15–49 in sub-Saharan Africa contributed a third of total HIV infections globally.¹ Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand), the second most affected region, had an infection rate much closer to the global average, about 0.27 per 1,000 infections for women and 0.22 per 1,000 for men, with women accounting for more than half of new HIV infections (55%).

Countries in other parts of the world had lower rates of HIV infection, although national or regional data usually hide inequalities within, and the incidence was higher among men than women, particularly in Latin America and the Caribbean and in Europe and Northern America (at least 2.5 times higher) (see figure I), where HIV is predominantly transmitted through sex between men or intravenous drug use.² Men who have sex with men accounted for an estimated 17% of new HIV infections globally, accounting for more than half of new HIV infections in western and central Europe and Northern America and 40% of infections in Latin America.³

Early marriage, gender-based violence, unequal access to information, including sexual health knowledge, and a lack of negotiating power and economic autonomy are among a number of factors that put women and adolescent girls at increased risk of HIV infection and restrict their ability to protect themselves from infection. Research has also show greater biological susceptibility to HIV infection in women, especially adolescent girls.⁴ Among the community of men and boys who have sex with members of the same sex, masculine norms that stigmatize homosexuality can lead to promiscuity and substance abuse,

increasing the risk of infection.⁵ More broadly, traditional masculine norms also typically equate risk-taking, aggression and stoicism with so-called manliness, and they stigmatize illness and prudence,⁶ which leads men to increased practice of unsafe sex, and decreased access to health services and adherence to treatment.

Progress in reducing rates of infection has been achieved in eastern and southern Africa, home to 54% of the global population living with HIV. During the period 2010–2018, AIDS-related mortality in these subregions declined by 44% and annual new HIV infections declined by 28%.

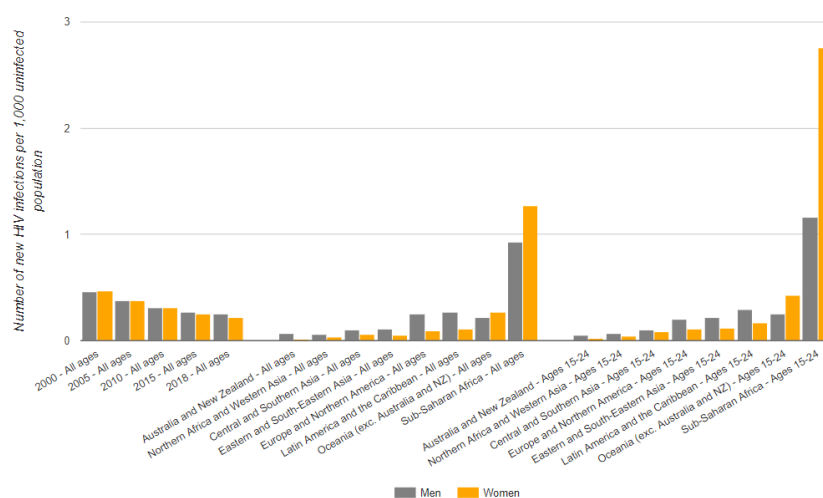
However, other regions have experienced an increase in HIV infection. Over the period 2010–2018, AIDS-related deaths in eastern Europe and central Asia increased by 5% and in Middle East and North Africa by 9%, and in three subregions the rate of HIV infection increased over the same time period: eastern Europe and central Asia (29% increase), the Middle East and North Africa (10% increase) and Latin America (7% increase).⁷

Globally, although new HIV infections among young women (aged 15–24) fell by 25% between 2010 and 2018, rates are significantly high in some regions

As reported in 2018, an alarming 7 in 10 young women in sub-Saharan Africa did not have comprehensive knowledge about HIV,⁸ and women overall were at higher risk of contracting HIV. Infection rates in young women aged 15–24 were almost 2.5 times as high as those of men of the same age (see figure I). A similar pattern has been reported in Oceania, excluding Australia and New Zealand, where adolescent girls and young women are particularly vulnerable and at increased risk of HIV infection.⁹ The pattern of high infection rates in young women reflects harmful gender norms that create unequal power dynamics in the home and wider society and deny young women control over their lives.¹⁰

Curbing HIV infections of girls and adolescents is particularly important in the prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV, since about 90% of HIV infections in infants and children are passed on from their mothers during pregnancy, delivery or breastfeeding, and half of all infants infected with HIV are likely to die before their second birthday if they do not receive treatment.¹¹ Persistent efforts to reach pregnant women living with HIV have resulted in a 44% decline in incidence among young children between 2010 and 2018 globally.¹²

Condom promotion remains a mainstay of prevention. However, according to UNAIDS,¹³ from a sample of 12 countries in West and Central Africa with recent data,¹⁴ more than half of young men (aged 15–24 years) in only 6 countries reported condom use at last incidence of high-risk sex. These data also show that condom use among young women was consistently lower.

Figure I: Estimated HIV incidence rate per 1,000 uninfected population: 2018

Source: Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS).

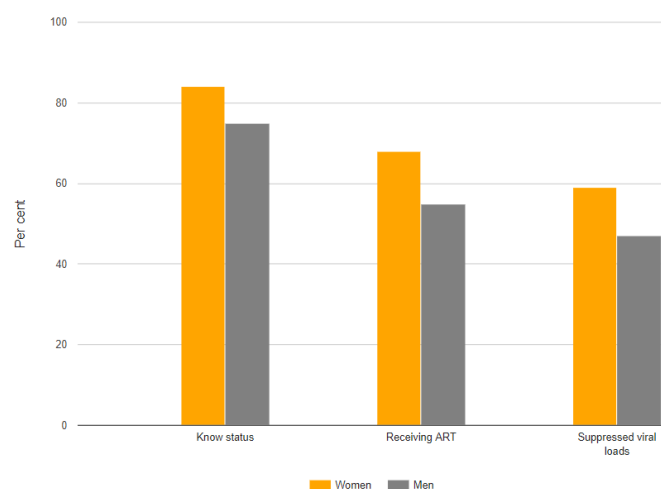
Note: Regional values are for 2018; regions are in ascending order of HIV incidence rate in females.

Globally, in 2017, men were less likely than women to take an HIV test, access antiretroviral therapy or have suppressed their viral loads.¹⁵

The uptake of testing and treatment can be low if such services are difficult to access. Fear of stigma and discrimination can also result in delays in seeking care, which can result in poor health outcomes.^{16 17 18} Men have reduced access to health-care services compared with women, who often access HIV services through maternal health services. Moreover, in general, men are less likely to seek health care,^{19 20} and are thus less likely to be diagnosed (75% men living with HIV/AIDS know their status versus 84% of women) and treated (55% among diagnosed men receive antiretroviral therapy versus 68% women) (see figure II). When men living with HIV are not diagnosed, do not start HIV treatment or fail to continue treatment, both their own health and the well-being and prospects of their partners, households, extended families and communities are jeopardized.

The intersections between infectious diseases, including HIV, and structural inequalities cannot be overstated.²¹ In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, efforts must be made to mitigate and overcome interruptions in health services and supplies in sub-Saharan Africa. Models show that if no action is taken, a six-month complete disruption in HIV services, including antiretroviral therapy, could lead to more than 500,000 additional deaths in the period 2020–2021 in sub-Saharan Africa from AIDS-related illnesses, including TB.²²

Figure II: Proportion of people living with HIV/AIDS who know their HIV status, are receiving treatment and have suppressed their viral loads: 2018



Source: UNAIDS, UNAIDS Data 2019, Geneva, 2019 (https://www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/media_asset/2019-UNAIDS-data_en.pdf).

People who are infected with HIV are 19 times more likely to develop active TB²³

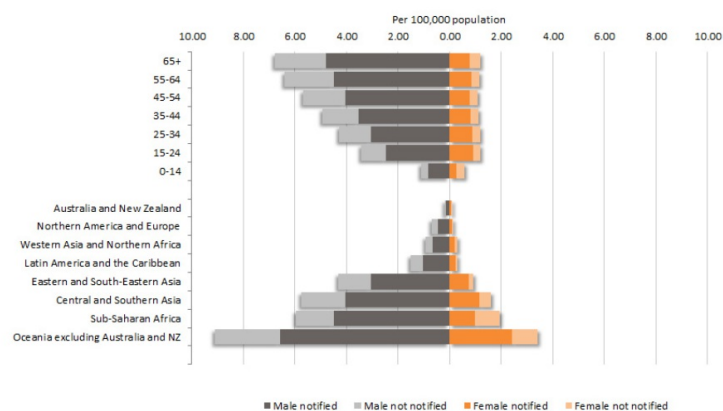
In 2018, it is estimated that there were 10 million cases of TB, 63% among men and 37% among women. While the incidence of TB appears to increase as men grow older, it remains relatively constant across age for women. Regional differences, with incidence among women consistently lower than men, were also significant (see figure III). Incidence was highest in Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand), with 6.5 new notified cases per 100,000 for men and 2.4 per 100,000 for women, followed by sub-Saharan Africa and Central and Southern Asia. Regional gender gaps in the incidence of TB also varied significantly, with the largest gender gap reported in Northern America and Europe, where men are 2.2 times more likely than women to be infected by TB, followed by Eastern and South-Eastern Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean, where men are almost twice as likely to be infected by TB as women.

The higher estimated incidence among men may be partly explained by men being more likely to smoke or drink.^{24 25} As reported by WHO, Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand) and Central and Southern Asia are the top three regions in terms of prevalence of **tobacco smoking** among men. The prevalence of smoking in adult men (aged over 15) is above 40% in 10 of the 30 countries with high incidence of TB.²⁶ Immunological reasons for an excess of TB infection in men have also been proposed.²⁷

Male TB patients appear to be less likely to seek care than female TB patients, as reflected in lower rates of case notification compared with the estimated total of cases (see figure III). As a consequence, male patients remain infectious in the community longer than female patients. There is a need for strategies to improve access to and use of health-care services among men, not only to address gender inequities but also to reduce infection to greatest extent possible. Potential strategies include the more active targeting of men with routine diagnostic and screening services.

Even though globally men are significantly more at risk of contracting and dying from TB than women, TB can have particularly severe consequences for women, especially during their reproductive years and during pregnancy. TB among mothers is associated with a six-fold increase in perinatal deaths and a two-fold risk of premature birth and low birth-weight; TB in pregnant women living with HIV increases the risk of maternal and infant mortality by almost 400%.²⁸

Modelling suggests that if the COVID-19 pandemic leads to a 25% global reduction in expected TB detection for three months, a realistic possibility given the levels of disruption being observed in multiple countries, a 13% rise in TB deaths might be expected. This would mean that global mortality rates from TB infection could return to those seen five years ago.²⁹

Figure III: Estimated incidence of notified and not notified cases of tuberculosis by sex: 2018

Source: WHO, Global Tuberculosis Report 2019, Geneva, 2019 (<https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/329368/9789241565714-eng.pdf?ua=1>).

Note: Regions are ordered according to estimated incidence of TB. Notified cases: the number of TB cases detected in a given year. The term "case detection", as used here, means that TB is diagnosed in a patient and is reported within the national surveillance system, and then to WHO. Not notified cases: gap between the number of new cases reported and the estimated.

About the data

Definitions

- **HIV incidence rate (SDG Indicator 3.3.1):** Number of new HIV infections per 1,000 uninfected population in a given period. The incidence rate provides a measure of progress towards preventing the onward transmission of HIV.
- **Proportion of the population living with HIV/AIDS who know their HIV status, are receiving treatment and have suppressed their viral loads:** Percentage of all people living with HIV who know their HIV status, are accessing treatment and have suppressed viral loads. This indicator belongs to the cascade of the 90-90-90 targets, called the "HIV testing and treatment cascade".
- **Tuberculosis incidence rate (SDG Indicator 3.3.2):** Estimated number of new cases and relapsed cases of tuberculosis (TB) (all forms of TB, including people living with HIV) arising in a given year, expressed as a rate per 100,000 population.
- **Notified TB cases:** The number of TB cases detected in a given year. The term "case detection", as used here, means that if TB is diagnosed in a patient it is reported within the national surveillance system and then to WHO.
- **Not notified TB cases:** Gap between the number of new cases reported and the estimated number of new cases.

Availability

- **HIV incidence rate (SDG Indicator 3.3.1):** Estimates published in 2019 by the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS)³⁰ and the World Health Organization³¹ are available for 170 countries. Estimates are not produced for 10 countries with very small HIV epidemics or those with populations lower than 250,000. Countries are organized by regional groupings under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) indicator framework.³²
- **Tuberculosis incidence rate (SDG Indicator 3.3.2):** WHO produces an annual report with estimates for all countries.³³

Footnotes

1. United Nations, Report of the Secretary-General on progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals, April 2020 (E/2020/57) .
2. UNDESA, Statistics Division, World's Women 2015: Trends and Statistics (chap. 2, p. 44) New York, 2015 .
3. UNAIDS, Communities at the Centre – Defending rights – Breaking barriers – Reaching people with HIV services, Global AIDS update 2019.
4. UNAIDS, HIV prevention among adolescent girls and young women, 2016 .
5. United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Gender and HIV/AIDS, New York, July 2020 .
6. UNAIDS, Blind spot – Reaching out to men and boys, 2017 .
7. UNAIDS, Communities at the Centre – Defending rights – Breaking barriers – Reaching people with HIV services, Global AIDS update 2019.
8. Ibid.
9. WHO, Health Topics database, HIV/AIDS .
10. Garcia-Moreno, C., and Watts, C., "Violence against women: its importance for HIV/AIDS", AIDS, vol. 14, Suppl. 3, 2000 .
11. UNICEF, Gender and HIV/AIDS, New York, July 2020 .
12. UNDESA, Statistics Division, The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2020, New York, 2020 .
13. UNAIDS, UNAIDS Data 2019, Geneva, 2019 .
14. Population-based surveys, 2013–2017.
15. UNAIDS, Blind Spot: Reaching out to men and boys: addressing a blind spot in the response to HIV, Geneva, 2017 .
16. Dlamini-Simelane, T.T.T., and Moyer E. "Lost to follow up": rethinking delayed and interrupted HIV treatment among married Swazi women", Health Policy and Planning, vol. 32, Issue 2, March 2017 . ([back to text](#))
17. Gamarel, K.E., Nelson, K.M., Stephenson, R., Santiago Rivera, O.J., Chiaramonte, D., and Miller, R.L., "Anticipated HIV stigma and delays in regular HIV testing behaviors among sexually-active young gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men and transgender women", AIDS and Behavior, vol. 22, January 2017 .
18. Merten, S., Ntalasha, H., Musheke, M., "Non-uptake of HIV testing in children at risk in two urban and rural settings in Zambia: a mixed-methods study", PLOS ONE, June 2016 .
19. Saikia, N., Moradhvaj, Bora, J.K., "Gender difference in health-care expenditure: evidence from India human development survey", PLOS ONE, 11(7), July 2016 .
20. Thompson, A. et al., "The influence of gender and other patient characteristics on health care-seeking behaviour: a QUALICOPC study", BMC Family Practice, 17:38, 2016.
21. Small, E., Sharma, B.B., and Nikolova, S.P., "Covid-19 and Gender in LMICs: Potential Lessons from HIV Pandemic", AIDS and Behavior, vol. 24, May 2020 .
22. UNDESA, Statistics Division, The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2020, New York, 2020 .
23. WHO, Health Topics, Fact sheets, Tuberculosis .
24. Amere, G.A., Nayak, P., Salindri, A.D., Narayan, K.M.V., and Magee, M.J., "Contribution of Smoking to Tuberculosis Incidence and Mortality in High-Tuberculosis-Burden Countries", American Journal of Epidemiology, vol. 187, Issue 7, September 2018.
25. Narasimhan, P., Wood, J., MacIntyre, C.R., and Mathai, D., "Risk factors for tuberculosis", Journal of Pulmonary Medicine, vol. 2013, February 2013 .
26. WHO, Global Tuberculosis Report 2019, Geneva, 2019 .
27. Nhamoyebonde, S., and Leslie, A., "Biological differences between the sexes and susceptibility to tuberculosis", Journal of Infectious Diseases, vol. 209, Issue suppl. 3, July 2014 .

28. WHO, Tuberculosis in women, 2019 .
29. UNDESA, Statistics Division, The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2020, New York, 2020 .
30. Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), UNAIDS Data 2019, Geneva, 2019 .
31. World Health Organization (WHO), Health Topics database, HIV/AIDS .
32. United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), Statistical Division, regional groupings under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) indicator framework .
33. WHO, Global Tuberculosis Report 2019, Geneva, 2019 .

Deaths caused by injury



Key points

- Road injuries are the leading cause of injury death among both women and men, and the rate is almost three times higher for men.
- Road traffic injuries are the leading cause of death among children and young adults aged 5–29. About three quarters (73%) of all deaths from road traffic injuries occur among young men under age 25; young men under age 25 are almost 3 times as likely to be killed in a road traffic crash as young women.
- The risk of death from road injuries increases progressively after age 14 both for women and men, with deaths among men reported at consistently higher rates. Older persons (aged 65 and older) registered the highest rates in 2016, with death among older men at more than double the rates of older women (52.2 per 100,000 for men versus 23 per 100,000 for women).
- The global average suicide rate is 10.6 deaths per 100,000 population. Although suicide attempts are about two to four times more frequent among women, men are more likely to use lethal means, which results in higher suicide mortality rates among the male population (13.5 per 100,000 for men versus 7.7 per 100,000 for women).
- Suicide is the third leading cause of death in young people aged 15–19 and the second leading cause of death among people aged 15–29 globally.
- While men are four times more likely to be murdered than women, women are four times more likely to be murdered by their intimate partners.
- Worldwide some 200,000 homicides occur annually among youth aged 10–29, comprising 42% of the total of global homicides. Homicide is the fourth leading cause of death among people aged 10–29; in 84% of such homicides men are the victims.

Road injuries

Measuring the risk of dying from road injuries is important for the assessment of the burden of risk in the population.¹ Road injuries are the leading cause of injury death among both women and men, with about 1.4 million deaths occurring in 2016. On average, the crude death rate due to road injuries has remained stable at below 20 per 100,000 since 2000, although the absolute number of deaths has increased.

Globally, the risk of dying due to road injuries is almost 3 times higher among men than among women

For all age groups, the death rate due to road injuries is higher among men than among women. At the global level, the crude death rate due to road injuries among men (28 per 100,000) is 2.8 times higher than that among women (10 per 100,000), and among people aged 15–49 it is 3.8 times higher among men (see figure I). Road traffic injuries are the leading cause of death among children and young adults aged 5–29 and about three quarters (73%) of all road traffic deaths occur among young men under age of 25.² This gender gap may also be linked to difference in behaviours between the sexes, in particular **alcohol consumption** and driving under the influence of alcohol, and to possible differences in the absolute number of female and male drivers.

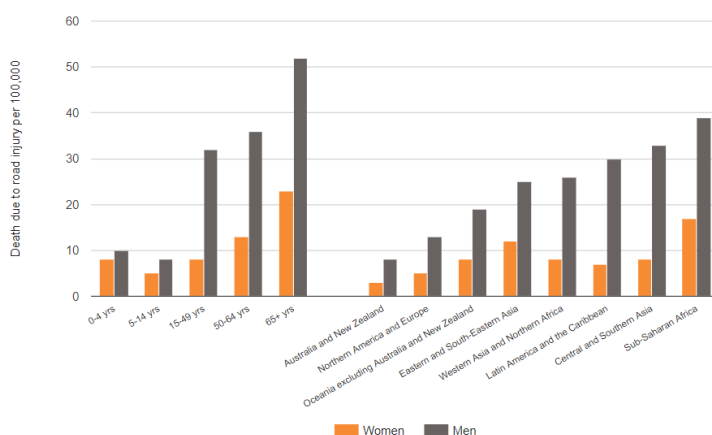
The risk of death from road injuries is lowest among young people aged 5–14, and increases progressively with age. Research³ as to why the road fatality rate rises with age suggests that while older persons are more likely to use seatbelts and not to drive under the influence of drugs or alcohol, they are more likely to have pre-existing **health conditions** and therefore more likely to die in road accidents.

The vast majority (93%) of fatalities resulting from road traffic accidents occur in low-income and middle-income countries,⁴ with the risk of dying from road injuries being highest in sub-Saharan Africa (39 per 100,000 for men and 17 per 100,000 for women). Data show a rather flat trend in Africa between 2013 and 2016.⁵ The lowest risk of dying from road injuries is in

Australia and New Zealand (8 per 100,000 for men and 3 per 100,000 for women) and Europe and Northern America (13 per 100,000 for men and 5 per 100,000 for women).

During the lockdown due to Coronavirus-19 (COVID-19), studies have shown a decline in traffic accidents and related injuries and fatalities. For example, in Turkey, in April 2020, traffic accidents dropped by approximately 60%, deaths declined by 43% and injuries declined by 64% compared to April 2019.⁶

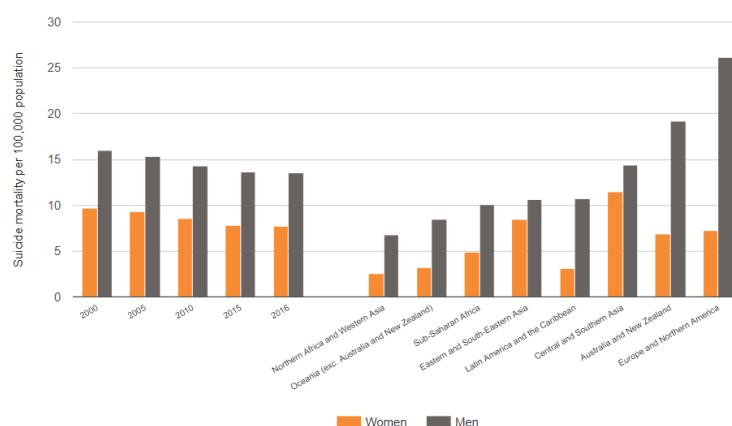
Figure I: Deaths due to road injury per 100,000 population by age, sex and region: 2016



Source: World Health Organization (WHO), Global Health Estimates 2016 (https://www.who.int/healthinfo/global_burden_disease/en/)
Note: Regional values are for 2016; regions are organized in ascending order according to the mortality rate among the male population

Suicide

Measuring the risk of dying from suicide is important for the assessment of the burden from suicide in the population. In 2016, there were nearly 800,000 deaths from suicide globally, which corresponds to an average suicide rate of 10.6 deaths per 100,000 population worldwide. Although suicide attempts are about two to four times more frequent among women,^{7 8} death rates among men are nearly twice as high (1.8 male deaths for every female death). Men are more likely to use lethal means when attempting suicide,⁹ which partly explains the higher suicide mortality rates observed in men (13.5 per 100,000 versus 7.7 per 100,000 for women). Globally, during the period 2000–2016, crude suicide mortality rates dropped by 16% in men and 21% in women.

Figure II: Deaths due to suicide per 100,000 population by age, sex and region: 2016

Source: World Health Organization (WHO), Global Health Estimates 2016 (https://www.who.int/healthinfo/global_burden_disease/en/)
 Note: Regional values are for 2016; regions are organized in ascending order according to the mortality rate in the male population.

Suicide rates among men are about 3.5 times higher than among women in both Europe and Northern America and in Latin America and the Caribbean: in contrast, gender differences in suicide rates are small in Central and Southern Asia and Eastern and South-Eastern Asia

Suicide is a global phenomenon, and for each suicide there are many suicide attempts. In 2016, 79% of suicides occurred in low-income and middle-income countries.¹⁰ In relative terms, developed regions are more affected, with particularly high suicide rates for men and, to a lesser extent, for women (see figure II). The highest suicide mortality rate is reported among men in Europe and Northern America (26 deaths per 100,000). Europe and Northern America is the region with the largest gender gap in the suicide mortality rate, with men being more than 3.5 times more likely to die due to suicide than women (7.2 deaths per 100,000 for women). The second highest suicide rate among men is in Australia and New Zealand (19.2 deaths per 100,000 for men and 6.9 deaths per 100,000 for women).

The highest suicide mortality rate among women is reported in Central and Southern Asia (11.5 deaths per 100,000 for women compared to 14.4 deaths per 100,000 for men), a region with one of the lowest gender gaps observed. The second highest suicide mortality rate among women is in Eastern and South-Eastern Asia (8.5 deaths per 100,000 for women and 10.6 per 100,000 for men), the region with the smallest overall gender gap in the suicide mortality rate. Worldwide, the lowest suicide mortality rates, for both men and women, are in Northern Africa and Western Asia, where the rate is 6.8 per 100,000 for men and 2.5 per 100,000 for women, revealing a sizable gender gap (men in Northern Africa and Western Asia are almost three times as likely to die from suicide than women).

While data seem to show an overall pattern where the male and, to a lesser extent, female suicide death rates are higher in regions with higher socioeconomic development, caution is advised against drawing strong conclusions. When looking at individual countries, there are exceptions to broad observations. For instance, Lesotho has the tenth highest suicide rate in the world, with 24.4 deaths per 100,000 for women, and 17.8 deaths per 100,000 for men. It is also the only country in the world where women have a higher suicide death rate than men. Research on individual country predictors and suicide rates reveal no clear overall patterns.¹¹

Suicide is a highly complex phenomenon, and difficult to understand; it occurs throughout the lifespan, and is the third leading cause of death among adolescents aged 15–19.¹² In 2016, among the global population aged 15–29, it was the second leading cause of death for women after **maternal conditions**, and the third leading cause of death for men after road injuries and interpersonal violence.¹³

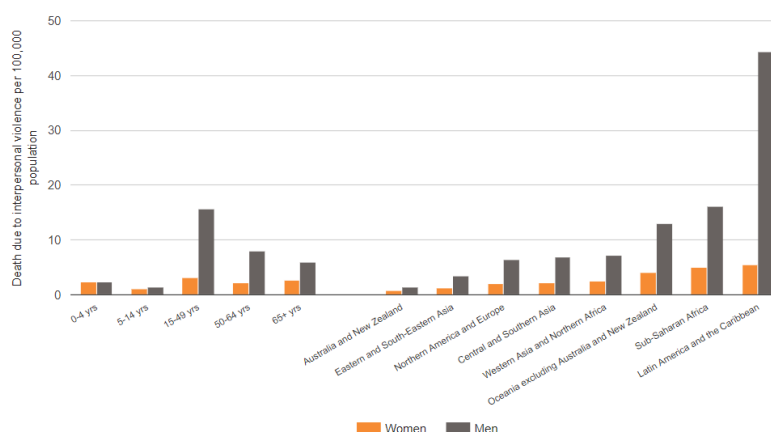
Interpersonal violence

Men are four times more likely to be murdered than women; however women are more than four times more likely to be murdered by their intimate partners

Measuring the risk of dying from interpersonal violence (homicide) is important for the assessment of the burden of risk in the population. In 2016, there were an estimated 475,000 deaths globally due to homicide, 380,000 men and 95,000 women. Rates were highest in **Latin America and the Caribbean**, where the homicide rate for men was over 8 times higher than that for women.

Globally, the highest interpersonal violence death rates are found among men aged 15–49 (almost 5 times higher than rates for women in the same age group) (see figure III). Worldwide, some 200,000 homicides occur annually among youth aged 10–29, comprising 42% of all homicides globally each year. Homicide is the fourth leading cause of death in people aged 10–29, and 84% of such deaths involve male victims.¹⁴

Figure III: Deaths due to interpersonal violence per 100,000 population by age, sex and region: 2016



Source: World Health Organization (WHO), Global Health Estimates 2016 (https://www.who.int/healthinfo/global_burden_disease/en/)

Note: Regional values are for 2016; regions are organized in ascending order according to the mortality rate among the male population.

In many cases, homicides are committed by **intimate partners or family members**, with women the majority of those killed. In 2017, an estimated 87,000 women were intentionally killed: more than half (58%) were killed by intimate partners or family members; and a third (34%) were killed by intimate partners (excluding other family members).¹⁵ In comparison, the estimated male rate of intimate partner homicide hovers in the range of 7% to 9% of all male killings, although data, being very scarce, are not robust.¹⁶

Put another way, almost two thirds (64%) of the victims of intimate partner/family-related homicide are women, in contrast to all cases of homicide, in which 20% of the victims are women.¹⁷ While the overall risk of suffering a violent death as a result of intentional homicide has been declining steadily for a quarter of a century, the killing of women by intimate partners or family members is on the rise, from 47% in 2012 to 58% in 2017.¹⁸

In addition to the death toll caused by **violence against women**, such violence places a heavy burden on the family and on society more broadly, including high levels of morbidity and ill health, both mental and physical. Preventing homicide and non-fatal violence requires a multisectoral approach that addresses underlying causes, such as: gender, social, ethnic and economic inequalities; **cultural norms** that support violence and make violence against women acceptable; easy access to and misuse of alcohol, drugs and firearms; as well as laws that are inadequate in protecting women against violence—and intimate partner violence in particular.

About the data

Definitions

- **Road traffic death rate:** Deaths per year due to road injuries per 100,000 population.
- **Suicide mortality rate:** Deaths due to self-harm (suicide) per 100,000 population, defined as the number of suicide deaths per year, divided by the population and multiplied by 100,000, often simply referred to as the "suicide rate".¹⁹
- **Interpersonal violence mortality rate:** Deaths per year due to interpersonal violence per 100,000 population.

Coverage

The World Health Organization (WHO) calculates estimates for all WHO member States with a population of more than 90,000 (184 countries).

Footnotes

1. Causes of death are classified under the WHO International Classification of Diseases into three groups: (a) communicable diseases, maternal, perinatal and nutritional conditions, (b) non-communicable diseases, and (c) injuries.
2. WHO, Health Topics, Fact sheets, Road traffic injuries.
3. See Kent, R., and Henary, B., "On the Fatal Crash Experience of Older Drivers", Association for the Advancement of Automotive Medicine, vol. 49, 2005.
4. WHO, Health Topics, Fact sheets, Road traffic injuries.
5. WHO, Global status report on road safety 2018, Geneva, 2018.
6. Oguzoglu, U., "COVID-19 Lockdowns and Decline in Traffic Related Deaths and Injuries", IZA Institute of Labor Economics, May 2020.
7. Wolff, S., Puts, D. A., "Sex differences: summarizing more than a century of scientific research", Archives of Sexual Behaviour, vol. 38 (6), December 2009.
8. Miranda-Mendizabal, A. et al, "Gender differences in suicidal behavior in adolescents and young adults: systematic review and meta-analysis of longitudinal studies", International Journal of Public Health, vol. 64 (2), January 2019.
9. Wolff, S., Puts, D. A., "Sex differences: summarizing more than a century of scientific research", Archives of Sexual Behaviour, vol. 38 (6), December 2009.
10. WHO, Health Topics, Suicide prevention.
11. Case, A. and Deaton, A., "Suicide and Happiness", VoxDev, May 2017.
12. WHO, 2020, Suicide fact sheet.
13. WHO.
14. WHO, Health Topics, Fact sheets, Youth violence.
15. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Global Study on Homicide: Gender-related killing of women and girls, Vienna, 2018.
16. Computed by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), Statistics Division, based on UNODC, Global Study on Homicide: Gender-related killing of women and girls, Vienna, 2018.
17. UNODC, Global Study on Homicide: Gender-related killing of women and girls, Vienna, 2018.
18. UNODC, Global Study on Homicide 2019, Executive summary.
19. World Health Organization (WHO), Global Health Observatory, Suicide mortality rate.

Ghana: skilled health-care assistance in childbirth



Key points

- During the period from 1998 to 2014, there was a 30 percentage point increase in the proportion of deliveries at health facilities.
- In 1998, younger mothers were more likely than older mothers to deliver their babies with the assistance of skilled health personnel, while by 2014 little difference was recorded by age.
- Overall, wealthier and more educated women and women living in urban areas are more likely to access the services of skilled personnel while giving birth.

Background

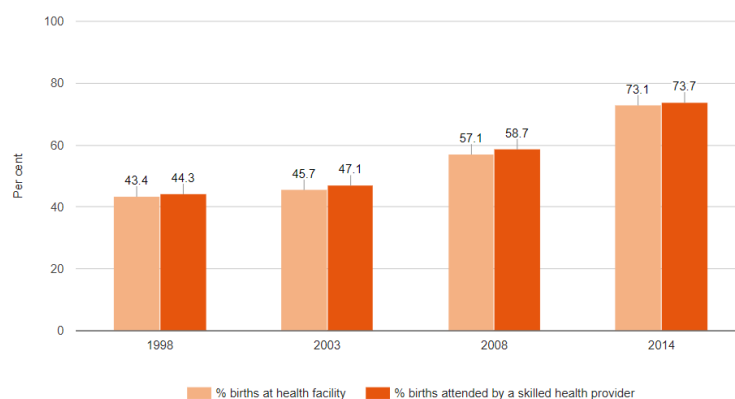
Women's access to skilled medical care, especially during childbirth, is a key strategy for the reduction of the maternal mortality ratio (MMR), which, in Ghana, still reaches 310 deaths per 100,000 live births.¹

The most dangerous time in a woman's pregnancy is during labour and delivery when the majority of maternal deaths occur. The presence of skilled medical attendants is essential for the timely management of complications that may arise during and after delivery; by providing important lifesaving intervention for both mothers and babies, skilled health personnel reduce the risk of maternal morbidity and long-lasting disability.

Current situation

Skilled medical assistance is essential to safe delivery. In Ghana, the proportion of pregnant women giving birth with the assistance of a skilled professional has increased, from 44% in 1998 to 74% in 2014 (see figure). Nevertheless, in 2014, 26% of women in the country delivered without such assistance.

During the period from 1998 to 2014, there was a 30 percentage point increase in the proportion of deliveries at health facilities as a result of improvements in the health sector brought about through the efforts of the Government and the Ghana Health Service.

Figure: Live births attended by a skilled professional and births at a health facility: 1998 to 2014

Source: Ghana Demographic and Health Surveys (1998 to 2014).

Note: The Ghana Demographic and Health Survey, which is conducted every five years by the Ghana Statistical Service, collects data on a range of maternal health issues, including antenatal care, type of assistance received during delivery of live births and postnatal care.

Despite the introduction of policies to address problems resulting from lack of access to skilled health personnel, some women are falling through the safety net; women who deliver their children at home are less likely to be able to obtain access to skilled care if complications occur **during childbirth**.

Delivering at health facilities ensures skilled care during childbirth. According to the most recent survey, nearly 3 in 4 births occur at health facilities, primarily public sector health facilities: facility-based births are more common in urban settings (90%) than in rural areas (60%).³ In Ghana, more than a quarter of births occur at home: overall, almost 3 in 4 births are attended by a skilled professional.⁴

In 1998, younger mothers were more likely than older mothers to deliver their babies with the assistance of skilled health personnel, while by 2014 little difference was recorded by age. Data collected in 1998 show a marked difference in the proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel according to a woman's age, a difference that has decreased over time as more women have gained access to professional health care. By 2014, among women aged 15–49, the proportion of women giving birth with skilled medical assistance was above 70%, and the difference among age groups was negligible compared to previous years (see table 1).

Table 1: Percentage of births attended by skilled health personnel by women's age: 1998 to 2014

Age group	Year			
	1998	2003	2008	2014
<20	50.2	48.4	52.2	72.1
20-34	44.7	47.8	60.6	74.6
35-49	38.6	44.0	54.9	71.2

Source: Ghana Demographic and Health Surveys, (1998-2014).

Skilled assistance at birth is most common among highly educated women. Women with higher levels of education are consistently more likely to seek skilled assistance at childbirth (see table 2). The trend during the period 1998–2014 reveals that a large and growing majority of women with secondary education and higher give birth with the assistance of skilled health-care providers (from 86% in 1998 to 96% in 2014) and that women with middle school education are increasingly following suit (from 60% in 1998 to 83% in 2014). Data also show that double the proportion of women with no formal education, although less likely to use skilled health personnel, gave birth with skilled assistance (from 25% in 1998 to 52% in 2014).

Table 2: Percentage of live births attended by skilled health personnel by women's educational level: 1998 to 2014

Mother's Education	Year			
	1998	2003	2008	2014
No schooling	25.1	29.7	36.3	52.3
Primary	39.9	44.4	54.6	68.8
Lower secondary	60.6	64.3	74.4	83.3
Upper secondary and higher	85.9	89.4	92.4	96.2

Source: Ghana Demographic and Health Surveys (1998-2014).

Overall, wealthier and more educated women and women living in urban areas are more likely to access the services of skilled personnel while giving birth.

In 2014, a large majority of pregnant women giving birth in urban areas (90%) received skilled care, as compared to women in rural areas (60%) (see table 3), an increase from 84% in urban areas and 43% in rural areas as reported in 2008. The difference between rural and urban rates is largely because of the greater concentration of health-care facilities in urban areas and because pregnant women in rural areas must travel long distances to access health facilities with skilled medical personnel.

Table 3: Percentage of live births attended to by skilled health personnel by women's place of residence: 1998 to 2014

Residence	Year			
	1998	2003	2008	2014
Urban	76.3	79.7	84.3	90.1
Rural	34.1	30.9	43.0	60.2

Source: Ghana Demographic and Health Surveys (1998-2014).

According to available data, pregnant women in the highest wealth quintile, who can most easily pay hospital charges, are also the most likely to seek the assistance of skilled health personnel at the time of delivery. In terms of access to health care, differences according to levels of wealth are marked and persistent over time (see table 4). In 2003, only 2 in 10 women in the lowest wealth quintile had access to skilled health personnel at the time of delivery, compared to 9 in 10 women in the highest quintile. By 2014, the proportion of women in the lowest quintile with access to skilled assistance had more than doubled (47%), although it was still far from equal. Overall, by 2014, more than 90% of women in the two highest wealth quintiles had access to skilled health personnel during childbirth.

Table 4: Percentage of live births attended by skilled health personnel by women's wealth: 1998 to 2014

Wealth quintile	Year			
	1998	2003	2008	2014
Lowest		20.6	24.2	46.9
Second		31.9	50.1	60.7
Middle		43.3	64.9	77.2
Fourth		73.1	81.8	93.6
Highest		90.4	94.6	96.7

Source: Ghana Demographic and Health Surveys (1998-2014).

Note: There is no data available on wealth quintiles for 1998.

Based on available data, Ghana has made a significant improvement in the lives of women: the majority of women visit health-care facilities for childbirth and have access to the assistance of skilled personnel at the time of delivery.

In 2003, Ghana introduced a delivery fee exemption policy for women giving birth (rolled out to all regions in April 2005), and in

2008 the Government introduced free national health insurance for pregnant women. Furthermore, free maternal health care services have been provided in Ghana since 2008 and community health-based planning services have been established at the district level all over the country. Additional evidence is needed, however, to confirm that free maternal health care has increased the overall use of skilled delivery providers by pregnant women.

More needs to be done to improve awareness of the availability of free maternal health care, so that every pregnant woman, irrespective of wealth, education, place of residence or traditional norms and beliefs, will be aware of her ability to visit the hospital or health-care facility for antenatal care and to receive skilled medical assistance there at the time of her delivery.

About the data

Coverage

Women aged 15–49.

Definitions

- Percentage of live births attended by skilled health personnel during a specified time period: Number of births attended by skilled health personnel divided by the number of live births in the five-year period preceding a given survey. Skilled health personnel comprise doctors, nurses and midwives trained in providing lifesaving obstetric care, including: supervision, care and advice to women during pregnancy, labour and the post-partum period, the independent conduct of deliveries and the care of newborns. Traditional birth attendants, even if they receive a short training course, are not included in this category of personnel.
- Percentage of live births delivered in a health facility: Calculated as the number of births at a health facility (public or private) divided by the number of live births in the five-year period preceding a given survey.

References

- Ghana Statistical Service, Ghana Demographic and Health Survey 1998, Accra, 1999.
- Ghana Statistical Service, Ghana Demographic and Health Survey 2003, Accra, 2004.
- Ghana Statistical Service, Ghana Health Service, Ghana Maternal Health Survey 2007, Accra, 2009.
- Ghana Statistical Service, Ghana Health Service and International Community Foundation, Ghana Demographic and Health Survey 2008, Accra, 2009.
- Ghana Statistical Service, Ghana Health Service and International Community Foundation, Ghana Demographic and Health Survey 2014, Accra, 2015.
- Ghana Statistical Service, Ghana Health Service and International Community Foundation, Ghana Maternal Health Survey 2017, Accra, 2017.

Footnotes

1. Ghana Statistical Service, Ghana Health Service and International Community Foundation, Ghana Maternal Health Survey 2017, Accra, 2017.
2. The Ghana Demographic and Health Survey, which is conducted every five years by the Ghana Statistical Service, collects data on a range of maternal health issues, including antenatal care, type of assistance received during delivery of live births and postnatal care.
3. Skilled assistance at birth is most common in greater Accra (92%), the capital of Ghana.
4. For the seven-year period before the issuance of the Ghana Maternal Health Survey 2017, data are from the 2014 Ghana Demographic and Health Survey: Key Findings.

Deaths among people aged 30-70 from non-communicable diseases (premature mortality)



Key points

- In 2016, non-communicable diseases were the cause of 41 million deaths (21 million among men and 20 million among women), or 71% of global deaths, including 15 million premature deaths (people aged 30–70).
- The risk of dying prematurely from any of the four major non-communicable diseases (cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease) between ages 30–70 was 21.6% for men and 15% for women. The risk has decreased by 5 percentage points for men and by more than 3 percentage points for women since 2000. The risk of dying prematurely due to non-communicable diseases varies by region, with the highest rate reported in Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand), where it is as high as 33% among men and 25% among women, and the lowest level of risk in Australia and New Zealand, where it is around 10% for men and 7% for women.
- Gender differences in the risk of premature death due to non-communicable diseases also vary by region, with the largest gender gap in Europe and Northern America, where men are almost twice as likely to die prematurely as women, and the smallest in sub-Saharan Africa, where men and women have equal chances of dying prematurely from non-communicable diseases.
- While men are less likely to use health services due to stereotypical notions of masculinity and other factors,¹ women may exhibit different, so-called "atypical", symptoms for certain non-communicable diseases than men, and consequently may have a delayed diagnosis and treatment.
- The Coronavirus-19 (COVID-19) pandemic has severely disrupted the delivery of prevention and treatment services for non-communicable diseases in many countries surveyed, notably for: hypertension in 53% of countries; diabetes and diabetes-related complications in 49% of countries; cancer in 42% of countries; and cardiovascular emergencies in 31% of countries.

Background

Non-communicable diseases, also known as chronic diseases, which tend to be of long duration, are the result of a combination of genetic, physiological, environmental and behavioural factors.² The disease burden from non-communicable diseases among adults, who are in the most economically productive age span, is rapidly increasing in developing countries due to ageing and health transitions.³

In developed countries, premature deaths due to non-communicable diseases are frequently associated with occupational risks or individual behaviours, including excessive alcohol consumption, obesity, and smoking, which leads to higher rates of death from lung cancer.

The incidence of some non-communicable diseases, such as diabetes and hypertensive heart disease, can be prevented or greatly reduced through the adoption of a healthy lifestyle, while other conditions, particularly cancers, cannot easily be prevented. However, early detection and modern treatment can greatly reduce mortality for many forms of cancer. WHO estimates that about 30% to 50% of cancers can be prevented with lifestyle modifications, such as eliminating tobacco use, being physically active and reducing exposure to carcinogens in the environment.⁴

Non-communicable diseases threaten progress towards the achievement of target 3.4 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,⁵ to reduce premature deaths from non-communicable diseases by one-third by 2030, as well as towards the overarching Goal of the 2030 Agenda, Goal 1, to end poverty in all its forms everywhere.

It is predicted that the rapid rise in non-communicable diseases will impede poverty reduction initiatives in developing countries (and even in some developed countries) owing to the associated high health-care costs, loss of employment and reduced income. With household savings drained to pay for often lengthy and expensive medical treatments, millions are forced into poverty annually.⁶

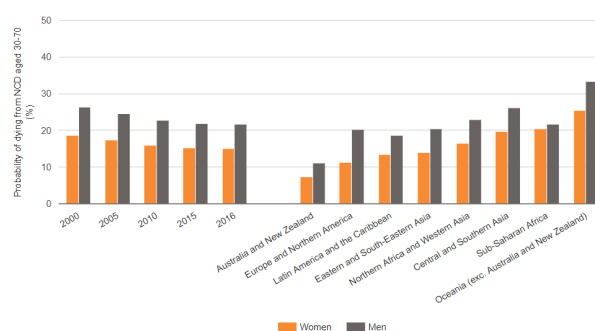
Current situation

In 2016, the probability of dying prematurely from any of the four major non-communicable diseases between ages 30–70 was 21.6% for men and 15% for women

In 2016, non-communicable diseases were the cause of 41 million deaths (21 million among men and 20 million among women), or 71% of global deaths,⁷ including 15 million premature deaths (deaths between ages 30–70). Globally, the probability of dying prematurely from any of the four major non-communicable diseases (cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease) between ages 30–70 was 21.6% for men and 15% for women. Compared to 2000, those rates represented a significant reduction in the global death rate of 5 percentage points for men and more than 3 percentage points for women, as well as a marginal decrease in the gender gap of 6.6 percentage points.

Progress in reducing premature deaths due to non-communicable diseases has slowed since 2010, partly due to a lack of success in addressing a number of **risk factors**. While tobacco use is steadily declining, obesity is on the rise, and global efforts to decrease alcohol consumption have stagnated and this harmful behaviour is increasing in some regions.⁸

Figure: Probability of dying from cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes or chronic respiratory disease between ages 30-70, by age: 2000-2016 (Percentage)



Source: World Health Organization (WHO), Global Health Estimates 2016 (https://www.who.int/healthinfo/global_burden_disease/en/).

Note: Regional values are for 2016; regions are presented in ascending order of mortality rates in women aged 30-70.

The region with highest risk of premature death due to non-communicable diseases, both for women and men, was Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand), but the largest gender gap was recorded in Europe and Northern America

In 2016, the highest risk of premature death from non-communicable diseases was in countries in Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand), where this probability was 33% (one in three) among men and 25% (one in four) among women. The lowest risk was reported in Australia and New Zealand, where it was around 10% for men and 7% for women. The gender gap between women and men was least marked in sub-Saharan Africa, where the probability of premature death due was almost the same for both sexes (21% for men and 20% for women). The largest gender gap was in Europe and Northern America, where men were almost twice as likely as women to die between ages 30–70 from non-communicable diseases (20% for men and 11% for women) (see figure).

Multiple factors influence the risk of mortality from non-communicable diseases

Biological differences between men and women are contributing factors in variations in the mortality rates related to **cancers** of the reproductive organs (for example, cervical, breast, prostate and testicular cancers). Death rates may also be influenced by levels of access to diagnosis and treatment: cervical **cancer rates** are reported at higher rates in low-income countries with poor access to health services⁹ as well as by significant inequities in access to quality preventative services through primary health care.

Overall, premature mortality caused by non-communicable diseases continues to be disproportionately concentrated in the most socially disadvantaged countries, with fluctuations in premature mortality rates, in particular among women within and across regions (see figure).¹⁰

In many countries, owing to stereotypical ideas about masculinity and other factors, men are less likely to use health services. Women, however, who tend to use health-care services to a greater degree, may exhibit different symptoms for some non-communicable diseases than men and may experience delayed diagnosis and treatment. For example, symptoms for coronary heart disease reported among women, including back pain, nausea or fatigue, may be considered "atypical", leading to underdiagnosis and undertreatment.¹¹

For many non-communicable diseases, death rates are driven by exposure to major modifiable **risk factors**, including: tobacco use; the harmful use of alcohol; unhealthy diet; and physical inactivity, which increases the risk of obesity. All of these risky behaviours vary by sex, with men generally adopting unhealthier lifestyles and taking greater risks than women.

In a health emergency such as the **COVID-19** pandemic, patients with pre-existing conditions such as hypertension and diabetes, have become more vulnerable and at higher risk of dying, not only because they are more susceptible to the virus, but because of the prioritization of medical resources directed towards caring for patients with the disease.

In a rapid assessment survey of service delivery for non-communicable diseases conducted by WHO in 2020, results confirmed that the prevention and treatment services have been severely disrupted by the pandemic.¹² More than half (53%) of the countries surveyed have partially or completely disrupted services for hypertension treatment; 49% for treatment for diabetes and diabetes-related complications; 42% for cancer treatment; and 31% for cardiovascular emergencies.¹³

Since people with underlying health conditions, in particular the four major non-communicable diseases, are at higher risk of contracting COVID-19, it is critical that efforts to address the burden of these diseases in the global community be reinforced¹⁴ and that these efforts are gender and culturally sensitive and targeted to at risk populations.

About the data

Definitions

- **Premature mortality:** Probability of people aged 30–70 dying from the following four non-communicable diseases: cardiovascular disease; cancer; diabetes; or chronic respiratory disease. Measuring the risk of dying from these four major causes is important in the assessment of the extent of the socioeconomic burden from premature mortality due to non-communicable diseases in a population.

Coverage

- Women and men aged 30–70.

Availability

- Around 70 countries have consistent high-quality data and 40 countries have data of lower quality. All countries are classified according to regional groupings under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) indicators framework.¹⁵ The World Health Organization (WHO) calculates estimates for all WHO member States with a population over 90,000 (184 countries).

Footnotes

1. World Health Organization (WHO), The men's health gap: men must be included in the global health equity agenda, WHO online bulletin, March 2014.
2. WHO, Non-communicable diseases fact sheet, June 2018.
3. WHO, Global Health Observatory, "Probability of dying between age 30 and exact age 70 from any of cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes, or chronic respiratory disease", World Health Data Platform.
4. WHO, Cancer prevention.
5. General Assembly resolution 70/1, "Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development", adopted 25 September 2015.
6. WHO, Non-communicable diseases fact sheet, 1 June 2018.
7. WHO, Disease burden and mortality estimates, 2000–2016, Geneva, 2018.
8. WHO, World Health Statistics 2020: Monitoring Health for the SDGs, Geneva, 2020.
9. Denny, L., de Sanjose, S., Mutebi, M., Anderson, B.O., Kim, J., Jeronimo, J. et al., "Interventions to close the divide for women with breast and cervical cancer between low-income and middle-income countries and high-income countries", Lancet, February 2017.
10. WHO, World Health Statistics 2020: Monitoring Health for the SDGs, Geneva, 2020.
11. Mehta, L.S., Beckie, T.M., DeVon, H.A., Grines, C.L., Krumholz, H.M., Johnson, M.N. et al., "Acute myocardial infarction in women: a scientific statement from the American Heart Association", Circulation, March 2016.
12. WHO, The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on noncommunicable disease resources and services: results of a rapid assessment, Geneva, 2020.
13. WHO, "COVID-19 significantly impacts health services for noncommunicable diseases", press release, 1 June 2020.
14. WHO, World Health Statistics 2020: Monitoring Health for the SDGs, Geneva, 2020.
15. Regional groupings under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) indicators framework.

Menstrual health and hygiene [UNICEF]



Key points

- During the period between 2017–2019, in the majority of the 19 countries with data, at least 10% of women and adolescent girls aged 15–49 did not participate in work, school or social activities during their menstrual period.
- In the 19 countries with data available for the period between 2017–2019, most women and adolescent girls (around 90%) used menstrual hygiene materials and had access to a private place to wash and change during their last menstrual period.
- In 2019, over one in three schools globally (37%) lacked basic sanitation services, affecting an estimated 698 million school-age children. Two out of five schools (43%) lacked handwashing facilities with water and soap, meaning that around 330 million girls went to primary and secondary schools without water and soap for washing their hands when changing sanitary pads or cloths.

Background

The ability of women and adolescent girls to safely manage their monthly menstrual cycle in privacy and with dignity is fundamental to their health, psychosocial well-being and mobility. Women and adolescent girls who lack access to adequate menstrual health and hygiene facilities and supplies may experience stigma and social exclusion and may not be able to take advantage of important educational, social and economic opportunities.¹

Although there is no dedicated target on menstrual health and hygiene in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,² it is closely related to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially SDG 5 on the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, as well as to specific global targets. Notably, SDG target 6.2 (on water and sanitation for all) calls for access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene, with special attention to the needs of women and girls, and SDG target 4.a (on inclusive and equitable quality education) calls for educational facilities that are gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all.

Current situation

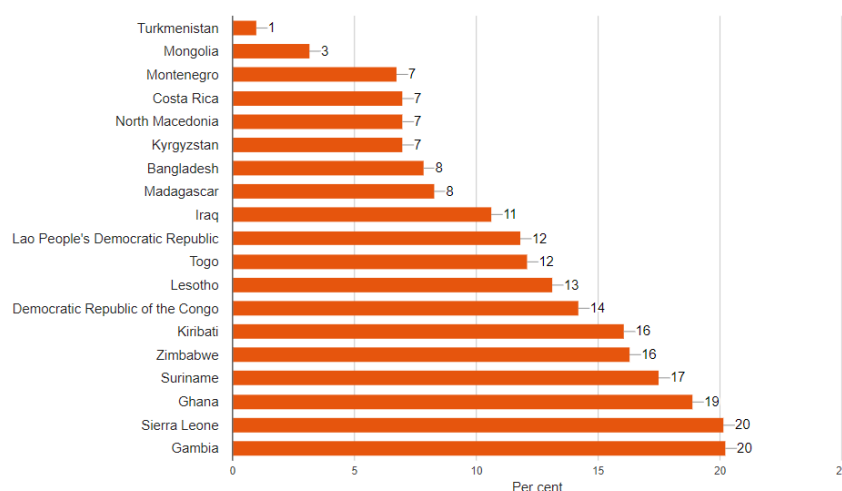
Emerging data suggest that many women and adolescent girls do not participate in school, work or social activities during menstruation

In 11 out of the 19 countries with data³ for the period 2017–2019, at least 10% of women and adolescent girls reported not participating in one or more of the following activities during their last menstrual period, school, work or social activities, with proportions ranging widely from 1% and 3% of women in Turkmenistan and Mongolia up to 20% in the Gambia and Sierra Leone (see figure I).

In most countries, non-participation tends to be higher for adolescent girls and younger women (aged 15–24) (for example, 30% for women and adolescent girls under 25 versus 13% for women aged 25–49 in the Gambia), but all age groups are affected. There are also large differences within geographic regions in several countries. For example, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, non-participation rates range from 2% to 31%. There does not appear to be a consistent pattern in participation across wealth quintiles or between urban and rural areas.

While these data demonstrate that a proportion of women and adolescent girls do not participate in activities during their menstrual period, they do not explain why. In Mongolia, an additional question was asked of the 3% of women who reported not participating in activities: they attributed their absence from activities to feeling unwell or in pain (76%) or to heavy bleeding (19%), with a smaller number reporting other reasons (5%). Further investigation is required to understand the main reasons for non-participation in other country contexts, especially in countries such as the Gambia and Sierra Leone, where there were far greater proportions of non-participating women and adolescent girls.

Figure I: Proportion of women and adolescent girls (15-49) who did not participate in school, work or social activities during their last menstrual period by country: (2017-2019) (latest available) (Percentage)



Source: UNICEF Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys database (mics.unicef.org/surveys/).

Note: Question asked of women and adolescent girls 15-49 who had menstrual periods in the last year.

Most women and adolescent girls used menstrual hygiene materials and had access to a private place to wash and change

In all but three countries with data (Lao People's Democratic Republic, Mongolia and Iraq), at least 90% of all women and adolescent girls aged 15–49 reported having access to a private place to wash and change during their menstrual period (see figure II), and in all countries with data, except the Lao People's Democratic Republic, over 90% of women and adolescent girls in the same age group reported the availability of menstrual hygiene materials.⁴

In the Lao People's Democratic Republic, where 82% of all women and adolescent girls reported using hygiene materials, the share was much lower among the poorest women (47% in the poorest versus 97% in the richest quintile), suggesting that affordability of hygiene materials plays an important role in determining access in some countries.

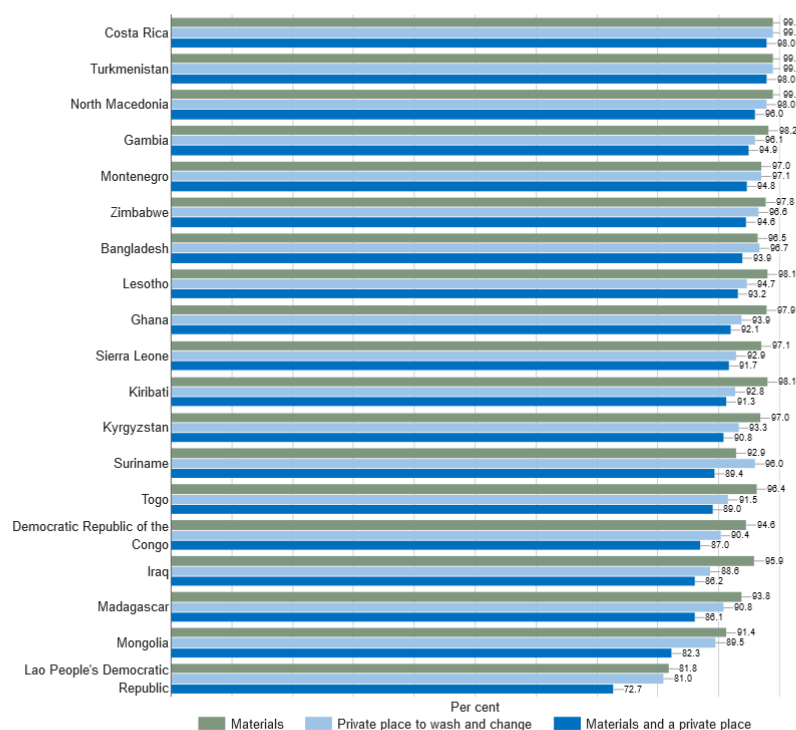
Overall, across the 19 countries with data, the share of women and adolescent girls aged 15–49 with menstrual hygiene materials and a private place to wash and change ranged from 73% (Lao People's Democratic Republic) to 98% (Costa Rica and Turkmenistan).

The type of materials used during menstruation varied, with implications regarding the extent to which they may meet menstrual health and hygiene needs. In Bangladesh and Zimbabwe additional questions were asked about the type of materials used by women and adolescent girls: in Bangladesh, 72% reported that they used cloth and

26% that they used sanitary napkins; in Zimbabwe the majority reported that they used sanitary pads (65%) and cloth (27%).

Very few women and girls in the two countries reported using tampons or menstrual cups. In addition, in all 19 countries with data, women and girls were asked whether menstrual materials were reused: reported rates varied considerably between countries, from less than 1% in North Macedonia and Turkmenistan to 78% in Madagascar.

Figure II: Proportion of women and adolescent girls (15-49) with access to a private place to wash, change and use menstrual hygiene materials by country : 2017-2019 (latest available) (Percentage)



Source: UNICEF Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys database (mics.unicef.org/surveys/).

Note: Question asked of women and adolescent girls 15-49 who had menstrual periods in the last year.

Monitoring menstrual health and hygiene in schools and health-care facilities

The World Health Organization (WHO)/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene has expanded its monitoring of drinking water, sanitation and hygiene to include schools and health-care facilities. Baseline reports for these settings were published in 2018⁵ and 2019⁶ and estimates will be updated on a biennial basis. The following are key findings on menstrual health and hygiene from the latest estimates.

Schools:

In 2019, over one in three schools globally (37%) lacked basic sanitation services, affecting an estimated 698 million school-age children. One in five schools either had no sanitation facilities at all or lacked useable facilities,

whether improved and/or single-sex, and were thus unable to meet the menstrual hygiene needs of adolescent girls. Furthermore, two out of five schools (43%) lacked handwashing facilities with water and soap, meaning that around 330 million girls in primary and secondary schools lacked water and soap for washing their hands when changing sanitary pads or cloths.

The 2018 report of the WHO/UNICEF Joint Programme for Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene⁷ found that few countries had specific data on menstrual hygiene and that definitions varied greatly. The report highlighted the example set by countries such as Zambia, where new questions related to education on menstrual hygiene, the provision of sanitary pads and disposal facilities have been integrated into the national Education Management Information System survey. The 2016 survey found that less than half of schools provided education on menstrual hygiene and only one in four provided sanitary towels and receptacles for their disposal.

Health-care facilities:

In 2019, one in five health-care facilities had no sanitation services: insufficient data were available to estimate the proportion of hospitals or non-hospitals with basic sanitation services. Basic sanitation services in health-care facilities include specific provisions for menstrual hygiene (a receptacle with a lid for disposing of menstrual hygiene materials, and water and soap in a private space for washing). In the 2019 WHO/UNICEF baseline report on water, sanitation and hygiene in health-care facilities,⁸ just 10 countries were able to report this information. For example, Lebanon collected information on the proportion of health-care facilities that provided water and soap (47% of facilities), privacy (45%) and covered receptacles (35%) in women's toilets.

Additional criteria related to menstrual health and hygiene in Lebanon included the provision of painkillers (27%), emergency supplies (24%) and training on the disposal of menstrual hygiene materials (17%). The proportion of health-care facilities with improved sanitation facilities that met the menstrual health and hygiene criteria for basic services ranged from 2% (Comoros) to 100% (Azerbaijan, Kuwait and Montenegro).

Country in focus: Lao People's Democratic Republic

In the Lao People's Democratic Republic, disaggregated data show that women in the richest wealth quintile are over three times more likely to have access to menstrual hygiene materials and a private place to wash and change than women in the poorest quintile.

Related stories and further reading

- [Schools with access to single-sex basic sanitation](#)

About the data

Definitions

- **Hygienic materials and a private place to wash and change:** Percentage of women and adolescent girls aged 15–49 reporting menstruating in the last 12 months and using menstrual hygiene materials and with access to a private place to wash and change during their last menstruation.
- **Non-participation in activities during menstruation:** Percentage of women and adolescent girls aged 15–49 reporting menstruating in the last 12 months who did not participate in social activities, school or work due to their last menstruation.

Coverage

Women and adolescent girls aged 15–49 in 19 countries reporting menstruating in the last 12 months.

Availability

Available data from the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys for 19 countries.⁹

National monitoring of whether the menstrual needs of women and adolescent girls are being met is challenging, given the breadth of factors that impact menstrual health and hygiene. A range of issues must be addressed, from raising awareness and changing social norms and practices to the provision of facilities and materials.

In the last few years, a number of indicators related to menstrual health and hygiene have been included in nationally representative household surveys, including the UNICEF Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys¹⁰ and the 2020 Performance Monitoring and Accountability Surveys.¹¹ The next round of Demographic and Health Surveys will also include new questions covering access to menstrual hygiene materials and a private place to wash and change.¹²

Footnotes

1. Sommer, M., Sutherland, C. and Chandra-Mouli, V., "Putting menarche and girls into the global population health agenda", *Reproductive Health*, 12, No. 1, March 2015.
2. United Nations, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (General Assembly resolution 70/1), adopted October 2015.
3. Based on emerging data from UNICEF Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys in 16 countries in Eastern and South-Eastern Asia, Central Asia and Southern Asia, Western Asia, sub-Saharan Africa, Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand), the Caribbean, and Southern Europe. Questions focused on access to menstrual hygiene materials and to a private place to wash and change, as well as exclusion from social activities, education and work.
4. Menstrual hygiene materials include sanitary pads, tampons and cloth.
5. World Health Organization (WHO)/United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Joint Programme for Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene, *Drinking Water, Sanitation and Hygiene in Schools: Global Baseline Report 2018*, Geneva, 2018.
6. WHO/UNICEF Joint Programme for Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene, *WASH in health-care facilities: Global Baseline Report 2019*, Geneva, 2019.
7. World Health Organization (WHO)/United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Joint Programme for Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene, *Drinking Water, Sanitation and Hygiene in Schools: Global Baseline Report 2018*, Geneva, 2018.
8. WHO/UNICEF Joint Programme for Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene, *WASH in health-care facilities: Global Baseline Report 2019*, Geneva, 2019.
9. Data can be downloaded from the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys database.
10. Khan, S.M. et al., Optimizing household survey methods to monitor the Sustainable Development Goals targets 6.1 and 6.2 on drinking water, sanitation and hygiene: A mixed-methods field-test in Belize, *PLOS ONE*, December 2017.
11. Menstrual hygiene briefs from Performance Monitoring and Accountability Surveys (by country).
12. Demographic and Health Surveys, Programme 8, model woman's questionnaire.

Life expectancy and causes of death



Key points

- At the global level, life expectancy at birth increased by 5.5 years, from age 66.5 to age 72.0 (for both sexes combined) during the period 2000–2020.
- Boys born in 2020 will live, on average, to age 69.9 and girls to age 74.7, a difference of 4.8 years that has remained consistent over time.
- While the fastest rate of increase in life expectancy at birth is reported in sub-Saharan Africa, as of 2020, life expectancy in the region remains 12 years lower than the global average.
- The gender gap in life expectancy at birth ranges from less than 3 years in Central and Southern Asia (70.9 years for women versus 68.2 years for men) to 6.5 years in Latin America and the Caribbean (78.5 years for women versus 72 years for men): in general, the gap is greater in developed countries and smaller in developing ones.
- Causes of death vary by age and sex, and the patterns observed across regions and countries are closely linked to the development of health systems and the epidemiological transition from communicable to non-communicable diseases.
- Women have a longer life expectancy than men at all ages and death rates from almost all leading causes of death are higher among men than women.
- While young women are at risk of dying in childbirth and from related complications, young men are more likely to die as a result of road injuries and/or interpersonal violence.
- In all regions, men aged 15–49 are more prone than women to dying from injuries or external causes: in Latin America and the Caribbean, six and a half times more likely; in Northern America and Europe, four times more likely; and in Western Asia and Northern Africa, Australia and New Zealand, sub-Saharan Africa and Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand) at least three times more likely.
- As men age, they die in greater numbers than women from causes such as tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS, stroke and heart disease, lower respiratory infections and cancer.
- At older ages, however, women are more likely to die from rheumatic heart disease, Alzheimer's disease and other types of dementia.

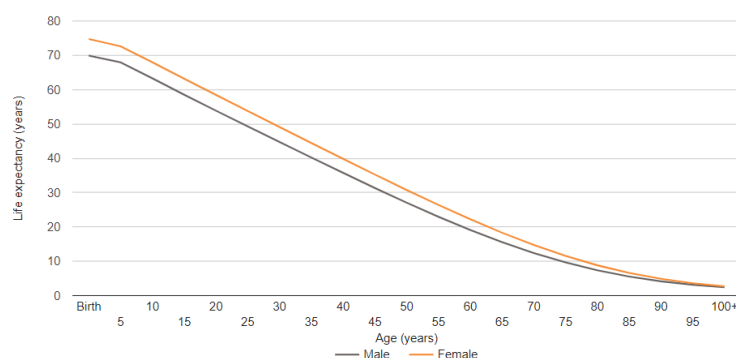
Background

Life expectancy is a key measure of a population's health; healthier populations live longer. Analysis of trends in life expectancy can reveal changes in health status over time. Analysis of differences in life expectancy between specific population groups, as well as between women and men, can uncover inequalities in health status that need to be addressed.

Current situation

Life expectancy for girls born in 2020, on average, age 74.7; for boys, on average, age 69.9 – a difference of 4.8 years

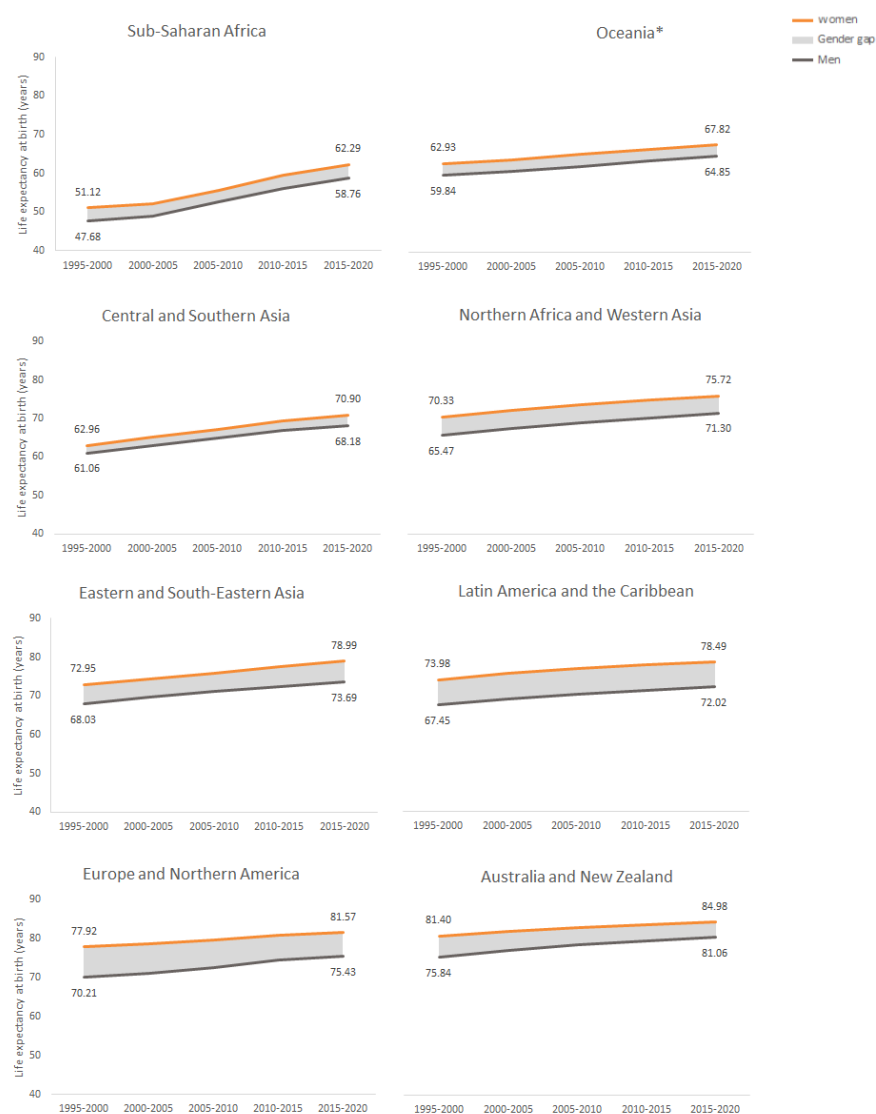
During the period 2000–2020, global life expectancy at birth increased by 5.5 years, from age 66.5 to age 72.0 (for both sexes combined): women continued to have a longer life expectancy than men at all ages (see figure I). While this difference is partly due to an inherent biological advantage, it also reflects **behavioural differences** between men and women, as well as gender differentials in the social determinants of health. Girls born in 2020 will live, on average to age 74.7, while boys will live, on average, to age 69.9 – a difference of 4.8 years that has remained more or less constant over the past 20 years.

Figure I: Global life expectancy by sex and age: 2015-2020

Source: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), Population Division, World Population Prospects 2019 (<https://population.un.org/wpp/>).

Over the period 2015–2020, the greatest increase in life expectancy at birth was in sub-Saharan Africa (see figure II), mainly due to improved quality and access of medical care, as well as the tapering off of **HIV/AIDS infection** in the region. Nevertheless, in 2020, life expectancy in sub-Saharan Africa remains 12 years lower than the global average, and the gender gap has remained constant, hovering at around 3.5 years (life expectancy for women is age 62.3 versus age 58.8 for men). There are significant regional differences in the gender gap in life expectancy, ranging from less than 3 years in Central and Southern Asia (life expectancy for women is age 70.9 versus age 68.2 for men) to 6.5 years in Latin America and the Caribbean (life expectancy for women is age 78.5 versus age 72 for men). In general, the gender gap is greater in developed countries and smaller in developing ones.

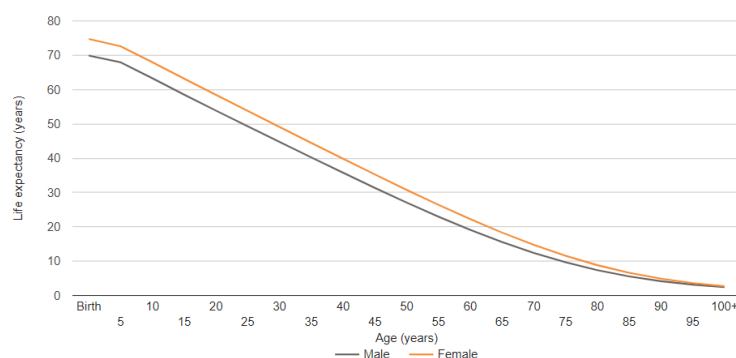
The life expectancy of women ranges from age 62.3 in sub-Saharan Africa, to almost age 85 in Australia and New Zealand. In 64 countries, most in Europe and Northern America and Eastern Asia, women's life expectancy is higher than age 80, while in 11 countries in sub-Saharan Africa it is below age 60.

Figure II: Life expectancy at birth by region and sex: 1995-2020

Source: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), Population Division, World Population Prospects 2019 (<https://population.un.org/wpp/>).

Note: Oceania* (excluding Australia and New Zealand).

Life expectancy at age 65 is also higher for women than men: 18.3 versus 15.6 additional years, a gender gap of 2.7 years. The differences in life expectancy between men and women may be due to biology, including hormonal differences and/or gender (socially influenced roles and behaviours), as well as differences in social determinants of health, access to health care or level of exposure to risk factors. The exact contributions of biological differences and gender roles to health status vary geographically, however, and are often difficult to separate because they do not operate independently.

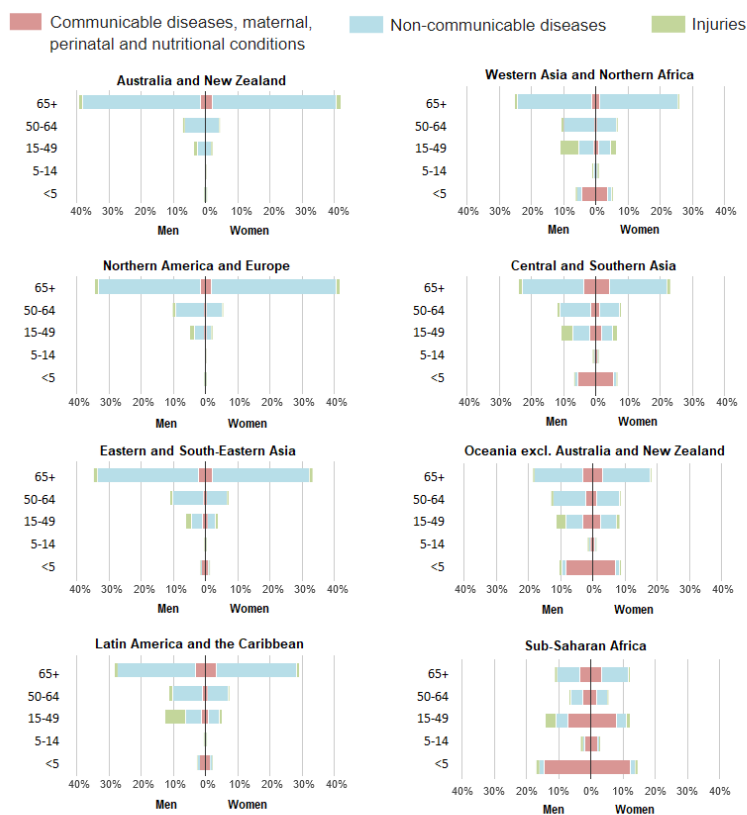
Figure I: Global life expectancy by sex and age: 2015-2020

Source: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), Population Division, World Population Prospects 2019 (<https://population.un.org/wpp/>).

There are markedly different patterns in the ages at and causes of death in developed and developing countries

While in developed countries, the majority of people who die are older than age 65, in countries in developing regions there are a significant number of deaths prior to age 5, relatively few deaths at ages 5–14, and an increase in the proportion of deaths in the cohorts aged 15–49 and aged 50–64 (see figure III). In Europe and Northern America more than 75% of deaths occur above age 65, but in sub-Saharan Africa the inverse is true (almost 75% of deaths occur below age 65) and almost one in three deaths are among children under 5 years of age.¹ The relatively low death rate among children aged 5–14, may be because, having survived the critical early years, they are still young enough to be under the protection of their parents and less likely to be exposed to risky behaviours or to work outside the home.

The most marked gender gap, which holds true in all regions, is linked to the fact that men aged 15–49 are significantly more likely than women to die from injuries or from external causes, including unintentional injuries, for example from road accidents, falls or drowning, as well as from intentional injuries, such as self-harm (suicide), interpersonal violence and collective violence. The largest gender gap in this cause of death among women and men in this age group is in Latin America and the Caribbean, where men are six and a half times more likely than women to die from one of these causes. In Northern America and Europe, men are four times as likely to die in this way, while in Western Asia and Northern Africa, Australia and New Zealand, sub-Saharan Africa and Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand) men are three times as likely as women to die in this manner (see figure III).

Figure III: Distribution of total deaths by age and sex by region: 2016 (Percentage)

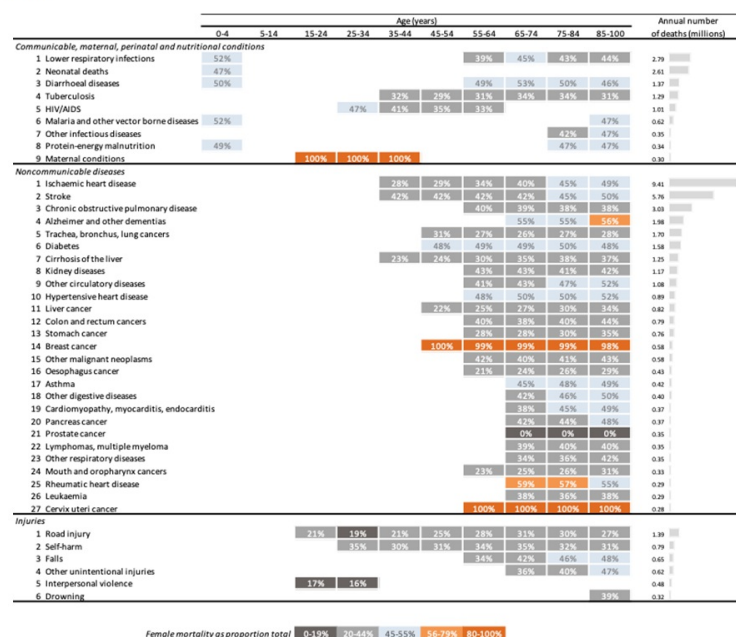
Source: WHO, Global Health Estimates 2016 (https://www.who.int/healthinfo/global_burden_disease/en/).

Note: Causes of death are classified under the WHO International Classification of Diseases into three groups: (a) communicable diseases, maternal, perinatal and nutritional conditions, (b) non-communicable diseases, and (c) injuries. Regions are in descending order of the percentage of deaths among people aged 65 and older.

With the exception of deaths due to maternal conditions, breast and cervical cancers and Alzheimer's and other types of dementia, over the course of life, death rates from leading causes of death are higher among men than women

Men's reduced life expectancy compared with women is not due to a single or a restricted number of causes² (see figure IV). Death rates from almost all leading causes of death are higher among men than women over the life course. Exceptions include death from **maternal conditions**, **breast cancer**, Alzheimer's and different types of dementia and cervical cancer. Causes of death vary by age and sex, and the patterns observed across regions and countries are closely linked to the development of health systems and the epidemiological transition from communicable to non-communicable diseases.

Figure IV: Female death rates as a percentage of total death rates by age and cause of death worldwide: 2016



Source: Source: WHO, Global Health Estimates 2016 (https://www.who.int/healthinfo/global_burden_disease/en/).

Note: Data are presented for the 42 leading causes of death in 2016 (where global number of deaths exceeded 280,000). These causes accounted for 89% of all deaths in 2016. The female death rate in relation to the combined male and female death rate is shown for cells where the age specific death rate from a cause, in either sex, exceeds 1,500 per 100,000.

In developing countries, life expectancy is reduced by causes that are frequently preventable or treatable through access to basic health services, notably deaths due to maternal conditions. Deaths from communicable diseases such as malaria, diarrhoea and tuberculosis are also higher in developing countries. This situation has drastically changed, however, since early 2020 due to the emergence of the Coronavirus-19 (COVID-19), a communicable disease that has affected developing and developed countries alike.

In developed countries, premature deaths³ due to non-communicable diseases are frequently associated with occupational risks or individual behaviours that are more common among men, including excessive drinking, and smoking, which results in higher deaths from lung cancer.

Throughout the life cycle, while young women are at risk of dying in childbirth and from related complications, young men are more likely to die from injuries and interpersonal violence; as men age, additional causes of death become more prominent compared to women, such as tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS, stroke and heart disease, lower respiratory infections and cancer; at older ages women are more likely than men to die from rheumatic heart disease, Alzheimer's and other types of dementia.

Although the differences in death rates between women and men are less noticeable in childhood than later in life, they are nevertheless significant. For example, girls account for more than half of deaths due to lower respiratory infections (52%) and malaria and other vector borne diseases (52%) in children from birth to age 4 (see figure IV). Differences become more noticeable after puberty, however, when physical and behavioural differences between men and women are more marked.

At ages 15–24, stark gender differences in causes of death appear: a significant proportion of young women die of maternal conditions, while young men tend to die of injuries, including road accidents (79% of deaths) and interpersonal violence (83% of deaths) (see figure IV). Deaths from maternal conditions among young women are almost entirely preventable when access is

provided to skilled health-care during pregnancy and birth; the death rate among young men resulting from injuries and/or interpersonal violence needs to be addressed through behavioural modification and other approaches.

In the population aged 25–44, there are a significant number of deaths from tuberculosis, which is more prevalent among men aged 35–44 (68%), and from HIV/AIDS, which is more prevalent in men above age 34, albeit with important regional differences in rates of HIV transmission. After age 34, deaths from non-communicable diseases increase, in particular deaths from heart disease and stroke. Stroke, a leading cause of death among this age cohort, both female and male, is more prevalent in men aged 35–44 (58% of global mortality), although with important regional differences (see figure IV).

Between ages 45–64, other causes of death become more noticeable, including death from lower respiratory infections, which are more common among men aged 55–64 (61% of mortality), and diarrhoeal diseases, which affect both women and men equally. Certain cancers (colon and rectum, stomach and liver), most of which occur after age 54, tend to be more common among men than women. The exceptions are breast cancers, which affect women almost exclusively. After age 44, maternal conditions are no longer a significant cause of death among women.

After age 64, other causes of death become more common, including Alzheimer's disease, asthma and certain cancers (including oesophageal, pancreatic and prostate). At older ages (ages 65–84) men are more likely than women to die from a range of diseases, with the exception of rheumatic heart disease, which is a cause of death for significant numbers of women aged 65–74 (59% of global mortality). After age 84, Alzheimer's and different types of dementia affect women more than men (56% at ages 85–100). In this latter, most aged, group (85–100), women and men are equally likely to die from a broad range of causes, including stroke, ischaemic heart disease, cardiomyopathy, myocarditis, endocarditis or from falls.

Diabetes and hypertensive heart disease affect men and women of all ages at roughly equal rates, and some of these conditions are easier to prevent and treat than others. While to a certain extent some of these non-communicable diseases can be prevented or their effects reduced through the adoption of a healthy lifestyle, others, notably cancer, cannot. However, early detection and modern treatment can greatly reduce mortality for many forms of cancer. WHO estimates that about 30% to 50% of cancers can be prevented with lifestyle modifications, such as eliminating tobacco use, being physically active and reducing exposure to carcinogens in the environment.⁴

Classification of causes of death

Causes of death are generally classified into three groups: (1) communicable diseases, maternal, perinatal and nutritional conditions, (2) non-communicable diseases, and (3) injuries. Within each of these groups, causes of death are further separated into 123 causes and analysis can be undertaken by major causes of death throughout the life course.

Non-communicable diseases, the most common cause of death globally, were responsible for 70% of deaths in 2016. However, in sub-Saharan Africa, communicable diseases and maternal, perinatal and nutritional conditions are responsible for more than 50% of deaths. Injuries are prominent as a cause of death among youth and adults, particularly males aged 15–49.

Communicable (or infectious) diseases caused by micro-organisms, such as bacteria, viruses or parasites, can spread from person to person or animal to person: lower respiratory infections, HIV/AIDS and diarrhoeal diseases are three of the most prominent communicable diseases. Leading risk factors for such diseases include unsafe water and poor sanitation, poor hygiene, unsafe sex and inadequate health services. Maternal, neonatal and nutritional conditions are health conditions related to pregnancy and childbirth, the neonatal period or nutritional deficiencies, respectively. Communicable diseases, maternal, perinatal and nutritional conditions accounted in total for 20% of deaths in 2016.

Non-communicable diseases are diseases that are non-transmissible and often, but not always, of long duration and generally slow progression. The four main types of non-communicable diseases are: cardiovascular diseases (such as heart attacks and stroke); cancer; chronic respiratory diseases (mostly chronic obstructed pulmonary disease and asthma); and diabetes.

The third leading cause of death is injuries, including unintentional injuries, such as those resulting from road accidents, falls or drowning, along with intentional injuries, such as self-harm (suicide), interpersonal violence and collective violence.

About the data

Definitions

- **Life expectancy at birth** in a given year is the average number of years a newborn is expected to live if current mortality patterns remain constant in the future.
- **Proportion of deaths by leading cause of death** is the number of deaths in each age group, both female and male, by leading cause of death, expressed as a percentage of the total number of deaths.
- **Female death rate as a proportion of the total death rate by cause of death and by age** is the female death rate in relation to the combined male and female death rate.

Coverage

Data on life expectancy and cause of death are available for 201 countries and territories, classified by regional grouping under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) indicators framework.⁵

Footnotes

1. World Health Organization (WHO), Global Health Estimates 2016 (deaths by cause, age, sex, by country and by region, 2000–2016; and life expectancy, 2000–2016), Geneva, 2018.
2. The International Classification of Diseases, developed by WHO, includes three major categories of causes of death: the first includes communicable diseases and maternal, neonatal and nutritional conditions; the other two categories are non-communicable diseases and injuries.
3. Premature deaths are deaths that occur before the average age of death in a certain population (see [link](#)). To allow for global comparison, they are generally defined by WHO as deaths occurring prior to age 70 (see [link](#)).
4. WHO, Health Topics, Cancer prevention.
5. Regional groupings under the Sustainable Development Goals indicators framework.

Chapter 3

Education

Introduction

Women's participation in education is on the rise worldwide

Worldwide, substantial progress has been made in the achievement of universal primary education, and girls and boys around the world participate equally in primary education in most regions. While the progress in achieving gender equality in secondary education is encouraging, it lags behind levels reported in primary education, and gender disparities are wider and occur in more countries at the secondary than at the primary level. Among positive global trends, evidence shows that, girls — once they have access to schooling — tend to do better than boys in terms of academic achievement at the primary and secondary levels and beyond. In tertiary education, enrolment is increasing faster for women than for men. However, gender disparities persist in the fields of study chosen by women and men. Women continue to be underrepresented among graduates in the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM studies), constituting slightly more than a third (35%) of the world's STEM graduates. Women are also a minority in scientific research and development, making up less than a third (30%) of the world's researchers. Moreover, women scientists and researchers are more likely to find work in academia or in the public sector while men are more likely to work in the private sector, which offers higher salaries and wider opportunities.

Because of the remarkable progress in the level of school participation, global rates for out-of-school children, adolescents and youth have shown a substantial decline over the past two decades across primary, lower secondary and upper secondary levels of education. Nevertheless, global out-of-school rates have stagnated in recent years, reflecting pockets of exclusion and hard-to-reach populations. As of 2018, 258 million children and youth were not enrolled in school and gender parity in the out-of-school rate had not been achieved in any region in the world, with girls generally having a higher out-of-school rate than boys in most regions, particularly in primary school (9% for girls versus 7% for boys).

In 2020, as the COVID-19 virus spread across the globe, more than 190 countries implemented nationwide school closures, with about 90% of all students (1.57 billion) out of school. Although distance-learning solutions have been provided in around 80% of countries with school closures, at least 500 million children and youth are currently excluded from these options. The sheer magnitude of school closures is likely to set back progress on access to education and to negatively affect educational outcomes.

Global literacy rates for both adults and youth have risen steadily over the past two decades and gender disparities have also narrowed, both for adult and youth populations. However, the gender gap in literacy among adult women and men remains significant; worldwide, on average, 90% of men are literate compared to about 80% of women, with wider gender gaps reported in countries in sub-Saharan Africa, Northern Africa, Southern Asia and Western Asia.

ICT skills are indispensable tools in an increasingly digital world and are essential in building a professional career in countries worldwide. During the COVID-19 pandemic, ICT has been the main media allowing people to maintain their personal connections as well as to carry on their day-to-day business operations. Women are disadvantaged in this regard, with lower levels of

access to the Internet (48% compared to 58% for men at the global level in 2019), and fewer ICT skills than men, particularly in developing regions, making the digital divide a very visible gender divide.

Students experiencing bullying



Key points

- School-related bullying is a pervasive issue in the majority of countries, affecting both girls and boys, although in different ways.
- Boys are more likely than girls to report having been bullied, both in developing and developed regions.
- Students with an immigrant background are more likely to experience bullying than students with a non-immigrant background.
- Children from households with lower socioeconomic status are more likely to be exposed to bullying than their counterparts from households with higher socioeconomic status.

Background

Bullying is an intentional, aggressive and repeatedly occurring behaviour. It occurs in school, on school grounds, on the way to school and, increasingly, in cyberspace. Bullying is often perpetrated as a result of gender norms and stereotypes. For instance, girls may experience sexist verbal abuse about their weight, appearance and marriage prospects. School is where children cultivate friendships and form peer groups – pivotal steps towards adult socialization.¹ Relentless and inescapable, bullying affects children and youth in terms of their school attendance, well-being and learning abilities, and can also have a significant impact on their emotional and behavioural development. Children who are bullied are often marginalized by their peers and exhibit risk factors, such as loneliness.² Providing a safe and inclusive learning environment is critical for the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) target 4. a, which aims to "Build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all".

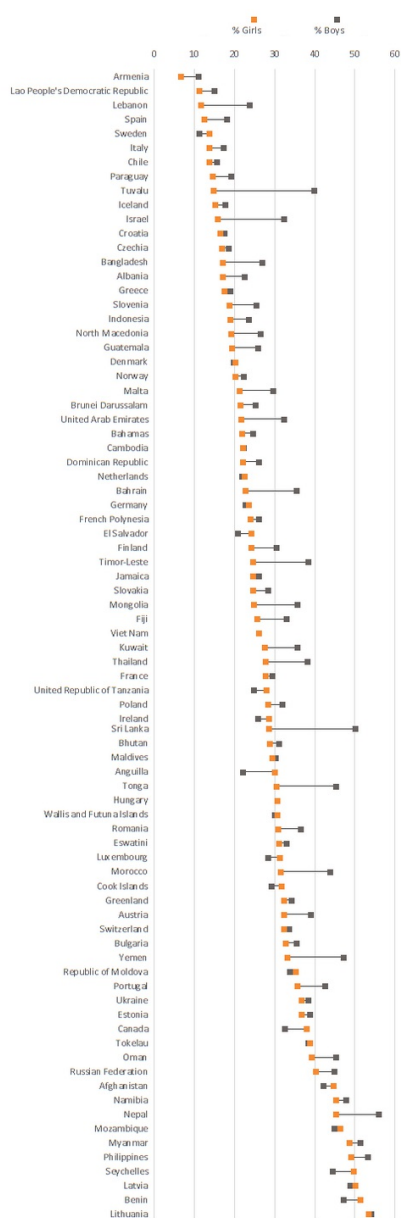
Current situation

Boys are more likely than girls to report having been bullied, both in developing and developed regions

School-related bullying is a pervasive problem in countries worldwide, affecting both girls and boys, but in different ways. Globally, based on data for the period 2013–2017, slightly more than one in four girls (28%) and one in three boys (32%) reported having been bullied at school or in the school environment in the previous 12 months (see figure). In countries in developed (high-income) regions, 27% of girls and 30% of boys reported having been bullied. The corresponding proportions for developing (low-income and middle-income) countries were slightly larger — 29% for girls and 34% for boys.

Analysis of data from 81 countries shows that, between 7% to 54% of girls and 11% to 56% of boys reported having been bullied by other students at least once in the past 12 months. In 41 countries (about half of the countries with data), the average prevalence rate was less than 30% for both girls and boys; in five countries (Latvia, Lithuania, Myanmar, Nepal and the Philippines), the average prevalence rate for both sexes was 50% or more. In most of the 81 countries, boys were more likely than girls to experience bullying.

Figure: Percentages of female and male students in countries and territories worldwide reporting bullying in the last 12 months: 2013–2017 (latest available)



Source: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), UNESCO Institute for Statistics database (accessed in May 2020) (<http://uis.unesco.org/>).

Note: Data by sex are available for 81 countries and territories.

Low socioeconomic status can expose students to more bullying

Children from certain population groups, such as ethnic minorities and children with disabilities, are more likely to be singled out for bullying,³ as are children from households with lower socioeconomic status. Analysis of data from 37 countries shows that, in almost all cases, students with low socioeconomic status experienced more bullying than their counterparts with higher socioeconomic status. The difference was substantial in 29 countries, with students with lower socioeconomic status reporting bullying at a higher rate, by 10 percentage points or more, and by 20 percentage points or more in Austria, Canada, Croatia,

Lithuania, Norway and Slovakia.

Students with an immigrant background are more likely to experience bullying

The situation of students with an immigrant background is similar, and worse in some cases, to that of students with low socioeconomic status. According to available data, they are more likely than students with a non-immigrant background to experience bullying. Data from 28 countries, all from developed regions, indicate that students with an immigrant background reported bullying at a higher proportion than their counterparts. This was the case in all but five countries: in 18 countries, the difference was greater than 5 percentage points, and in Bulgaria, Czechia, Estonia, Finland, Ireland and Italy the difference was reported at 10 percentage points or more.

Recent studies suggest that bullying leads to lower levels of educational achievement

Recent studies show that bullying leads to lower levels of educational achievement. In Recife, Brazil, grade 6 students who had been bullied achieved significantly lower scores in mathematics.⁴ In Ghana, where bullied grade 8 students also achieved lower scores in mathematics, the effects were worse for female students, although their situation was mitigated when the teacher was a woman.⁵

Preventing and addressing acts of bullying require that governments develop comprehensive, coordinated responses, including appropriate regulations, policy and leadership initiatives, reporting mechanisms, community and student partnerships, evaluations of incidents and staff and teacher involvement.⁶ Prevention-oriented education programmes that teach students acceptable strategies for interacting with their peers, including skills for understanding interpersonal differences, managing peer pressure and rejecting gender norms have been shown to be effective in preventing acts of bullying.⁷ Teaching communication and decision-making skills will help students, both victims and perpetrators, to address and ultimately eliminate bullying behaviour.

Source

- United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), *An Everyday Lesson: #ENDviolence in Schools*, New York, 2018.

About the data

Definitions

- **Percentage of girls and boys who experienced bullying during a school year (or in the past 12 months):** This indicator provides information based on the self-reporting by students of violence and bullying in schools. A high value indicates that a large number of students are experiencing bullying in or near school, indicating that the school is not a safe environment in which to promote learning. Because the indicator is based on self-reporting of violence and bullying in or near school, it is possible that a proportion of students may be afraid of disclosing such information, resulting in an overestimation of the safety of the school environment.

Coverage

Girls and boys aged 13–17 if the data source for this indicator is the Global school-based student health survey,⁸ or girls and boys aged 11, 13 and 15 if data source is the Health Behaviour in School-aged Children study.⁹

Availability

Data by sex are available for 81 countries for the period 2013–2017 (latest available) from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Institute for Statistics database.¹⁰

Footnotes

1. United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), *An Everyday Lesson: #ENDviolence in Schools*, New York, 2018 .
2. Ibid.
3. United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), *An Everyday Lesson: #ENDviolence in Schools*, New York, 2018 .
4. Oliveira, F.R. et al., "Bullying effect on student's performance", *Economia*, vol.19, Issue 1, 2017 .
5. Kibriya, S. et al., "The negative consequences of school bullying on academic performance and mitigation through female teacher participation: evidence from Ghana", *Journal of Applied Economics*, vol. 49, Issue 25, 2017 .
6. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), *School Violence and Bullying: Global Status Report*, Paris, 2017 .
7. Ibid.
8. World Health Organization (WHO) and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Global school-based student health survey* .
9. WHO, *Health Behaviour in School-aged Children study* .
10. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), UNESCO Institute of Statistics database (accessed in May 2020) .

Education

Schools with access to single-sex basic sanitation



Key points

- Primary schools are more affected by the lack of access to single-sex sanitation facilities than schools at other levels of education. Globally, about one in five primary schools lacks single-sex sanitation facilities.
- Levels of access to sanitation facilities vary widely across regions and levels of education.
- In sub-Saharan Africa, which faces the starkest challenge in providing schools with access to single-sex toilets, the proportion of primary schools with single-sex sanitation is less than 50% in about half of countries with data.
- Access to single-sex sanitation facilities in schools at the lower and upper secondary levels is better than in schools at the primary level.

Background

Lack of water and sanitation facilities, especially single-sex toilets, can be a barrier to girls' participation in schooling. Inadequate sanitation facilities for girls, particularly **during menstruation**, can have a negative effect on their school attendance. Safe and separate sanitation facilities need to be made available in schools to ensure that girls can study in a dignified, gender-equitable learning environment; this will reduce absenteeism and facilitate their continuing enrolment in education through adolescence. Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) indicator 4.a.1, which monitors the proportion of schools offering basic services, by type of service, addresses access to single-sex basic sanitation facilities to ensure that education facilities are gender sensitive and provide safe, inclusive and effective learning environments for all.

Current situation

Levels of access to sanitation facilities vary across regions and across level of education: primary schools are particularly affected by the lack of access to single-sex sanitation facilities.

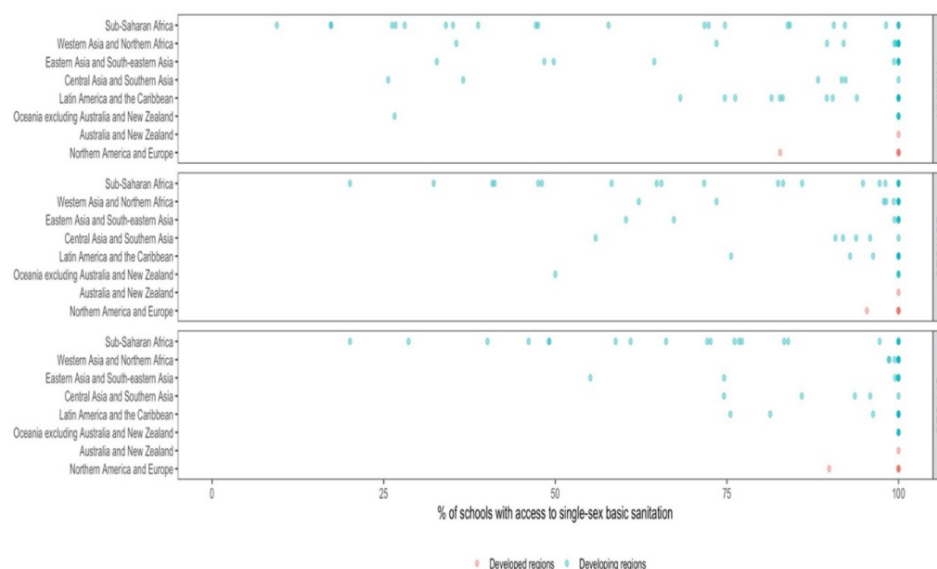
Data for the period 2015–2019 show that globally 22% of primary schools lack single-sex sanitation facilities. Among 103 countries with data, in about 20% access to single-sex sanitation facilities at the primary school level was below 75% (more than half of those countries were in sub-Saharan Africa). Access to single-sex facilities was universal in countries in Northern America and Europe, with the exception of Albania, where access was 83%. Access was also universal in the vast majority of countries in Eastern Asia, Oceania, excluding Australia and New Zealand, and Northern Africa and Western Asia and in about 50% of the countries in Latin America and the Caribbean (see figure). In Afghanistan and Bangladesh (Southern Asia), Cambodia and the Philippines (South-Eastern Asia), the Marshall Islands (Oceania excluding Australia and New Zealand) and Jordan (Western Asia) less than half of primary schools provided single-sex sanitation facilities.

Compared to schools at the primary level, the situation reported in schools at the lower and upper secondary levels was improved. Globally, the percentage of schools that lacked single-sex facilities at the lower (13%) and upper (12%) secondary levels compared favourably to the 22% of primary schools with appropriate facilities. Regional patterns of access to single-sex sanitation facilities at the lower and upper secondary levels are broadly similar to those at the primary level, although overall access is somewhat better at those levels of education (see

figure).

Studies of access to sanitation facilities that analyse the situation at the individual country level show that variations in access by region are wide, and that access is more limited in rural schools. For example, in Nicaragua, 64% of urban schools but only 32% of rural schools had improved basic sanitation services.¹

Figure: Proportion of schools with access to single-sex sanitation facilities by educational level and region, 2015–2019 (latest available)



Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics database (accessed in May 2020).

Note: Each point represents data for one country; data are available for 103 countries for primary, 89 for lower secondary, and 91 for upper secondary school; data correspond to the latest available year for the period 2015–2019.

A high percentage of schools in sub-Saharan Africa lack adequate facilities

Countries in sub-Saharan Africa face the starkest challenge in providing access to single-sex toilets at all levels of education. The situation is extreme at the primary education level, where the proportion of schools with single-sex sanitation was less than 50% in 11 out of 23 countries with data.

Access to single-sex sanitation facilities was somewhat better in schools at the lower and upper secondary levels of education in sub-Saharan Africa: at those levels, the proportion of schools with access was less than 50% in about a third of countries with data. In about half of countries with data, more than 75% of schools had access to single-sex sanitation facilities.

Sources

1. United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and World Health Organization (WHO), *Drinking Water, Sanitation and Hygiene in Schools: Global Baseline Report 2018*, New York, 2018

About the data

Definition

- **Proportion of schools with access to single-sex basic sanitation facilities:** Number of schools at a given level of education (primary, lower secondary and upper secondary education) with access to single-sex basic sanitation facilities expressed as a percentage of all schools at that level of education.
- **Basic sanitation facilities:** Functional improved sanitation facilities² separated for females and males on or near the school premises.

The indicator measures access in schools to key basic services and facilities necessary to ensure a safe and effective learning environment for all students.

Coverage

Schools at the primary, lower secondary and upper secondary education levels.

Availability

Data are available for: 103 countries at the primary education level; 89 at the lower secondary level; and 91 at the upper secondary education level. Data correspond to the latest available year for the period 2015–2019.³ Countries are organized according to regional groupings under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) indicator framework.⁴

Footnotes

1. United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and World Health Organization (WHO), *Drinking Water, Sanitation and Hygiene in Schools: Global Baseline Report 2018*, New York, 2018 .
2. Improved sanitation facilities include a pit latrine with slab, a ventilated improved pit latrine, a flush toilet, a pour-flush toilet or a composting toilet: unimproved facilities include a pit latrine without a slab, hanging toilets and bucket toilets.
3. Data are from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), UNESCO Institute for Statistics database (accessed in May 2020).
4. United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), Statistics Division, regional groupings under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) indicator framework.

Education

Out-of-school children, adolescents and youth



Key points

- The global rates for out-of-school children, adolescents and youth show a substantial downward decline across levels of education corresponding to primary, lower secondary and upper secondary education.
- Global trends show that the world is moving towards greater gender parity in out-of-school rates, although inequalities at the primary school level persist (9% for girls and 7% for boys, resulting in a 2 percentage points gender gap).
- Female and male out-of-school rates for the lower secondary (around 15%) and upper secondary (around 35%) school-age populations are nearly identical at the global level.
- Out-of-school rates for youth of upper secondary school age are far greater than those for children and adolescents of primary and lower secondary school age.
- Despite the overall historically downward trend, global out-of-school rates seem to have stagnated in recent years.
- Although global proportions of boys and girls not in education are roughly equal, global averages mask large gender inequalities among regions. As of 2018, gender parity in the out-of-school rate had not been achieved in any region in the world with girls generally having a higher out-of-school rate than boys in most regions, particularly in primary school.

Background

Out-of-school children, adolescents and youth comprise two groups based on their exposure to education: those who have entered school in the past and dropped out; and those who have not entered school. Children who drop out in early grades are unlikely to acquire even the most basic mastery of reading and writing, numeracy and other skills. Children who never enter school will have no exposure to formal education at all and will bear the attendant lifelong consequences.

Children, adolescents and youth who are not enrolled in school are often those from poor households and from socially marginalized communities, including children with disabilities, and from ethnic-minority communities, rural areas and areas with conflict. These barriers often interact with gender to create even greater disadvantages in learning opportunities. Education is essential to the achievement of the SDGs: it will not be possible to achieve universal completion of primary and secondary education by 2030 (SDG Goal 4) without tackling the problem of out-of-school children, adolescents and youth.

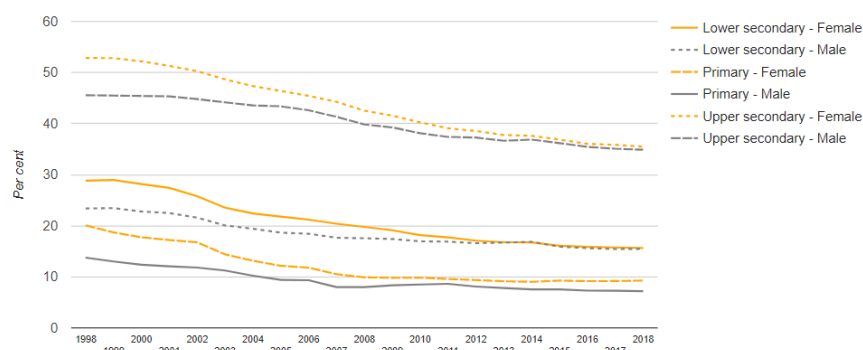
The world is moving towards greater gender parity in out-of-school rates, although some inequalities at the primary level remain

Globally, the rates of out-of-school children, adolescents and youth for all three levels of education, primary, lower secondary and upper secondary, have followed a similar downward trend (see figure I), which has been accompanied by a reduction in gender disparities. While girls and young women have historically been excluded

from education relative to boys, statistics for 2018 show that male and female out-of-school rates for the lower secondary school-age population (around 15%) and the upper secondary school-age population (around 35%) are now nearly identical at the global level.

While the gender gap among children of primary school age has more than halved since 1998, gender disparities remain. Among children of primary school age, the gender gap has widened marginally over recent years due to the continued decline in the male out-of-school rate and a small increase in the female out-of-school rate. In 2018, the global out-of-school rate among girls of primary school age (9.3%) was two percentage points higher than that of boys (7.2%).

Figure 1: Global out-of-school rate by level of education: 2000–2015 (Percentage)



Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics, database (<http://uis.unesco.org/en/topic/out-school-children-and-youth>) (accessed February 2020)

Out-of-school rates for youth of upper secondary school age are larger than those for children and adolescents of primary and lower secondary school age

Data show that out-of-school rates for youth, both girls and boys, of upper secondary school age are far greater than those for children and adolescents of primary and lower secondary school age. Upper secondary school-age youth are more than four times as likely to be out of school as children of primary school age and more than twice as likely to be out of school as adolescents of lower secondary school age.

The high out-of-school rates for older cohorts can be explained by poverty and a variety of other reasons: many youth may never have had the opportunity to go to school when they were younger; upper secondary education is often not compulsory; and upper secondary school-age youth may choose employment over continued education.¹

Despite the downward trend, out-of-school rates have stagnated in recent years

It is important to note that despite the overall downward trend, out-of-school rates appear to have stagnated in recent years.

The primary out-of-school rate has decreased only slightly since around 2008, reaching 8% in 2018, and the

lower secondary out-of-school rate has been at 16% since around 2012.

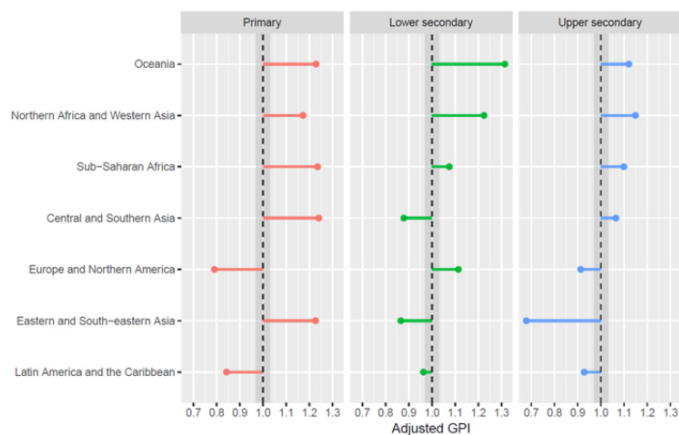
The upper secondary out-of-school rate, which was initially at much higher levels than the primary and lower secondary out-of-school rates, and which had been falling steadily since 2000, has stagnated at around 35% since 2013.

Global averages mask large gender inequalities among regions

Although the shares of boys and girls not in education (for each of the three levels of education) are roughly equal at the global level, this is not necessarily the case among regions. In fact, as of 2018, gender parity in the out-of-school rate had not been achieved in any region in the world (see figure II).

In the majority of regions, females generally have a higher out-of-school rate than males. In Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand), Northern Africa and Western Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, gender inequality affecting girls, indicated by a GPI greater than 1, is evident at every level of education. In Europe and Northern America, Eastern and South-Eastern Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean, boys are more likely than girls to be out of school. In the case of Eastern and South-Eastern Asia, these disparities are most pronounced at the upper secondary level, when boys tend to drop out at a significant rate. In most regions, inequalities tend to be higher at the primary level relative to lower and upper secondary education.

Figure II: Adjusted gender parity index (GPI) of out-of-school rate by region and level of education: 2018



Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics, database (<http://uis.unesco.org/en/topic/out-school-children-and-youth>) (accessed February 2020).

Note: Gender parity index is the female out-of-school rate divided by the male out-of-school rate. The gender parity index (GPI) of the out-of-school rate is the ratio of the female to male rates. A GPI value between 0.97 and 1.03 is usually interpreted to indicate gender parity. The adjusted gender parity index is the GPI adjusted to be symmetrical around 1 and limited to range between 0 and 2. The shaded grey area between 0.97 and 1.03 shows where parity has been achieved. Parity indices above 1 show a disparity affecting against girls, and parity indices below 1 show disparity affecting boys.

As countries strive to achieve universal primary and secondary education by 2030, they face different challenges and require different policies, depending on their circumstances.

Interventions that have been used successfully to reach the disadvantaged and the marginalized, especially girls, include: the abolishment of school fees; increased education budgets; social cash transfers, especially to support poor families, making it easier for them to send their children to school; increasing attention to ethnic and linguistic minorities; overcoming conflicts that keep children out of school because of hostilities; and improving the quality of education.

Sources

- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), UNESCO Institute for Statistics and Global Education Monitoring Report, "Leaving No One Behind: How Far on the Way to Universal Primary and Secondary Education?", Policy Paper 27/Fact Sheet No. 37, July 2016.
- UNESCO, UNESCO Institute for Statistics and Global Education Monitoring Report, "Progress in getting all children to school stalls but some countries show the way forward", Policy Paper 14/Fact Sheet 28, June 2014.

About the data

Definitions

- **Out-of-school rates:** Measure of the proportion of children, adolescents and youth who are not enrolled in or attending school, specifically: (a) the primary out-of-school rate is the proportion of children of official primary school age who are not enrolled in (or not attending) pre-primary, primary, secondary or post-secondary education, expressed as a percentage of the population of official primary school age; (b) the lower secondary out-of-school rate is the proportion of adolescents of lower secondary age not enrolled in (or not attending) pre-primary, primary, secondary or tertiary education; and (c) the upper secondary out-of-school rate is defined as the proportion of youth of upper secondary age who are not enrolled in (or not attending) pre-primary, primary, secondary or tertiary education.

Coverage

Female and male children, adolescents and youth in the official age group for: (a) primary, (b) lower secondary, and (c) upper secondary education.

Availability

Data are available for 120 countries at the primary education level and for 153 countries at the lower secondary and upper secondary education levels: countries are from all regional groupings under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)² (latest available for the period 2000–2018).³

Footnotes

1. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), UNESCO Institute for Statistics and Global Education Monitoring Report, "Leaving No One Behind: How Far on the Way to Universal Primary and Secondary Education?", Policy Paper 27/Fact Sheet No. 37, July 2016.
2. United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), Statistics Division, Regional groupings under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
3. Data from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), UNESCO Institute for Statistics, Out-of-School Children and Youth (database) (accessed February 2020).

Education

Youth and adult literacy rates



Key points

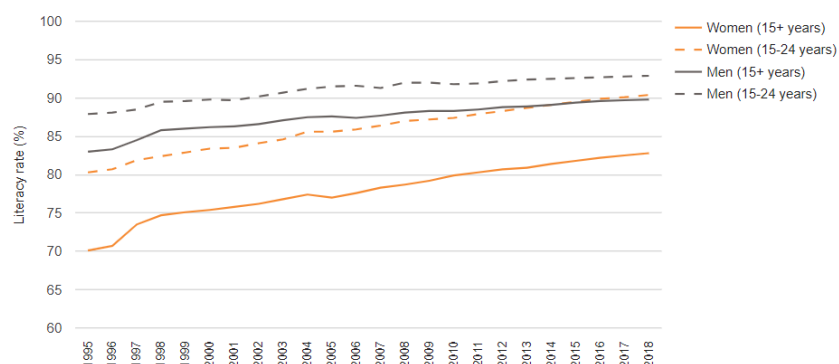
- The benefits of literacy, in particular for women, include greater participation in the labour market, delayed marriage, and improved child and family health and nutrition; these benefits, in turn, reduce poverty and expand life opportunities.
- Global literacy rates for both adults and youth have been rising steadily over the period 1995–2018, and gender gaps have narrowed consistently for both the adult (7 percentage points) and youth populations (2 percentage points) worldwide over the same period.
- Despite this improvement, gender gaps among the adult population aged 15 and older remain significant worldwide, with 9 in 10 adult men being literate in 2018 compared to about 8 in 10 women.
- The largest gender disparities in literacy (9–16 percentage points) for adult populations are concentrated in four regions: sub-Saharan Africa (73% for men versus 59% for women), Northern Africa (79% for men versus 66% for women), Southern Asia (81% for men versus 65% for women) and Western Asia (90% for men versus 81% for women).

Background

Literacy is an indispensable skill, essential for accessing information and knowledge and for independent learning. It is a key driver of sustainable development, which enables greater participation in the labour market and civic life. A lack of literacy skills is strongly correlated with poverty and exclusion from social and economic opportunities. The benefits of literacy, in particular for women, are well documented, including increased participation in the labour market, delayed marriage and improved child and family health and nutrition, all of which reduce poverty and expand life opportunities. In the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development¹ literacy is highlighted as a public good, the foundation of basic education, and Sustainable Development Goal 4, target 4.6, specifically calls on countries to ensure that by 2030 “all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy”.

Gender disparities in literacy have narrowed over recent decades for both the adult and youth populations

Global literacy rates rose during the period 1995–2018 (see figure I). Over this period, gaps between women and men consistently narrowed in terms of reading and writing skills. At the global level, the gender gap in the youth literacy rates has been steadily closing (from about 8 percentage points in 1995 to about 2 percentage points in 2018), although disparities persist across and within regions. Gender parity in literacy among youth has been attained in the majority of regions, and data show remarkable improvement among adult populations, with a steady reduction in gender gaps from about 13 percentage points in 1995 to 7 percentage points in 2018. Nevertheless, gender gaps among the adult population aged 15 and older worldwide remain significant, with 9 in 10 adult men being literate in 2018 compared to about 8 in 10 women.

Figure I: Literacy rate among adult and youth populations by sex: 1995-2018

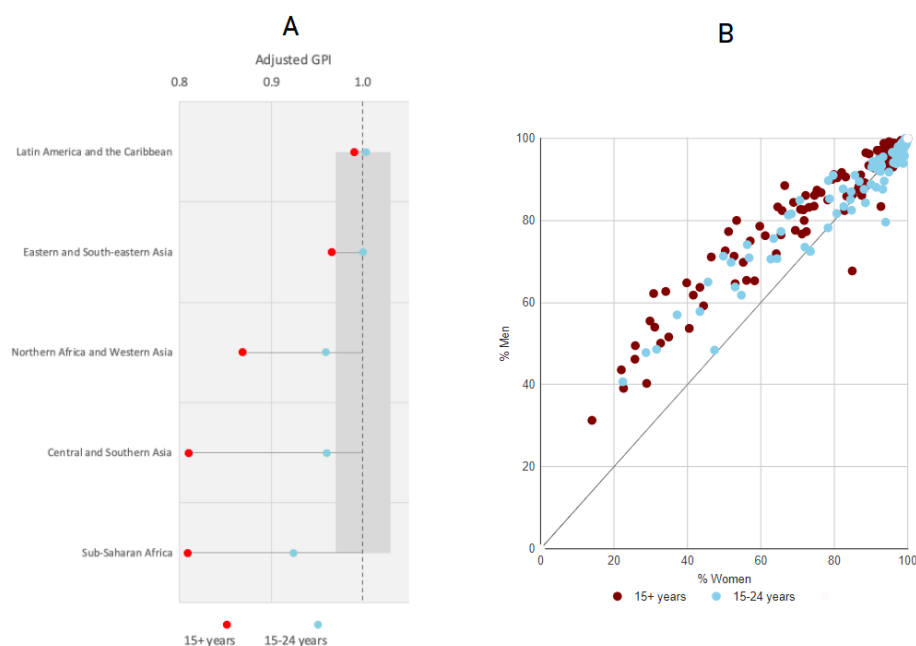
Source: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Institute for Statistics database (<http://uis.unesco.org/>) (accessed in February 2020).

Note: Figures are regional and global aggregates produced by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics; there is no data for Oceania, Northern America and Europe.

Gender disparities in literacy are concentrated in certain regions

Gender inequalities in literacy are most prevalent in four regions, with the widest gender disparities in the literacy rate, particularly for adult populations, observed in sub-Saharan Africa (73% for men versus 59% for women), Northern Africa (79% for men versus 66% for women), Southern Asia (81% for men versus 65% for women) and Western Asia (90% for men versus 81% for women) (see figure II.A). Gender disparities were more pronounced in adult populations than among youth, a point that is further illustrated in terms of the gender parity index (GPI) (see figure II.A) for regions with available data.

Figure II: Adjusted gender parity index (GPI) of literacy rates by region (A); and percentages of literate women and men by country (B): 2018 (or latest year available)



Inequalities in literacy tend to be consistently against females, as illustrated in figure II.B. In some countries gender disparities among the adult population are particularly pronounced. For example, in Chad and Guinea-Bissau, less than 50 adult females are literate for every 100 literate males. Even among the youth population, gender inequalities can be stark in some countries, with less than 60 literate females for every 100 males in Chad and the Central African Republic. Similar, although less extreme, disparities against female youth are also evident in other countries in West Africa, including Guinea, Liberia and Niger, as demonstrated in gender inequalities in school enrolment and learning.

Despite the steady rise in literacy rates over the past few decades, more progress is needed to achieve SDG target 4.6, which aims to ensure that all youth and most adults achieve literacy and numeracy by 2030. This requires scaling up literacy and skills programmes and collaborating with civil society partners, particularly aimed at reaching girls and women and vulnerable groups, and integrating such programmes with skills development for decent work and livelihoods as essential elements of lifelong learning.

About the data

Definitions

- **Literacy:** Ability to read and write with understanding a simple statement related to one's daily life. It involves a continuum of reading and writing skills, and often encompasses "numeracy", the ability to make simple arithmetical calculations.
- **Adult literacy rate:** Percentage of people aged 15 and older who can both read and write with understanding a short simple statement about their everyday lives.
- **Youth literacy rate:** Percentage of people aged 15–24 who can both read and write with understanding a short simple statement on their everyday life.

Coverage

Women and men aged 15 and older (adult population) and youth aged 15–24 in countries worldwide.

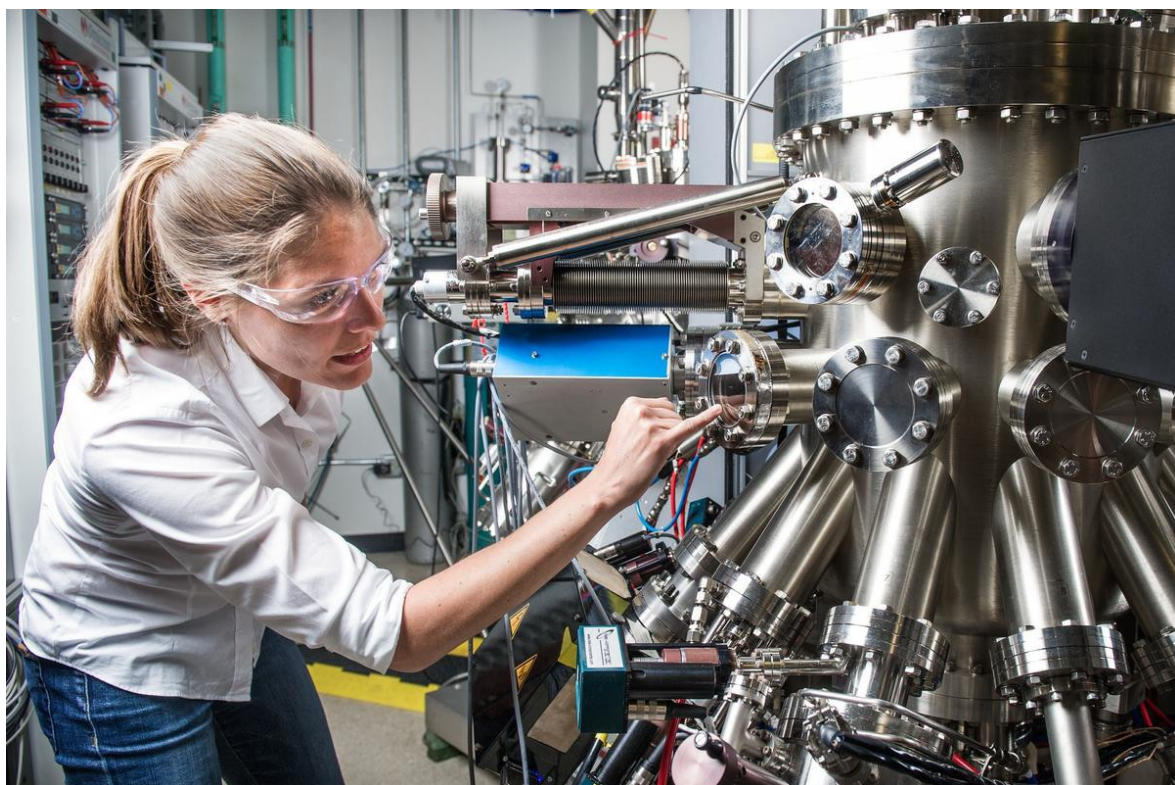
Availability

Data are available for 141 countries for youth (15–24 years) literacy rates, and for 142 countries for adult (age 15 and older) literacy rates for the period 2012–2018 (latest available). Regional and global data produced by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Institute for Statistics are available for countries in all regional groupings under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) indicator framework except for Northern America and Europe, Australia and New Zealand and Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand).

Footnotes

1. [United Nations, General Assembly, resolution 70/1, adopted on 25 September 2015](#) .
2. The gender parity index (GPI) of the literacy rate is the ratio of the female to male literacy rates. A GPI value between 0.97 and 1.03 is usually interpreted to indicate gender parity. The adjusted gender parity index is the GPI adjusted to be symmetrical around 1 and limited to a range between 0 and 2.
3. [United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization \(UNESCO\) Institute for Statistics](#) .
4. [United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs \(UNDESA\), Statistics Division, regional groupings under the Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\) indicator framework](#) .

Female researchers active in research and development (R&D)



Key points

- Globally, women researchers constituted only 30% of all researchers.
- The share of women among researchers varies widely across regions, with the highest share of female researchers in countries in the Latin America and the Caribbean region. Only three regions, Latin America and the Caribbean, Northern Africa, and Central Asia, have achieved or almost attained gender parity, that is, a share of between 45% and 55% for either sex.
- Gender parity has been achieved only in about one in four countries (of the 148 countries with available data).
- Female researchers tend to work in the academic and government sectors, while male researchers work mainly in the private sector. In general, women researchers are less likely than men to be engaged in fields of research pertaining to engineering and technologies.

Background

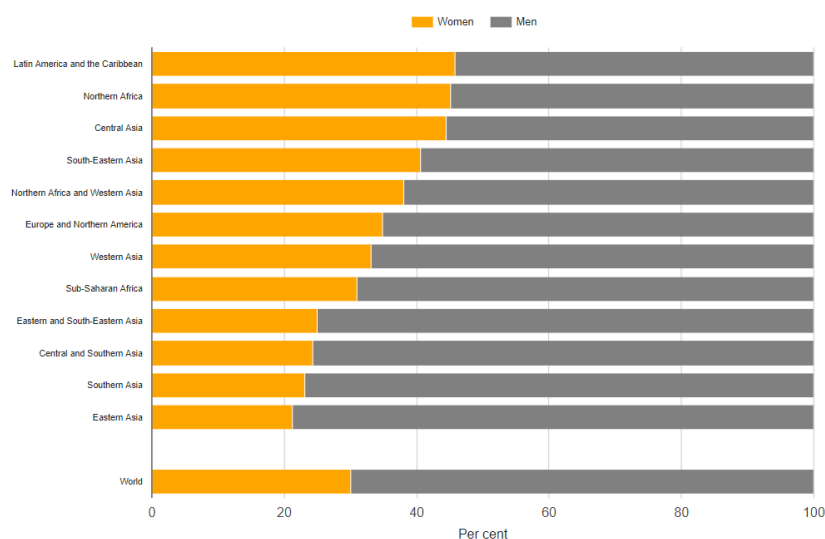
Outcomes from R&D play a pivotal role in transforming societies, economies and the natural environment. In the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,¹ countries pledged to "build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation" (Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 9). Target 9.5 of SDG 9 called upon countries to enhance scientific research, upgrade technological capabilities, encourage innovation and substantially increase the number of researchers, as well as public and private spending on R&D. Achieving this target will not be possible without harnessing all talents and addressing gender imbalances in the research workforce.

Women constituted only 30% of all researchers worldwide, with wide disparities among regions

Globally, women accounted for only 30% of total researchers in 2017 (see figure I).

The share of women among researchers displayed wide variation across regions, with countries Latin America and the Caribbean having the highest share of women researchers (46% in 2017). The proportion of women researchers was also relatively high in Northern Africa (45%), Central Asia (45%) and South-Eastern Asia (41%). Around one in three researchers was female in Europe and Northern America (35%), Western Asia (33%) and sub-Saharan Africa (31%), exceeding the world average. In contrast, the share of women researchers was the lowest in Southern Asia (23%) and Eastern Asia (21%).

In the achievement of gender parity, which is defined as a share of between 45% and 55% for either sex, only three regions, Latin America and the Caribbean; Northern Africa; and Central Asia, have thus far reached this goal.

Figure I: Women researchers as a proportion of total researchers by region: 2017 (Percentage)

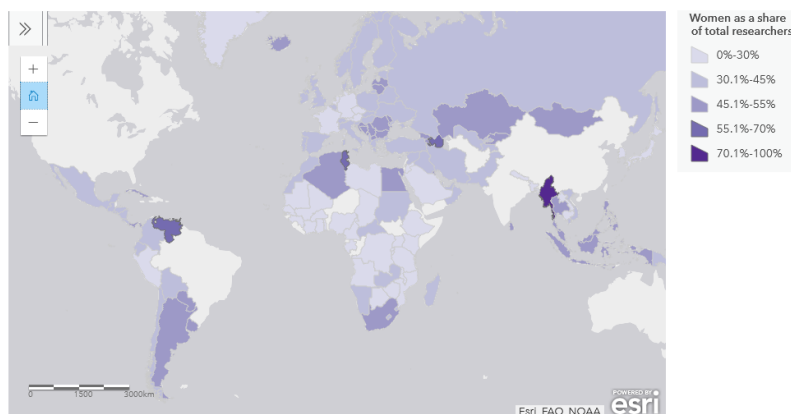
Source: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), UNESCO Institute for Statistics database (<http://uis.unesco.org/>) (accessed February 2020).

Note: Regional averages are based on data for 2017 or the latest available data for the period 2000–2017. The share of women researchers is based on headcounts, that is, the total number of researchers who are mainly or partially engaged in R&D. It is important to note that headcount measures do not take into account part-time employment in the research workforce. As a result, headcount data may mask variations in working hours among researchers. There is insufficient data coverage on the number of researchers broken down by sex for Oceania, Australia and New Zealand, and Northern America to calculate a regional aggregate.

Women researchers remained underrepresented in many countries around the world

To find the degree of progress in the employment of women in R&D, it is necessary to examine the situation at the individual country level. Figure II displays the proportion of women among the total number of researchers by country for 148 countries with available data for the period 1996–2018. Data show the underrepresentation of women researchers in the vast majority of countries.

In 129 of 148 countries, women made up less than a half of researchers. In 47 countries, women's share was less than a third. Nevertheless, significant progress by women researchers was registered in some countries. Women outnumbered men among researchers in the following countries: Argentina, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Latvia, Lithuania, Myanmar, New Zealand, North Macedonia, Panama, the Philippines, Serbia, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of). Gender parity, that is, a share of between 45% and 55% for either sex, has been achieved in only about one in four countries (of the 148 countries with available data).

Figure II: Women as a share of total researchers by country: 2018 or latest year available

Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics database (<http://uis.unesco.org/>) (accessed February 2020).

Note: Data in the map are based on headcounts, except for the Congo, India and Israel, which are based on full-time equivalents. Data for China are based on the total number of personnel working in the area of R&D rather than the number of researchers. Data for Brazil are based on estimations. Data are for 2018 or the latest year available for the period 1996–2018.

The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this and other maps throughout this publication do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

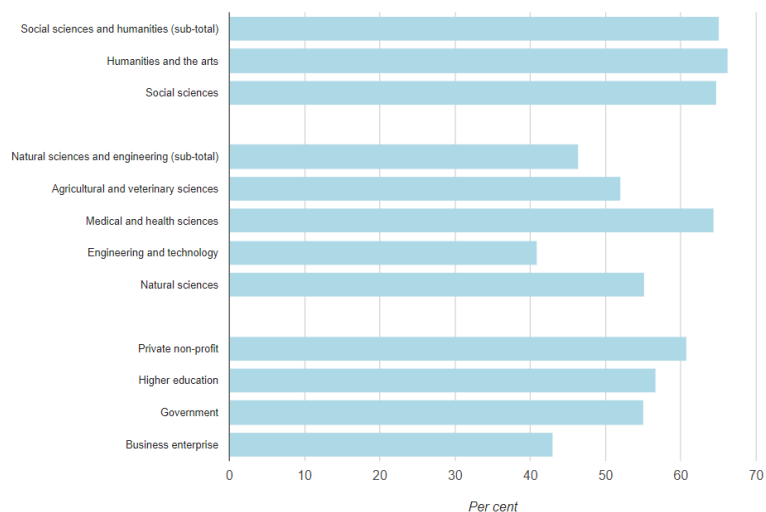
To better understand the underlying trends in women's representation in research, it is useful, *inter alia*, to look into the career paths of researchers, as well as the sectors of the economy and the fields of research in which they work. Data show that, although there has been an increase in the gender balance **among university graduates** and a rising level in women's educational qualifications, female researchers are still underrepresented in countries around the world.

This has been characterized as a "leaky pipeline" phenomenon, whereby an increase in the number of women graduates does not lead to an increase in the proportion of women researchers.² Data also show that worldwide, female researchers work chiefly in the academic and government sectors, while male researchers work mainly in the private sector. This is the case even in countries with high shares of women researchers (see the case of the Philippines, described below). Women are underrepresented across all areas of research, including natural sciences, engineering and technology, medical sciences, agricultural sciences, social sciences and humanities, and their underrepresentation is the most pronounced in the fields of engineering and technology.³

Country in focus: the Philippines

Even in countries with high shares of women researchers, such as the Philippines, more women work in the academic and government sectors than in the private sector, where men dominate. The proportion of women working in R&D pertaining to the natural sciences and engineering is significantly smaller in comparison to their representation in research in the field of social sciences and humanities (see figure III).

Figure III: Share of women researchers in the Philippines by sector and field of research: 2013 (Percentage)



Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics database (<http://uis.unesco.org/>) (accessed February 2020).

Note: Figure III displays research activities classified into six broad fields of R&D and four major economic sectors. The first four research fields are grouped as natural sciences and engineering and include: natural sciences; engineering and technology; medical and health sciences; and agricultural sciences. The other two are categorized as social sciences and humanities. Data are based on headcounts.

Sources

- Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), *Frascati Manual 2015: Guidelines for Collecting and Reporting Data on Research and Experimental Development*, Paris, 2015
- Jensen, K. S. H., *Women Working in Science, Engineering and Technology, Higher Education and Industry (A Literature Review)*, IRIS (Informatics Research Institute), Salford University, Manchester, 2005.

About the data

Definitions

- **Research and development (R&D):** comprises creative and systematic work undertaken in order to increase the stock of knowledge and devise new applications of available knowledge;⁴ it is aimed at new findings based on original concepts (and their interpretation) or hypotheses.
- **Researchers who work in the area of R&D:** Researchers are engaged in the conception or creation of new knowledge. They conduct research and improve or develop concepts, theories, models, techniques, instrumentation, software or operational methods.⁵
- **Proportion of female researchers:** Number of female researchers expressed as a percentage of the total number of researchers (male and female).

Coverage

Researchers in countries worldwide based on headcounts, that is, the total number of researchers who are mainly or partially engaged in R&D.

Availability

Regional averages are available for all regional groupings under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)⁶ except Oceania, excluding Australia and New Zealand, Australia and New Zealand and Northern America and for 148 countries (latest available for the period 1996–2018).⁷

Footnotes

1. United Nations, Transforming our World: 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, (General Assembly resolution 70/1), adopted in October 2015.
2. Jensen, K. S. H., Women Working in Science, Engineering and Technology, Higher Education and Industry (A Literature Review), IRIS (Informatics Research Institute), Salford University, Manchester, 2005.
3. European Union, She Figures 2015 - Gender in Research and Innovation, Luxembourg, 2016.
4. Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Frascati Manual 2015: Guidelines for Collecting and Reporting Data on Research and Experimental Development, Paris, 2015.
5. Ibid.
6. Regional groupings under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
7. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), UNESCO Institute for Statistics database. (accessed February 2020)

Gross enrolment ratio in tertiary education



Key points

- Globally, tertiary education has expanded substantially over the past three decades for both women and men: from 13% to 41% for women and from 14% to 36% for men.
- Progress in tertiary education shows large regional disparities; progress has been fastest in Eastern Asia and Australia and New Zealand and slowest in sub-Saharan Africa; Central Asia was the only region in the world to experience stagnation.
- Gender disparities in tertiary education have shifted in favour of females worldwide, and in most regions, over the past three decades.
- As of 2018, gender disparities continued to favour men in sub-Saharan Africa, the region hosting the majority of countries reporting a rate of female enrolment in tertiary education at below 10%.

Background

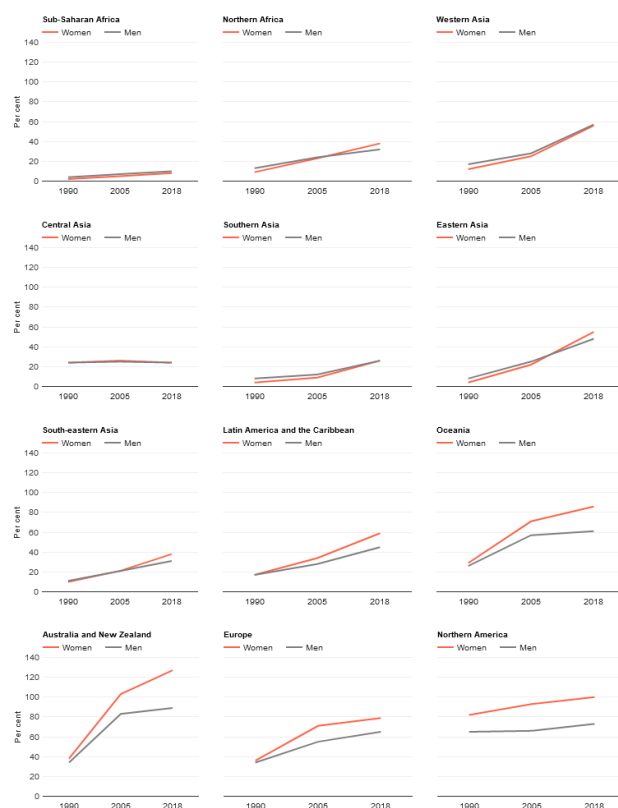
Tertiary education builds on secondary education and imparts knowledge and skills as well as qualifications in specialized fields. It also brings extensive social and private benefits. At the individual level, the outcomes for people pursuing and completing a tertiary education are linked to better employment opportunities and higher levels of earning. At the societal level, tertiary education graduates contribute to human capital, which is essential for economic development, productivity growth, innovation and the healthy functioning of government and civil society.¹

Current situation

Enrolment in tertiary education throughout the world has expanded substantially over the past three decades both for women and men; there has been a three-fold increase in the participation of women in tertiary education, and the participation has doubled for men.

Participation in tertiary education expanded significantly during the period 1990–2018. As measured by the tertiary gross enrolment ratio (GER), participation rose from 13% to 41% for women and from 14% to 36% for men (see figure I). The substantial progress achieved reflects the steady expansion of education systems across the world, as well as the increasing demand for a highly skilled labour force.

Figure I: Tertiary gross enrolment ratios by region and sex: 1990, 2005 and 2018
(Percentage)



Source: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), UNESCO Institute for Statistics database (<http://uis.unesco.org/>) (accessed April 2020).

Note: Regions are listed in ascending order of the tertiary gross enrolment ratio (GER) for women in 2018.

Participation in tertiary education shows large regional disparities

Progress has been fastest in Eastern Asia and Australia and New Zealand and slowest in sub-Saharan Africa; Central Asia was the only region in the world to experience stagnation.

Enrolment in tertiary education, as measured by gross enrolment ratios, shows large regional disparities. Ratios are high for both women and men in regions where participation has historically been at high levels: Northern America, Europe, Australia and New Zealand, Latin America and the Caribbean, Eastern Asia and Western Asia are the global leaders in terms of enrolment in tertiary education.

During the period 1990–2018, enrolment in tertiary education in Northern America expanded from 65% to 73% for men and from 82% to 100% for women. In Europe, over the same time period, men's enrolment expanded from 34% to 65% and women's enrolment from 36% to 79%. In Latin America and the Caribbean, gross enrolment ratios more than doubled for men and more than tripled for women. In terms of progress since 1990, in countries in Eastern Asia there was a six-fold increase in enrolment in tertiary education for men and a thirteen-fold gain for women: growth in tertiary enrolment in this region has been particularly remarkable since 2000. Similarly, in Western Asia enrolment ratios nearly tripled for men and increased almost five times for women.

Despite this significant expansion of enrolment in tertiary education in a number of regions, it has remained low in others. In sub-Saharan Africa, participation rose only slightly, from 4% to 10% for men and from 2% to 8% for women over the period 1990–2018. Similarly, in countries in Southern Asia, gross enrolment ratios for 2018 were lower than global averages (26% for both

men and women). Countries in Northern Africa and South-Eastern Asia also recorded enrolment in tertiary education below the global averages for both women and men. Over the period 1990–2018, Central Asia, where gross enrolment ratios have remained in the mid 20% range, for both women and men, was the only region in the world to experience stagnation in participation in tertiary education.

Gender disparities at the tertiary level favour women over men in most regions

Gender disparities in tertiary education shifted from a male to a female advantage throughout the world, and in most regions, during the period 1990–2018 (see figure I). In 1990, men's participation was slightly higher than that of women's (at 14% for men and 13% for women). Since then, the enrolment of women has been increasing worldwide at a faster rate than that for men, and by the late 1990s the enrolment ratios of men and women reached **parity**, remaining equal until the early 2000s. The global participation of women has since exceeded that of men, shifting gender disparity from a male to a female advantage. By 2018, the gross enrolment ratios for women and men stood at 41% and 36%, respectively, reflecting a gender disparity in favour of women.

Women in sub-Saharan Africa and Western Asia remain at a disadvantage

While women are more represented than men in tertiary education in most regions of the world, the situation is the opposite in sub-Saharan Africa (where the gross enrolment ratio in 2018 was 8% for women and 10% for men). National level data show that the majority of countries with female enrolment ratios of less than 10% are located in sub-Saharan Africa (see figure II), and a few in Western Asia (Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Yemen). While enrolment in tertiary education has historically been low in these regions for both women and men, gender disparities continue to favour men in most countries in sub-Saharan Africa and Western Asia.

Methodological challenges: measuring participation in tertiary education

Unlike primary and secondary education, where the target age groups consist of the official school-age populations, the notion of a target population is not easily applied to tertiary education as there are usually no official ages for attendance. Most tertiary education systems offer a wide range of programmes and pathways, allowing students to achieve a degree in two years or to complete an advanced research degree in seven or eight years. In the light of this variation, the gross enrolment ratio for tertiary education is calculated based on a standard age range of five years, which begins at the end of secondary education.

The ratio is computed as the total enrolment in tertiary education, regardless of age, expressed as a percentage of the target population made up of the five-year age group following graduation from secondary school. While the gross enrolment ratio in tertiary education is useful for computing the volume of participation in tertiary programmes, it is important to note that there are limitations when comparing the actual population coverage across countries owing to: differences in the duration of tertiary education programmes; the enrolment of large numbers of women and men outside the target age group; and high drop-out rates and frequent re-enrolments.

Source

- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), UNESCO Institute for Statistics, *Global Education Digest 2009: Comparing Education Statistics Across the World*, Montreal, 2009.

About the data

Definitions

- **Gross enrolment ratio (GER) in tertiary education:** Number of students enrolled in tertiary education, regardless of age, expressed as a percentage of the population in the five-year age group starting from the official secondary school graduation age. There are limitations when comparing the actual population coverage across countries due to: the diversity in the duration of tertiary programmes; the enrolment of large numbers of women and men outside the target age group; and high drop-out rates and frequent re-enrolments.

Coverage

Women and men in tertiary education.

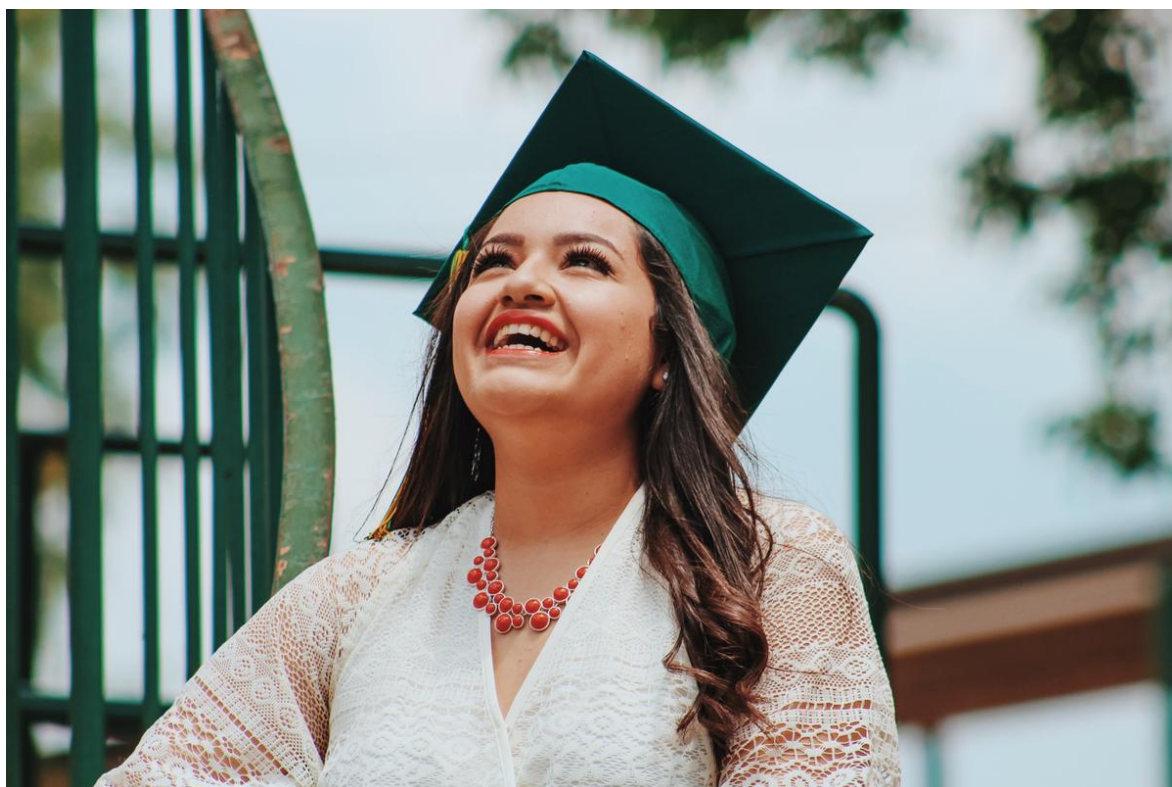
Availability

Data are available for all regional groupings under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)² and for 189 countries for the period 1990–2018 (latest available).³

Footnotes

1. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), UNESCO Institute for Statistics, Global Education Digest 2009: Comparing Education Statistics Across the World, Montreal, 2004. (2009)
2. Regional groupings under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
3. Data source: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Institute for Statistics database. (accessed April 2020).

Mexico: school attendance among youth aged 15-24



Key points

- The participation in formal education of both young women and men aged 15–24 has increased steadily in Mexico since 1996.
- The national gender gap, which historically has been slightly to the disadvantage of young women, narrowed over the period 1996–2019; the gender gap has been reversed, with a slightly higher proportion of young women than young men aged 15–19 attending school.
- Participation of young women and men in formal education differs by state within the United Mexican States. While in many states gender parity has been achieved, in some states, such as Chiapas and Hidalgo, the gender gap in favour of young men persists, in others, such as Jalisco and Chihuahua, the gender gap has reversed, leaving men at a disadvantage.
- The school attendance rate of young women and men is affected by place of residence, with the gap between urban and rural areas showing a difference of more than 15 percentage points.
- Socioeconomic status has an impact on participation in formal education, with more young women and men in higher socioeconomic strata attending school than their counterparts in lower socioeconomic strata.

Background

Education fosters better opportunities for individuals, advances progress in terms of collective well-being and promotes improved overall levels of social development. Educational achievement directly affects the ability of young women and men to find decent work and to improve their living conditions.¹

Current situation

The proportion of young people aged 15–24 in Mexico currently attending school is significantly greater than that recorded for previous generations. “The changes experienced in social, cultural, economic, political and demographic orders have opened new and greater opportunities for young people”.² Among young women, in particular, there has been a significant increase in rates of school attendance.

The greater participation of young women aged 15–24 in formal education (which generally corresponds to upper secondary education and higher education),³ is directly related to improved educational options and increased awareness of the opportunities education offers, including access to decent jobs in the labour market.

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action,⁴ adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995, prompted many countries, including Mexico, to examine the status of women in critical areas including education, health, employment and political participation.⁵ In the educational field, women in Mexico were disadvantaged in different aspects, evidencing higher levels of illiteracy, lower school participation rates and a notable gender gap at higher levels of education. Moreover, significant gender biases were reported in both upper and higher secondary education, with women often restricted to so-called feminine fields of study.

In response, the National Programme for Women 1995–2000 proposed “to guarantee the access and enrolment of women at all levels and modalities of the education system”, with priority given to ensuring the equality of educational opportunities at all levels of the school system, as well as reducing inequalities between women and men regarding access to school and educational outcomes.⁶

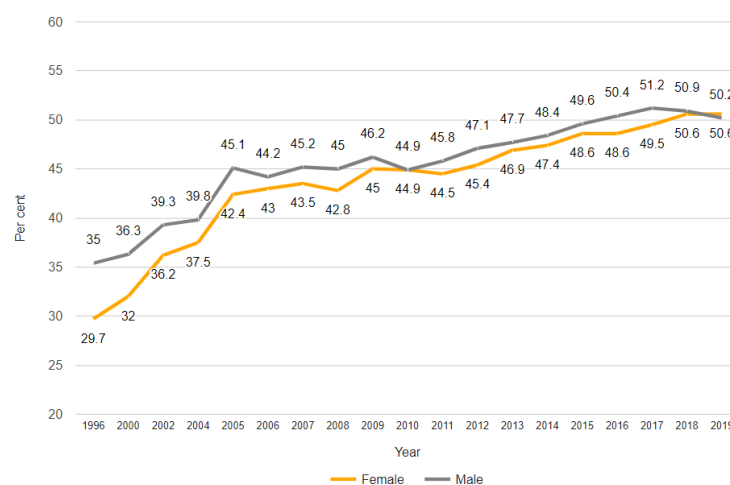
The participation of young women and men in formal education has increased steadily over the period 1996–2019, and the gender gap has narrowed over the same period

The percentages of young women and men in formal education during the period 1996–2019 are presented in figure I. School attendance at ages 15–24 assumes enrolment either in upper secondary education⁷ (ages 15–17), which, since 9 February 2012, has been mandatory in Mexico, or in higher education (ages 18–24).

At the national level, the school attendance rate for the population aged 15–24 has increased over recent decades.⁸ In 1996 only 32.5% of young people in that age range was in school: the attendance rate for young women was 29.7% and for young men it was 35.4%, revealing a gap between women and men of 6 percentage points. By 2002, school attendance had increased by 5 percentage points, to 37.7%, and the gap between women and men had been reduced to 3 percentage points (36.2% for women and 39.3% for men).

In 2005, the school attendance rate for young women and men aged 15–24 was 43.7% and by 2019 it had increased to 50.4%, an increase of 6.7 percentage points over a period of 14 years. In 2019, young women's attendance rate was 50.6% and men's rate was 50.2%, showing a virtual elimination of the gender gap in formal education at the national level.

Figure I: School attendance rate of young women and men aged 15–24: 1996–2019 (Percentage)

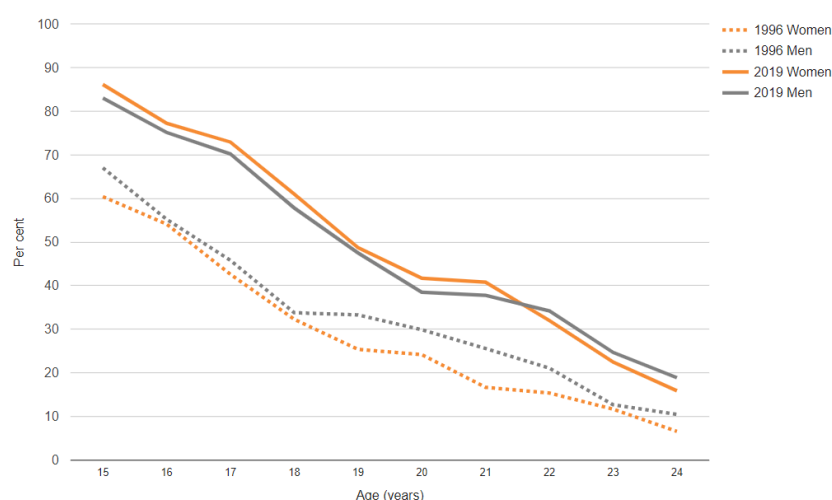


Source: National Institute of Statistics, Geography and Informatics (INEGI), National Survey of Household Income and Expenditure (ENIGH), 1996–2004; INEGI, National Survey of Occupation and Employment (ENOE), 2005–2019.

A steady increase in participation in formal education is observed for both young women and men; the gender gap, which was moderately to the disadvantage of young women, has narrowed over the period 1996–2019

When analysing the school attendance rate by single year of age for 1996 and 2019 (see figure II), it is evident that the school attendance rate for both young women and men increased significantly over the period 1996–2019. In particular, attendance of young women aged 15–19 and at age 21 increased by more than 20 percentage points. Over the same period, the gender gap, which was moderately to the disadvantage of young women in 1996, narrowed, and appears to be reversing among young women and men aged 15–21, with a slightly higher participation rate among young women than men in what would be secondary education. For the group aged 22–24, there is a slightly higher participation rate of young men than women in what would be upper secondary or post-secondary education.

Figure II: School attendance rate among young women and men aged 15–24, by age: 1996 and 2019 (Percentage)



Source: INEGI, National Survey of Household Income and Expenditure (ENIGH) 1996; and INEGI, National Survey of Occupation and Employment (ENOE) 2019.

Participation of young women and men in formal education differs by state within the United Mexican States. While in many states gender parity has been achieved, in some, such as Hidalgo and Chiapas, a gender gap in favour of men persists. In other states, such as Jalisco and Chihuahua, the gender gap has reversed, leaving men at a disadvantage

Participation in the formal education of young people aged 15–24 reveals gender gaps when looking at the data by state (see figure III).

Closure of the gender gap in school participation has not been even across all states. The 2019 data presented by the states of Chiapas, Guerrero, Hidalgo, Oaxaca, San Luis Potosi, Tabasco and Veracruz showed a 4 and 5 percentage point difference in school participation to the disadvantage of women. In other states, including Chihuahua, Guanajuato, Jalisco, Puebla, Queretaro and Yucatan, between 4 and 8 percentage points differences in school participation were reported to the disadvantage of young men. Since 2005 some states, including Durango, Nayarit, Sinaloa and Sonora, showed equal or greater levels of school attendance among women.

The southern region of the country still displays the greatest differences in opportunities for and accessibility to formal education for women, in particular in Chiapas, Guerrero and Hidalgo. In the central and northern states of the country, the gap is to the disadvantage of men, with a lower rate of school attendance of up to almost 8 percentage points in states such as Chihuahua and Jalisco, a situation that also causes concern and calls for attention.

Figure III: Gender gaps in school attendance rates among the population aged 15–24 by state: 2019



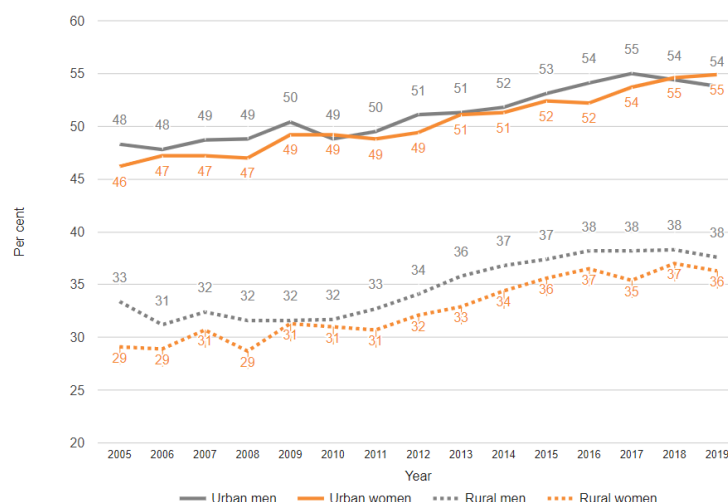
Place of residence affects the participation of young women and men in school, with a gap in attendance of young people in urban and rural areas of more than 15 percentage points

It is well known that educational opportunities differ depending on place of residence. The inequalities between urban and rural areas are significant in terms of participation in education for young women and men, with a consistent difference of more than 15 percentage points in the rate of school attendance reported since 2005 (see figure IV).

In 2005, urban locations reported school attendance among men aged 15–24 at 48%, and at 54% in 2019, while the school attendance for women was 46% in 2005 and 55% in 2019. As of 2019, the gender gap in school participation in urban locations had been virtually closed (registering a gender gap of only one percentage point).

The situation in rural locations was different, with a gender gap in 2005 of four percentage points against women. While that differential remained for a number of years, by 2019 it had been reduced to close to only one percentage point. It is important to highlight the moderate increase in school attendance among rural women, from 29% in 2005 and to 36% in 2019.

Figure IV: School attendance rate of young women and men aged 15–24 by sex and rural/urban residence: 2005–2019 (Percentage)



Source: INEGI, National Survey of Occupation and Employment (ENOE) 2005 and 2019.

Socioeconomic status has impact on participation in formal education, with young women and men in higher socioeconomic strata participating in school at relatively higher attendance rates than their counterparts in lower socioeconomic strata

While there are many factors that prevent the access and enrolment of young women and men in formal education, the economic aspect is one of the most relevant. Socioeconomic status as well as place of residence have a significant effect on school enrolment and participation. In particular, in locations with limited physical access to upper and upper middle level schools, students with access to the Internet and advanced information and communication technologies (ICT) are able to access education by different modalities,⁹ and students at lower socioeconomic strata, without such access, are left at a disadvantage.

Evidence shows that, in 2019, the attendance rate of both young women and men increases with their socioeconomic level, with young women and men aged 15–24 in upper socioeconomic strata attending school at relatively higher rates than their less advantaged counterparts. This applies regardless of urban or rural residence or age group (15–19 or 20–24). Young women and men aged 15–19 in upper socioeconomic strata living in rural areas had higher levels of attendance than their urban counterparts, and the same was observed for young women aged 20–24.

About the data

Definitions

The indicator measures the percentage of youth aged 15–24 attending school at any educational level in the formal education system during the reference period.

Coverage

Young women and men aged 15–24.

Availability

Data are available by age and sex at the national level as well as by state within the United Mexican States, urban/rural residence and socioeconomic status for the period 1996–2019. The National Survey of Occupation and Employment (ENOE),¹⁰ the labour force survey carried out by the National Institute of Statistics, Geography and Informatics (INEGI), is the source of data for the period 2005–2019, while data on school attendance from the INEGI National Survey of Household Income and Expenditure (ENIGH)¹¹ has been used to complement the time-series data for the period 1996–2004.

Footnotes

1. INEGI, *Mujeres y hombres en México 2019*, Mexico City, 2019 .
2. Camarena, C., Rosa María, "Los jóvenes y la educación: Situación actual y cambios intergeneracionales", *Papeles de la Población*, vol. 6, No. 26, October-December 2000, Autonomous University of Mexico State .
3. Corresponds to the following levels of the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED): ISCED level 3 (upper secondary education), ISCED level 5 (short-cycle tertiary education), ISCED level 6 (Bachelor's or equivalent level), ISCED level 7 (Master's or equivalent level), and, in some cases, ISCED level 8 (Doctoral or equivalent level).
4. Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4–15 September 1995 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annexes I and II .
5. Sandoval, Etelvina and Tarrés, María Luisa, "Mujer y educación en México, 1980–1990", *Revista Latinoamericana de Estudios Educativos* (México), vol. XXVI, No. 3, 1995 .
6. National Programme for Women 1995–2000 (Programa Nacional de la Mujer 1995–2000) (Diario Oficial de la Federación: 21/08/1996) .
7. Higher secondary education includes the levels of baccalaureate, professional baccalaureate and its equivalent and professional education that does not require a baccalaureate or its equivalent. It is organized through a common curricular framework at the national level that guarantees the recognition of studies among the options offered (article 44 of the General Education Law, Diario Oficial de la Federación, September 2019).
8. Based on information from INEGI, the National Survey of Household Income and Expenditure (ENIGH) and the National Survey of Occupation and Employment (ENOE).
9. National Council for the Evaluation of Social Development Policy (Consejo Nacional de Evaluación de la Política de Desarrollo Social (CONEVAL)), *Estudio Diagnóstico del Derecho a la Educación 2018*, Mexico City, 2018 .
10. National Institute of Statistics, Geography and Informatics (INEGI), *National Survey of Occupation and Employment* .
11. INEGI,

Schools providing life skills-based HIV and sexuality education



Key points

- Life skills-based HIV and sexuality education is provided at the three levels of education in schools worldwide: it is provided in all schools at the upper secondary level in 60% of countries with data, at the lower secondary level in 66% of countries and at the primary education level in 62% of countries with data.
- There is no appreciable difference in the provision of life skills-based HIV and sexuality education programmes at the upper secondary school level in public and private schools.
- Programmes are needed outside schools to reach youth the most at risk — young people who are no longer participating in education — as well as to reach youth in places where teaching about sexuality and HIV and AIDS in school is highly sensitive or forbidden.

Background

The provision of life skills-based HIV and sexuality education in schools equips children and young people with the knowledge and information that lead to responsible and healthy sexual behaviour. Comprehensive sexuality education promotes improved sexual and reproductive health-related outcomes, including reduction in HIV infection and teenage pregnancy rates, thus expanding educational opportunities for young women.¹ This kind of education also helps students to develop critical thinking, communication and decision-making skills, empowering them to take responsibility and control their actions and to become healthy, responsible, productive citizens. Successful programmes adopt interactive, responsive and participatory methods that challenge young people to find new ways of relating to one another. Such programmes should have a planned and sequenced curriculum across primary and secondary schools, incrementally adjusted to the age, stage and situation of the learner.²

Current situation

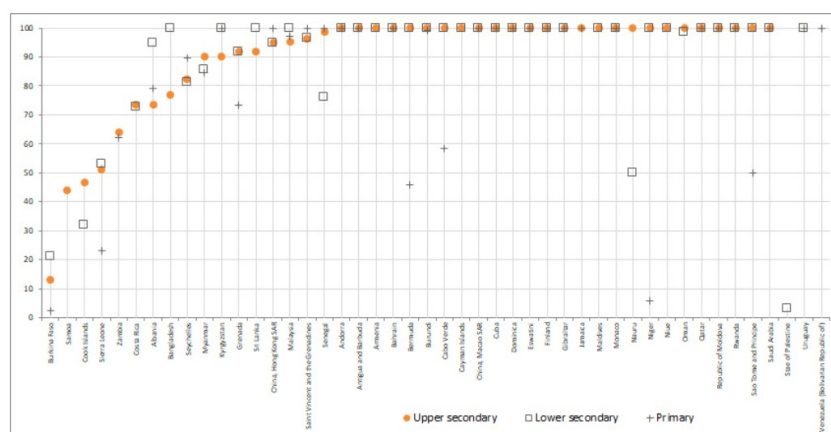
Availability of life skills-based HIV and sexuality education

At the upper secondary level, 60% of countries with data (26 out of 43 countries and territories) provided life skills-based HIV and sexuality education at all schools, both public and private during the period 2015–2019 (see figure). These countries and territories represent different regional groupings: sub-Saharan Africa (Burundi, Cabo Verde, Eswatini, Niger, Rwanda and Sao Tome and Principe); Europe and Northern America (Andorra, Bermuda, Finland, Gibraltar, Monaco and the Republic of Moldova); the Caribbean (Antigua and Barbuda, Cayman Islands, Cuba, Dominica and Jamaica); and Western Asia (Bahrain, Oman, Qatar and Saudi Arabia).

At the lower secondary level, out of 42 countries with data, two out of three provided life skills-based HIV and sexuality education at all schools (see figure).

Data availability on the provision of life skills-based HIV and sexuality education at the primary education level is limited, reflecting the fact that relatively few countries provide such programmes at that level, as opposed to the lower and upper secondary levels. Data available for 34 countries show that in 21 countries (62%) all schools provided age-appropriate sexuality education programmes at the primary education level.

Figure: Percentage of schools providing life skills-based HIV and sexuality education, by country, territory and education level: 2013–2019 (latest available)



Source: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), UNESCO Institute for Statistics database (accessed in May 2020) (<http://uis.unesco.org/>).

Note: Data are available for 34 countries at the primary level; for 42 countries at the lower secondary level; and for 43 countries at the upper secondary level: data are sorted by values for upper secondary level.

Life skills-based HIV and sexuality education is provided in both public and private schools

While more data are available for public schools than for private schools at the upper secondary level, with data available for both in the same country, there is no appreciable difference in the provision of life skills-based HIV and sexuality education. In 22 countries among the 36 with data for both public and private schools, all schools, regardless of whether they were private or public, taught life skills-based HIV and sexuality education.

Programmes providing life skills education are also needed outside schools to reach youth no longer in school

School-based programmes do not reach youth most at risk: those no longer in school. Furthermore, programmes outside school may be the only means of imparting knowledge and life skills education to young people in places where **teaching about sexuality and HIV and AIDS** in school is highly sensitive or forbidden. Life skills education outside school is likely to be most effective when it complements other services targeting young people. Voluntary and anonymous participation offered by youth drop-in centres can enhance the reach and effectiveness of such programmes.

Moreover, whether life skills-based HIV and sexuality education is offered inside or outside a formal educational setting, it needs to reflect the fact that girls and boys have different needs and vulnerabilities. Single gender groups, with a teacher or facilitator of the same gender, can foster more open communication on sensitive issues. For example, as part of the “Sister 2 Sister” initiative in Malawi, “big sisters” (older young women) share their knowledge and life-skills experiences with young women aged 15–19. Overall, the programme has led to increased knowledge in the areas of sexuality, HIV, condom use, multiple and concurrent partners, age-disparate relationships and health-seeking behaviours, and there is evidence that such knowledge is sustained over time.³

About the data

Definitions

- **Percentage of schools that provide life skills-based HIV and sexuality education** : Number of schools at a given level of education (primary, lower secondary and upper secondary education) providing such skills and education expressed as a percentage of all schools at that level of education. The indicator measures key life skills necessary to ensure a safe and effective learning environment for all students.

Coverage

Schools at the primary, lower secondary and upper secondary education levels.

Availability

Data are available for 34 countries at the primary level, 42 countries at the lower secondary level and 43 countries at the upper secondary levels.⁴ Countries are organized by regional groupings under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) indicator framework.⁵

Footnotes

1. UNESCO, *Global education monitoring report 2019 – Gender report: Building bridges for gender equality*, Paris, 2019 .
2. Ibid.
3. Bakaroudis, M., "Sister 2 Sister Initiative: Life Skills PLUS Extracurricular Peer Educator Training Package for Young Women 15–19 Years Old in Malawi", Lilongwe, 2011 (debrief presentation of consultancy mission and summary of proof of concept validation study, (unpublished.)
4. Data are from [United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization \(UNESCO\), UNESCO Institute for Statistics database \(accessed in May 2020\)](#).
5. [United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs \(UNDESA\), Statistical Division, regional groupings under the Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\) indicator framework](#) .

Education

Lifelong learning



Key points

- As of 2019, slightly more women (12%) than men (10%) participated in adult education in the member States of the European Union, only slightly higher than the corresponding figures for 2010.
- Adults with already high levels of education participated in adult learning at a higher rate than those with lower educational attainment.
- Gender gaps in participation rates were significant in the group with tertiary education, while at lower levels of educational attainment the gender gap was smaller or insignificant.
- Employed people are more likely to participate in adult education and training than unemployed people or those who are economically inactive.

Background

Adult education is a core component of lifelong learning. The United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) defines adult education as education specifically targeting adults to improve their technical or professional qualifications, further develop their abilities or enrich their knowledge, with the purpose of completing a level of formal education, acquiring knowledge, skills and competencies in a new field or refreshing or updating their knowledge in a particular field.¹

Adult learning comprises all forms of education and learning that aim to ensure that adults continue to participate in their societies and the world of work. Adult learning is crucial in maintaining good health, remaining active in the community and staying active in all aspects of society, as well as for improving and developing skills, adapting to technical developments, advancing careers or returning to the labour market.² Adult education programmes are extremely diverse³ and differ in terms of objectives, focus, target groups, content, pedagogy and scale. In more developed countries, adult education tends to be more focused on the enhancement of skills, while in the less developed countries the emphasis is more on literacy programmes and the completion of basic education. Moreover, providers of adult education programmes are also diverse, including governments, non-governmental organizations, local communities and employers.

The indicator on adult participation in learning contributes to the monitoring of progress towards Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4, which seeks to ensure that people have access to inclusive and equitable quality education through all stages of life. In addition to promoting formal qualifications, SDG 4 also aims to increase the number of youths and adults with relevant skills for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship.

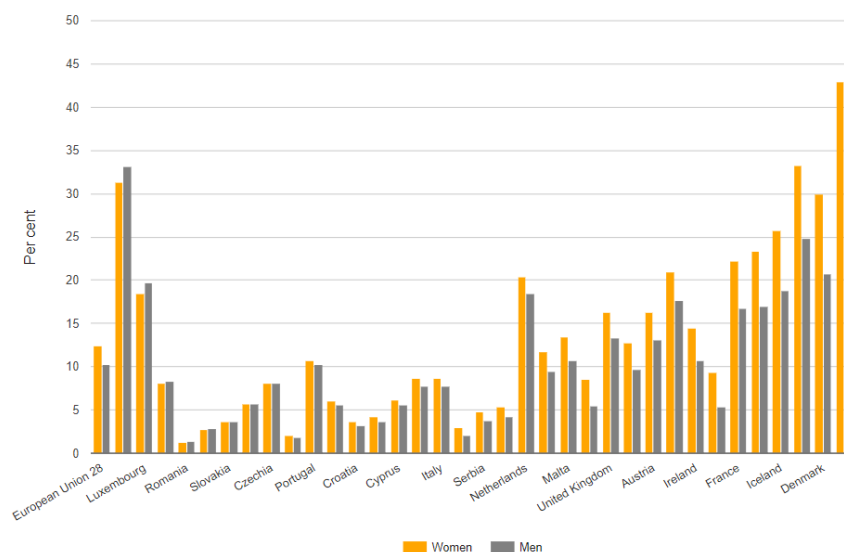
Current situation

Slightly more women than men participate in adult education in member States of the European Union

Data for the 28 countries that took part in the 2019 European Union Labour Force Survey show that the average participation rate in adult education among people aged 25–64, regardless of the respondent's level of education and labour force status, stood at 12% for women and 10% for men in 2019 (see figure I). Those figures

were only slightly higher than the corresponding figures for 2010. Participation in adult education and training varied considerably across countries. Sweden had the highest participation rate (43% of women and 26% of men), while in Romania only about 1% of women and men were engaged in adult education. In most countries, women were more likely to participate in learning activities than men, with the exception of Germany, Luxembourg, North Macedonia, Romania and Switzerland, although the sex differential in participation rates in those countries was small.

Figure I: Rates of participation in adult education and training in member States of the European Union by sex: 2019 (Percentage)

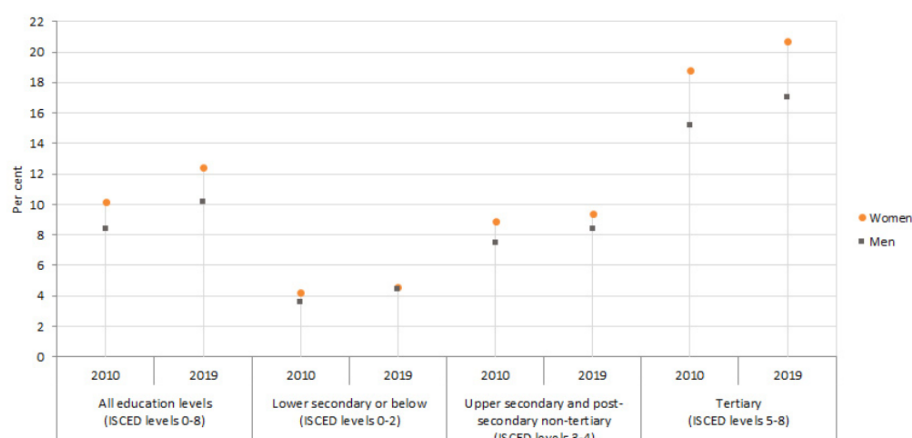


Source: Eurostat database, 2020 (accessed on 5 June 2020) (<http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database>).

Adults with high levels of education participate in adult learning at a higher rate than those with lower levels of educational attainment: the gender gap is largest at the highest levels of educational attainment

Data on participation in adult education according to educational attainment indicate that adults with already high levels of education participate at a higher rate, while those with lower levels participate at a lower rate (see figure II): 21% of adult women and 17% of adult men who had completed tertiary education participated in lifelong learning in 2019, while among those who had a medium level of qualification as their highest educational attainment (upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary) the rate was 9% for women and 8% for men. For those who had attained lower secondary level at most, the participation rate was below 5% for both women and men. There are a number of reasons for this situation, including, in particular, that the demand for training might be higher among individuals with higher levels of education because they already have the skills that facilitate learning and are more likely to be in jobs that demand ongoing training. Regardless of the educational level, in most countries, women's participation rates were higher than those of men. Gaps between women's and men's participation rates were significant among individuals with tertiary education. At lower educational attainment levels, gaps in participation in adult education between women and men were smaller or insignificant.

Figure II: Rates of participation in adult education and training in member States of the European Union by sex and level of educational attainment: 2010 and 2019



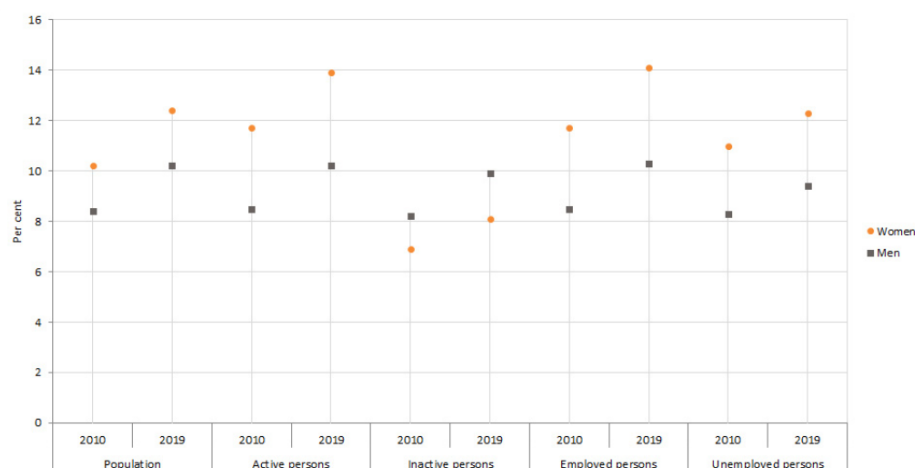
Source: Eurostat database, 2020 (accessed on 5 June 2020) (<http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database>).

Note: Educational levels are presented as classified in the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED). The annual European Union Labour Force Survey collects statistics on lifelong learning for the population aged 25–64. The reference period for participation is four weeks prior to the 2019 survey (<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/microdata/european-union-labour-force-survey>).

Employed people are more likely to participate in adult education than those who are unemployed or economically inactive

Data on labour status also show disparities: employed people are more likely to participate in adult education and training than those who are unemployed or economically inactive (see figure III). Participation rates for employed people in 2019 were 14% for women and 10% for men, compared with 12% for women and 9% for men among unemployed people and 8% for women and 10% for men among those who were economically inactive.

Figure III: Rates of participation in adult education and training in member States of the European Union by sex and labour status: 2010 and 2019



Source: Eurostat database, 2020 (accessed on 5 June 2020) (<http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database>).

Note: The annual European Union Labour Force Survey collects statistics on lifelong learning for the population aged 25–64. The reference period for participation is four weeks prior to the 2019 survey (<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/microdata/european-union-labour-force-survey>).

Sources

- United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, UNESCO Recommendation on Adult Learning and Education 2015, France, 2016 .
- UNESCO, UNESCO Institute for Statistics, UIS glossary (accessed in May 2020) .
- UNESCO et al., Education 2030: Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action for the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 4, Paris, 2016 .

About the data

Definition

- **Adult participation in learning:** Indicator that measures the share of the population aged 25–64 who received formal or non-formal education and training in the four weeks preceding the 2019 European Union Labour Force Survey.⁴ Adult learning covers both general and vocational formal and non-formal learning activities. Adult learning refers to learning activities that take place after the end of initial (or full-time) education.

Coverage

Women and men aged 25–64.

Availability

Data availability on lifelong learning, including adult education, is limited due to large variations in adult learning programmes and the lack of a common understanding about which categories of learning activities should be included. Data presented correspond to the 28 member States of the European Union that took part in the European Union Labour Force Survey in 2019.⁵

Footnotes

1. [United Nations, Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization \(UNESCO\), UNESCO Institute for Statistics, UIS glossary](#). (accessed in May 2020)
2. Eurostat metadata for adult participation in learning.
3. Adult education may encompass formal and non-formal education and training, including: continuing education; recurrent education; equivalency or second chance education; professional development; literacy and post-literacy programmes; adult basic education; information and communication technologies (ICT) training; religious, cultural and political education; technical, vocational and entrepreneurship education and training; income-generation programmes; and other programmes focusing on life skills, livelihoods and community development.
4. The annual [European Union Labour Force Survey](#) provides results for the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) indicator on lifelong learning (defined as the participation of people aged 25–64 in education and training), which is used for regular policy monitoring in the European Union. The reference period for participation in education and training is the four weeks prior to the 2019 survey.
5. Ibid.

Gender parity index of the gross enrolment ratios in primary, secondary and tertiary education



Key points

- At the global level, girls and boys are equally likely to be enrolled in primary education, although fewer girls than boys participate in primary education in Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand) and Western Asia, and to a minor extent in sub-Saharan Africa; in Southern Asia more girls than boys participate in primary education.
- There has been substantial progress towards gender parity in regions with the widest gender disparities in favour of boys in 1990. Southern Asia, in particular, has recorded a significant increase in GPI (from 0.75 to 1.07).
- The gender gap in secondary education has closed in most regions over the period 1990–2018, although girls are still less likely than boys to enrol in secondary school in sub-Saharan Africa, Western Asia and Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand).
- Gender disparities at the secondary level of education are wider than those at the primary level.
- Gender disparities in tertiary education have shifted from a male to a female advantage across the world and in most regions over the period 1990–2018.

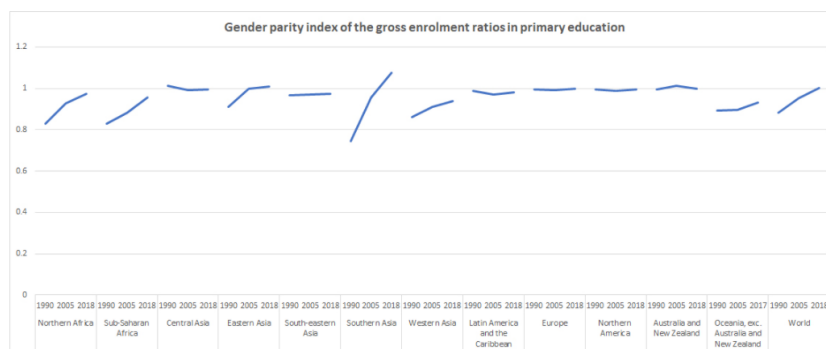
Gender parity index of gross enrolment ratios in primary education

Gender parity in primary education has been reached globally, although regional disparities persist

The global GPI of gross enrolment ratios (GER) in primary education was 1.00 in 2018, implying that, at the global level, girls and boys were equally likely to participate in primary education. This global average masks disparities among regions, however (see figure I).

As of 2018: (a) in Northern America and Europe, Australia and New Zealand, Northern Africa, Central Asia, Eastern Asia, South-Eastern Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean the GPI for each region was within the range of parity; (b) in sub-Saharan Africa (where the GPI was 0.96), Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand) (0.93) and Western Asia (0.94), the GPI value was lower than the range of parity; and (c) in Southern Asia the GPI fell outside the range of parity (1.07), meaning that girls were more likely than boys to participate in primary education.

Figure I: Gender parity index of gross enrolment ratios in primary education globally and by region: 1990, 2005 and 2018



Source: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), UNESCO Institute for Statistics database (accessed April 2020) (<http://data.uis.unesco.org/>).

Note: Gender parity is considered to have been attained when the GPI lies between 0.97 and 1.03.

Substantial progress towards gender parity occurred in those regions where boys had once vastly outnumbered girls in primary education

Since 1990, there has been a significant shift towards greater gender parity in primary education (see figure I). The global GPI of primary gross enrolment ratios rose from 0.88 in 1990 to 1.00 in 2018. GPI values improved substantially, particularly in Northern Africa (from 0.83 to 0.97), sub-Saharan Africa (from 0.83 to 0.96) and Southern Asia (from 0.75 to 1.07), all regions with the widest disparities in GPI in 1990. Remarkable gains were also registered in Eastern Asia over the period since 1990, with its regional GPI reaching a value of 1.00 in 2005, and parity has remained steady until the present time. Australia and New Zealand and countries in Northern America and Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean and Central Asia and South-Eastern Asia maintained gender parity in primary education throughout the period 1990–2018.

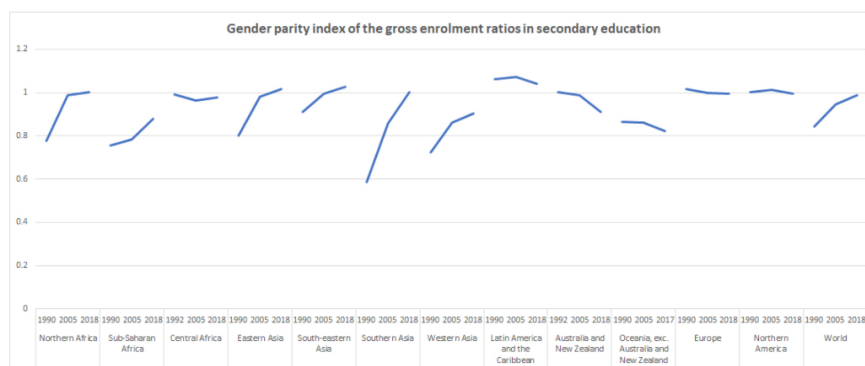
Gender parity index of the gross enrolment ratios in secondary education

The gender gap in secondary education has closed in most regions

The gender gap in the global gross enrolment ratios for girls and boys in **secondary education** has narrowed steadily during the period 1990–2018. The GPI based on gross enrolment ratios in secondary education rose from a value of 0.84 in 1990 to 0.99 in 2018, confirming that the gender gap at the secondary level of education has closed at the global level (see figure II).

Despite the gains made over the past three decades, girls are still less likely than boys to enrol in secondary school in sub-Saharan Africa (where GPI was 0.88 in 2018), Western Asia (0.90) and Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand) (0.82), all regions with low overall enrolment ratios for both girls and boys. In Southern Asia, where the GPI was low in 1990 (0.59), the gender gap has been closed at the fastest rate over the period 1990–2018 (the GPI in 2018 was 1.00). In regions with higher overall secondary enrolment ratios, such as Latin America and the Caribbean (where the GPI was 1.04 in 2018), gender-based disparities favour girls. Northern America and Europe and Central Asia are the only regions that have achieved and maintained equal access to secondary education for both girls and boys throughout the period 1990–2018.

Figure II: Gender parity index of gross enrolment ratios in secondary education globally and by region: 1990, 2005 and 2018



Source: UNESCO, UNESCO Institute for Statistics database (accessed April 2020) (<http://data.uis.unesco.org/>).

Note: Gender parity is considered to have been attained when the GPI lies between 0.97 and 1.03.

Gender disparities at the secondary level are wider than those at the primary level

Although gender disparities in access to secondary education have been reduced in all regions, they remain more prevalent and wider than those at the primary level (see figures I and II). In sub-Saharan Africa, the GPI at the primary level was 0.96 in 2018, whereas the GPI was 0.88 at the secondary level. Similarly, in Western Asia, the primary level GPI was 0.94 versus the secondary level GPI of 0.90. In those countries where girls are severely disadvantaged, gender differences at the secondary level are partly a reflection of cumulative gender disparities at the primary level as well as disparities during the transition to the secondary level.¹

Gender parity index of the gross enrolment ratios in tertiary education

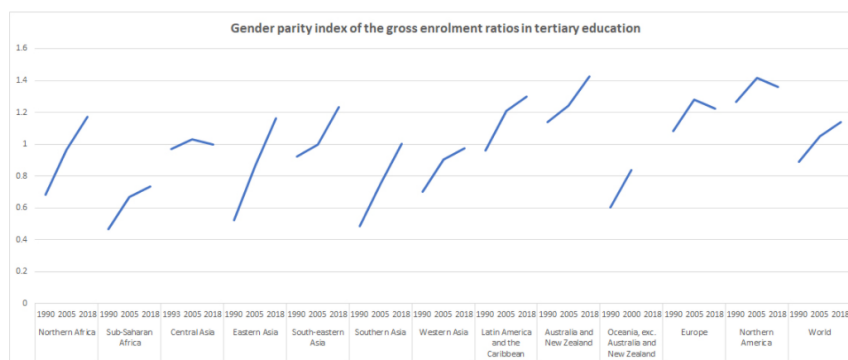
Gender disparities in tertiary education disproportionately favour women

During the period 1990–2018, gender disparities in **tertiary education** shifted from a male to female advantage both in the world and in most regions (see figure III). In 1990, men's participation in tertiary level education was higher than that of women, as reflected in a worldwide GPI of 0.89 (in sub-Saharan Africa the GPI was 0.47; in Southern Asia, 0.49; in Eastern Asia, 0.52; in Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand), 0.60; in Northern Africa, 0.68; and in Western Asia 0.70).

Overall, because the global participation of women has increased at a faster rate than that of men, the tertiary enrolment ratios of men and women reached parity in the late 1990s and remained at parity until the early 2000s. The global participation of women in tertiary education has since exceeded that of men, shifting gender disparity from a male to female advantage. In 2018, the GPI of the global tertiary enrolment of women and men stood at 1.14, reflecting a gender disparity clearly in favour of women.

In most regions of the world, women outnumber men in tertiary education. In 2018, the GPI surpassed the parity range by a good measure in Northern America and Europe (GPI of 1.28), Australia and New Zealand (1.42), Northern Africa (1.17), Latin America and the Caribbean (1.30), Eastern Asia (1.16) and South-Eastern Asia (1.23). Nevertheless, a considerable disparity in favour of men persists in sub-Saharan Africa (0.74) and Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand) (0.84). Overall, there are almost as many women as men enrolled in tertiary education in Central Asia, Southern Asia and Western Asia, but the regional averages conceal a low participation rate among women in several countries within those regions.

Figure III: Gender parity index of gross enrolment ratios in tertiary education globally and by region: 1990, 2005 and 2018



Source: UNESCO, UNESCO Institute for Statistics database (accessed April 2020) (<http://data.uis.unesco.org/>).

Note: Gender parity is considered to have been attained when the GPI lies between 0.97 and 1.03.

About the data

Definitions

- **Gender Parity Index (GPI):** Measure of the progress towards gender parity in education participation and/or learning opportunities available for girls in relation to those available to boys, and represents the ratio of the value of females to that of males, for a given indicator. A GPI value equal to one indicates parity. In general, a value less than one indicates disparity in favour of men/boys, whereas a value greater than one indicates disparity in favour of women/girls. Gender parity is considered to have been attained when the GPI lies between 0.97 and 1.03.

Coverage

(a) Girls and boys in primary education; (b) girls and boys in secondary education; (c) women and men in tertiary education.

Availability

Data for the period 1990–2018² are available for countries in all regions, organized by regional groupings under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) indicators framework.³

Footnotes

1. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), UNESCO Institute for Statistics, Global Education Digest 2005: Comparing Education Statistics Across the World, Montreal, 2005.
2. Data source is the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), UNESCO Institute for Statistics database (accessed in April 2020).
3. United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), Statistics Division, regional groupings under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) indicators framework.

Women teachers and professors at tertiary levels of education



Key points

- Globally, more men than women teach at the tertiary level of education; worldwide female teachers constituted only 43% of teachers at the tertiary level in 2018, an increase from 33% in 1990.
- Proportions of female teachers at the tertiary level in regions worldwide show a broad range of variation, with the highest proportion in Central Asia (54%) and the lowest in sub-Saharan Africa (24%).
- As of 2018, gender parity in the composition of the teaching force was reported in 30% of countries with data; the majority of countries with less than 30% of female teachers at the tertiary level were in sub-Saharan Africa.
- The proportion of women teachers at the tertiary level has increased in all regions of the world over the period 1990–2018.
- The proportion of women teachers at the tertiary level (43%) is significantly lower than the share of women at the primary (66%) and secondary levels (slightly over 50%).

Background

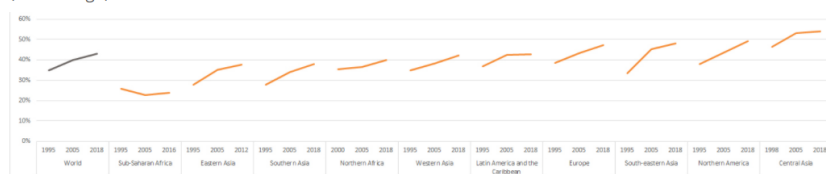
Trained, qualified and well-motivated teachers are essential for an effective learning environment and quality education, and the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4. Teaching staff have an important role in the creation of a gender-sensitive learning and social environment in which young women and men are treated equally and encouraged to achieve their full potential. Gender balance among teaching staff is critical for promoting gender parity and equality in access to, and achievement in, education and for creating a supportive and non-discriminatory learning environment. There is evidence that gender balance among teaching staff is closely related to the improvement of gender parity in school enrolment.² Policies that promote gender balance in the teaching workforce have been found to have a positive impact on access to education and completion rates, especially for girls and young women.²

Current situation

More men than women teach at the tertiary level

Globally, female teachers constituted 43% of tertiary-level teaching staff in 2018 (see figure I). Across the world, however, the proportions of female teachers at the tertiary level showed a wide range of variation: the highest level in Central Asia (54%) and lowest in sub-Saharan Africa (24%).

Figure I: Proportion of female teachers in tertiary education by region: 1990, 2005 and 2018 (Percentage)



Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics database (<http://uis.unesco.org/>) (accessed May 2020).

Note: Data for Oceania not available for 2005 and 2018; data sorted by values for 2018.

Data show that the proportion of female teachers at the tertiary level has increased in all regions of the world

The participation of women in teaching at the tertiary level has increased in all regions of the world (see figure I). The global

share of female teachers at the tertiary level increased from 33% to 43% over the period 1990–2018. In many regions, the proportion of female teachers grew by double digits: in South-Eastern Asia by 21 percentage points; in Southern Asia by 15 percentage points, in Northern America by 14 percentage points, and in Eastern Asia by 13 percentage points. The gains were modest (less than 10 percentage points) in sub-Saharan Africa, Northern Africa and Western Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean. During the period 1990–2018, Central Asia was the only region to attain gender parity among teachers at the tertiary level of education.

Most of the countries with less than 30% of female teachers at the tertiary level of education were in sub-Saharan Africa

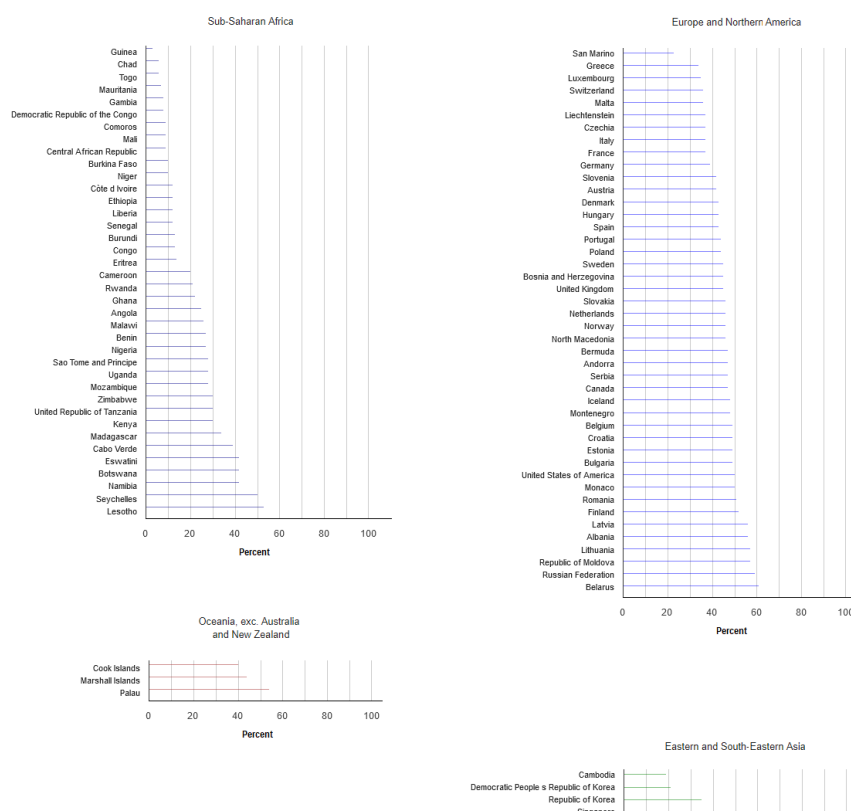
In 46 countries out of 150 (about 30%) reporting data for the period 2010–2019, the proportion of female teachers at the tertiary level was in the range of 45% to 55%, indicating the achievement of gender parity in the teaching force. In 15 countries, more than 55% of teachers at the tertiary level were women, and in Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Myanmar the proportion of female teachers was higher than 60% (see figure II).

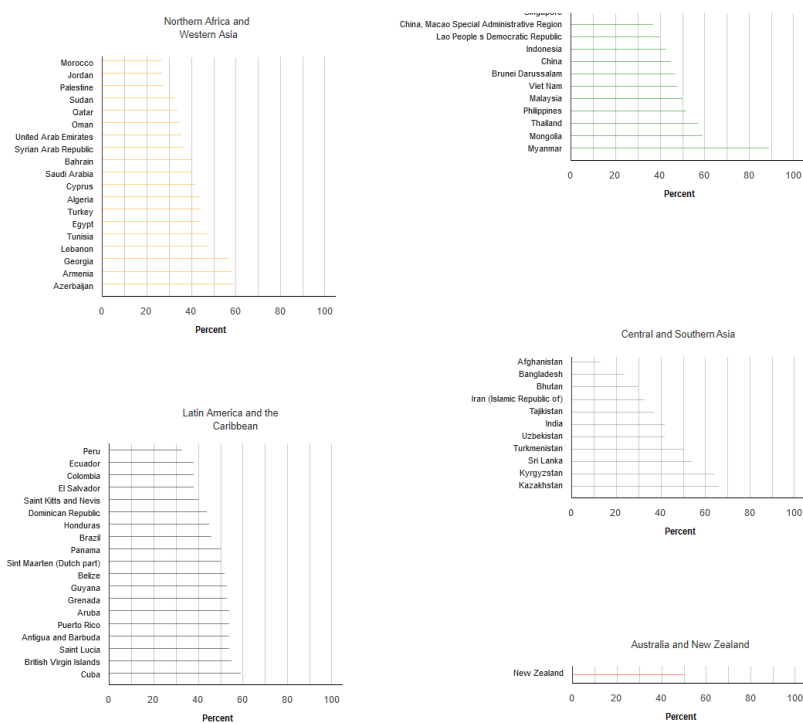
In contrast, in 89 countries (60% of countries with data) the share of female teachers at the tertiary level was less than 45%. Low proportions of female teachers at the tertiary level (below 30%) were reported in 36 countries, 28 of which were in sub-Saharan Africa. The other countries with a low representation of female teachers were in Northern Africa and Western Asia (Jordan, Morocco and the State of Palestine), Southern Asia (Afghanistan and Bangladesh) and Eastern and South-Eastern Asia (Cambodia and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea). Data show, moreover, that the proportion of female teachers at the tertiary level tends to be lower in countries with low levels of overall [enrolment in tertiary education](#).

The share of female teachers at the tertiary level is significantly lower than their share at the primary and secondary levels

In most regions of the world, the majority of teachers at the primary level (about 66%) are women, although data reveal variations between countries. Women's share in teaching drops significantly at higher levels of education: female teachers at the secondary level constitute slightly more than half of the teaching staff; and at the tertiary level, worldwide, the majority of teachers are men. Globally, the proportion of female teachers at the tertiary level of education was 43% in 2018.

Figure II: Proportion of female teachers at tertiary level of education by country/territory and region: 2010–2019 (latest available) (Percentage)





Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics database (<http://uis.unesco.org/>) (accessed February 2020).

Note: Data in the map are based on headcounts, except for the Congo, India and Israel, which are based on full-time equivalents. Data for China are based on the total number of personnel working in the area of R&D rather than the number of researchers. Data for Brazil are based on estimations. Data are for 2018 or the latest year available for the period 1996–2018.

About the data

Definitions

- **Teachers:** Persons whose professional activity involves the transmission of knowledge, attitudes and skills stipulated in a formal curriculum programme to students enrolled at a formal educational institution
- **Proportion of females among tertiary teachers or professors:** Number of female teachers at the tertiary level of education, expressed as a percentage of the total number of teachers at that level. The indicator measures the gender composition of the teaching force and helps in assessing the need for opportunities and/or incentives to encourage women to teach at the tertiary level of education. A percentage of female teachers in the range of 45% to 55% indicates gender parity in the composition of the teaching force. A value of greater than 55% reveals more opportunities and/or preference for women in teaching at the tertiary level of education.

Coverage

Teaching staff, including full and/or part-time teachers, at the tertiary level of education.

Availability

Data are available for all regional groupings under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)⁴ (except Oceania, excluding Australia and New Zealand) and for 150 countries for the period 1990–2018 (latest available).⁵

Footnotes

1. Al-Samarrai, S., Rose, P., Tembon, M., and Colclough, C. (ed.), *Achieving Schooling for All in Africa: Costs, Commitment and Gender*, Ashgate, 2003.
2. UNESCO Institute for Statistics, *Global Education Digest 2010, Comparing Education Statistics Across the World*, Montreal, 2010.
3. United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), *The World's Women 2015: Trends and Statistics*, New York, 2015 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.15.XVII.8).
4. *Regional groupings under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)*.
5. *Data source: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), UNESCO Institute for Statistics database* (last accessed May 2020).

Information and communications technology (ICT) skills



Key points

- Women's ICT skills lag considerably behind men's across all nine ICT skills in the majority of countries with data, both developed and developing regions.
- Gender disparities against women are moderate for "basic" ICT skills (such as copying and pasting and sending e-mails with attached files) when compared to those for the more complex "standard" skills (such as downloading and installing software and connecting and installing devices).
- Women in developing regions are more disadvantaged than their counterparts in developed regions when it comes to basic digital skills and some standard skills.
- Gender disparities against women are pronounced in the "advanced" ICT skill of writing computer programs and, with few exceptions, gender inequalities are primarily against women.

Background

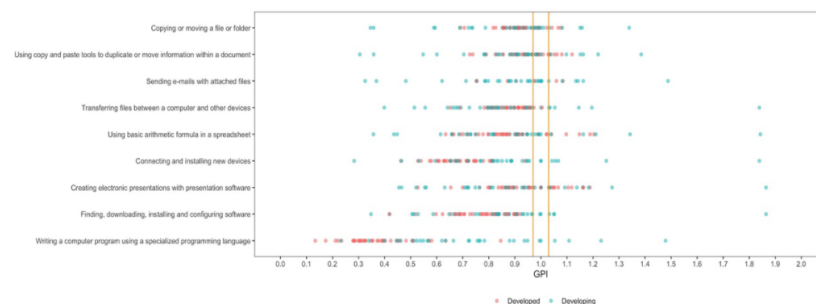
In an increasingly digital world, ICT skills are fundamental, at the individual level, to higher social and economic well-being and, at the national level, to success in a more dynamic and competitive economy.¹ It is widely recognized that a lack of ICT skills act as an impediment to participation in work, school and in society in general — and for women in particular. ICT skills are critical to the attainment of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4, target 4.4, which encourages countries to substantially increase, by 2030, the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship.

In the majority of countries worldwide, women lag behind men in all ICT skills

Data on the gender parity index (GPI)² in 2018 show that, with few exceptions, women's ICT skills are considerably behind those of men across all nine ICT skills in the majority of countries, both developed and developing (see figure I). For each ICT activity, GPI values are smaller than 0.97 in the vast majority of countries, underscoring the fact that overall gender disparities favour men over women.

Gender disparities against women are moderate for "basic" ICT skills (such as copying and pasting and sending e-mails with attached files) in comparison to those for the more complex "standard" skills (such as downloading and installing software and connecting and installing devices). Gender disparities against women are highest for the "advanced" skill of writing computer programs. It should be noted that gender parity has been achieved in Lithuania and Slovakia, where women's ICT skills are equal to those of men across the nine ICT skills. In a handful of countries, including Jamaica, more women than men have ICT skills in both basic and standard ICT categories.

Figure I: Gender parity index across 9 ICT skills in developing and developed regions: 2019 (or latest available year)



Source: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), Statistics Division, Global SDG Indicators Database (accessed February 2020) (<https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/database/>).

Note: Data refer to 2019 or latest available for the period 2014–2019. Each observation point corresponds to the gender parity index (GPI) value for a country with reported data. “Basic” ICT skills consist of: (1) Copying or moving a file or folder; (2) Using copy and paste tools to duplicate or move information within a document; (3) Sending e-mails with attached files (e.g. documents, pictures, videos); and (4) Transferring files between a computer and other devices. “Standard” ICT skills include: (5) Using basic arithmetic formulae in a spreadsheet; (6) Connecting and installing new devices (e.g. a modem, camera, printer); (7) Creating electronic presentations with presentation software (including text, images, sound, video or charts); and, (8) Finding, downloading, installing and configuring software. “Advanced” ICT skills refer to: (9) Writing a computer program using a specialized programming language.

Women in developing regions are more disadvantaged in basic digital skills

The lack of data on ICT skills in developing regions limits detailed regional comparisons. Nevertheless, available data (see figure I) suggest that women in developing regions are more disadvantaged than their counterparts in developed regions when it comes to basic digital skills and some of the standard skills. Available data on advanced skills (writing computer programs) provide an unclear picture, as some developing countries that reported lower levels of basic skills also reported higher levels of standard and advanced skills.

Research suggests that inequalities in ICT skills at the country level reflect other inequalities, including in education, wealth and gender, and that inequalities in digital skills might lead to increased disparity between developing and developed countries³ and between socioeconomic and sociocultural groups.⁴ A lack of digital skills is widely understood to be a significant barrier to participation in work and school, and in society in general, as well as in home-based activities and in private life.

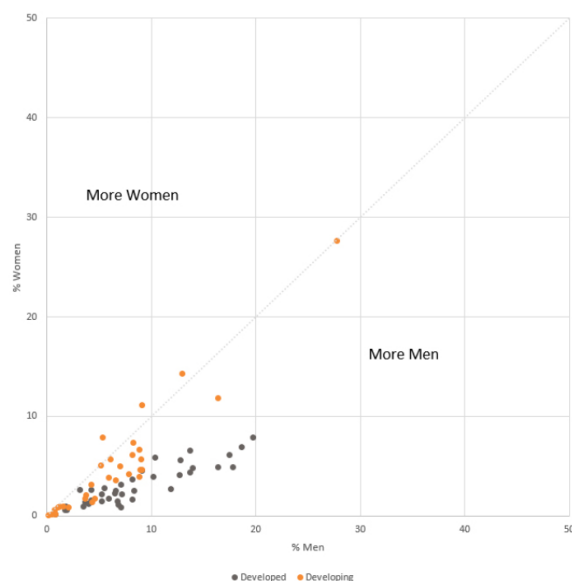
Significant gender gaps in advanced ICT skills

Writing a computer program is the only advanced ICT skill measured in connection with the monitoring of SDG target 4.4. Considerable gender gaps in advanced ICT skills, based on the proportion of women and men who can write a computer program, are noticeable in the 70 countries for which data were available for 2019 or the latest available year during the period 2014–2019 (see figure II).

With few exceptions, gender inequalities are primarily against women, and the gender gap is large in several countries in developed regions. For every 100 men who can write a computer program, there are fewer than 33 women with that ability in a number of developed countries, including: Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Ireland, Japan, the Netherlands, Poland and Sweden. Only two countries (Brunei Darussalam and Cuba) out of the 70 with available data show gender parity in this advanced ICT skill. However, more women than men in Bahrain, Cambodia, Kuwait and Oman can write computer programs.

In the advanced ICT skill of writing computer programs, developed countries are ahead of developing countries by only a small margin. This is partly owing to the fact that, in both developing and developed countries, the proportion of the population with skills at the highest level is very low (less than 15%, with few exceptions). This is in contrast to the situation with basic and standard skills, where developed countries have substantial advantage.

Figure II: Proportion of the female and male population aged 15 and older who can write a computer program by region: 2019 (or latest available year) (Percentage)



Source: UNDESA, Statistics Division, Global SDG Indicators Database (accessed February 2020) (<https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/database/>).

Note: Data refer to 2019 or latest available for the period 2014–2019.

Sources

- International Telecommunication Union (ITU), *Manual for Measuring ICT Access and Use by Households and Individuals*, 2014 Edition, Geneva, 2014
- ITU, *Measuring the Information Society Report* (vols. 1 and 2), Geneva, 2014
- Statistical Institute of Jamaica, *JAMAICA Voluntary National Review Report on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, Kingston, 2018

About the data

Definitions

- **The proportion of adults with information and communications technology (ICT) skills** is defined as the percentage of adults (aged 15 and above) who have undertaken certain computer-related activities in a specified time period

- **Computer-related activities** to measure ICT skills include:

1. Copying or moving a file or folder.
2. Using copy and paste tools to duplicate or move information within a document.
3. Sending e-mails with attached files (for example, documents, pictures, videos).
4. Transferring files between a computer and other devices.
5. Using basic arithmetic formulae in a spreadsheet.
6. Connecting and installing new devices (for example, a modem, camera, printer).
7. Creating electronic presentations with presentation software (including text, images, sound, videos or charts).
8. Finding, downloading, installing and configuring software.
9. Writing a computer program using a specialized programming language.

ICT skills are often grouped into three categories: "basic", "standard" and "advanced" skills. "Basic" skills comprise the first four computer-based activities (1 to 4), while "standard" skills consist of the next four activities (5 to 8). "Advanced" skills refer to the last activity (9), writing a computer program using a specialized programming language.

Coverage

Female and male population aged 15 and older.

Availability

Data are available for 70 countries for 2019 or latest available data for the period 2014–2019.⁵

Footnotes

1. International Telecommunication Union (ITU), *Measuring the Information Society Report 2018*, (vols. 1 and 2), Geneva, 2018.
2. The gender parity index (GPI) is calculated by dividing the percentage of women with ICT skills by the percentage of men with the same skills. Gender parity is considered to have been attained when the GPI value lies between 0.97 and 1.03. A GPI value of less than 0.97 indicates disparity in favour of men, whereas a value greater than 1.03 indicates disparity in favour of women.
3. Cruz Jesus, F., Vicente, M.R., Bacao, F. and Oliveira, T., "The education-related digital divide: An analysis for the EU-28", *Computers in Human Behavior*, vol. 56, March 2016.
4. Scheerder, A., Van Deursen, J. A. M. and Van Dijk, J. A. G. M., "Determinants of Internet Skills, Uses and Outcomes: A Systematic Review of the Second- and Third-Level Digital Divide", *Telematics and Informatics*, vol. 34, Issue 8, December 2017.
5. United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), Statistics Division, Global SDG Indicators Database (accessed in February 2020).

Enrolment in technical and vocational programmes



Key points

- In 2018, the global participation rate in technical and vocational programmes was 4.4% for girls and 5.0% for boys.
- The average enrolment of girls and boys in technical and vocational programmes varies greatly across regions.
- More boys than girls enrol in technical and vocational programmes in most regions of the world, with the exception of Eastern Asia, Northern America and Latin America and the Caribbean.
- Gender disparities show an underrepresentation of girls in technical and vocational programmes in 110 of 141 countries (78%) with data.
- Despite persistent gender disparities, girls' enrolment in technical and vocational programmes nearly doubled over the past three decades.

Background

Technical and vocational education and training programmes develop skills and competencies valued by employers and/or are useful for self-employment. Such programmes equip young women and men with skills and capabilities that can broaden their opportunities in life and prepare them for the transition from school to work.

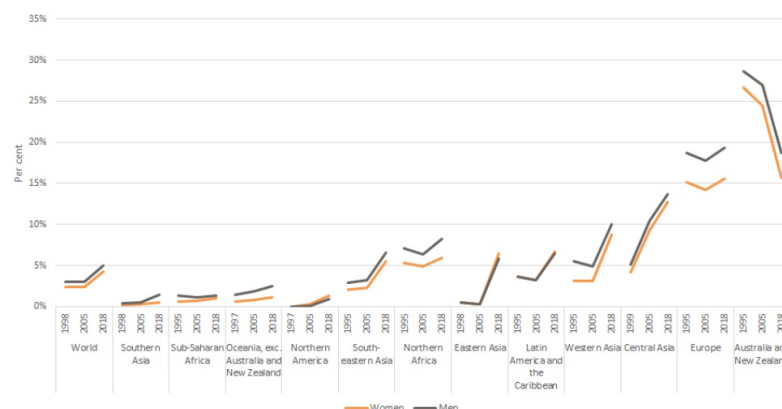
Technical and vocational programmes encompass a wide range of subject matters, from teacher training programmes to commercial studies, including various technical fields in industry and engineering. The participation rate of young people aged 15–24 in technical and vocational programmes is monitored under SDG target 4.3: "By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university".

Current situation

Enrolment of girls and boys in technical and vocational programmes varies greatly across regions

In 2018, the global participation rate in technical and vocational programmes was 4.4% for girls and 5.0% for boys (see figure I). Data show that the average participation of girls and boys in technical and vocational programmes varies greatly across regions: rates were lower than the global average in sub-Saharan Africa, Southern Asia, Northern America and Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand); rates were higher than global average, but lower than 10%, in Northern Africa, Eastern Asia, South-Eastern Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean; and rates were high (between 10% and 20%) in Central Asia, Europe and Australia/New Zealand.

Figure I: Percentage of the population aged 15–24 in technical and vocational education at secondary, post-secondary or tertiary levels of education by sex and region: 1995–2018



Source: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), UNESCO Institute for Statistics, Data for the Sustainable Development Goals (accessed May 2020) (<http://uis.unesco.org/>).

Note: Data sorted by female value for 2018.

More boys than girls participate in technical and vocational programmes in most regions of the world

More boys participate in technical and vocational programmes in all regions worldwide except Eastern Asia, Northern America and Latin America and the Caribbean. Girls were severely underrepresented in: Northern Africa (36 girls for every 100 boys), Southern Asia (46 girls for every 100 boys) and Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand) (72 girls for every 100 boys).

Of the 141 countries for which data were available for the period 2010–2018 (see figure II), in 110 countries (78%) there was an underrepresentation of girls. Significantly fewer girls than boys (less than 75 girls for every 100 boys) were enrolled in technical and vocational programmes in about half of the 110 countries. Girls were significantly underrepresented in technical and vocational programmes, accounting for less than 50 girls for every 100 boys, in several countries in Southern Asia (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Iran (Islamic Republic of) and Pakistan) and sub-Saharan Africa (Angola, Benin, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Eswatini, Ghana, Madagascar, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mozambique and the United Republic of Tanzania).

Gender parity was attained in only 10 countries with data, half of which were in Latin America and the Caribbean (Chile, El Salvador, Mexico, Paraguay and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)). In contrast, more girls were enrolled than boys in 21 countries with data. Several countries and one territory in Latin America and the Caribbean were represented in the latter group: technical and vocational programmes, including Brazil, the British Virgin Islands, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Peru.

Enrolment of girls in technical and vocational programmes nearly doubled over the past three decades

Between 1990 and 2018, notable progress was made in participation in technical and vocational programmes by young people aged 15–24. Over that period, the global participation rate in technical and vocational programmes rose from 2.4% to 4.4% for girls and from 3.0% to 5.0% for boys (see figure I). In terms of progress of girls, countries in sub-Saharan Africa, Southern Asia and Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand) saw miniscule growth (less than half of one percentage point) over the same period. Northern Africa, Europe and Northern America displayed modest growth (between one and one and a half percentage points). Girls' participation increased by three percentage points or more, however, in Central Asia (8.5 percentage points), Eastern Asia (6.0 percentage points), South-Eastern Asia (3.3 percentage points), Western Asia (5.8 percentage points) and Latin America and the Caribbean (3.0 percentage points). Participation substantially declined for both girls and boys in Australia and New Zealand, the only region to see a decline over the period 1990–2018.

Understanding the relationship between gender and technical and vocational programmes

Investigating overall enrolment rates alone is not sufficient to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between gender and participation in technical and vocational programmes, it is also necessary to assess the enrolment of girls and boys by different fields of study in order to have a fuller understanding of gender disparities in participation in such programmes, including in understanding the extent to which the traditional differentiation between "masculine" and "feminine" subjects remains.

About the data

Definitions

- **Participation rate in technical and vocational programmes:** Number of young people aged 15–24 enrolled in technical and vocational education at the secondary, post-secondary or tertiary levels of education expressed as a percentage of the population of the same age group. The purpose of the indicator is to show the level of participation of youth in technical and vocational education and training. A high value indicates that a large share of people aged 15–24 are participating in education and training specifically designed to lead to a particular line of work. Technical and vocational education and training can be offered in a variety of settings, including schools, universities and workplace environments. Participation rates do not capture the intensity or quality of the provision nor the outcomes of such education and training.

Coverage

Youth aged 15–24.

Availability

Data are available for 141 countries and for all regional groupings under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) indicators framework¹ (latest available data for the period 2010–2018).²

Footnotes

1. Regional groupings under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
2. Data from United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), UNESCO Institute for Statistics, Data for the Sustainable Development Goals (accessed May 2020).

Canada: female graduates in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) at the tertiary level of education



Key points

- Women's representation in STEM-related studies largely remained stable or increased between initial enrolment and graduation during the period 2010–2016.
- The proportion of women differs considerably among STEM fields, with women making up the majority of graduates in biological sciences, but only 20% in engineering and 18% in computer and information sciences.
- Young women with a STEM undergraduate degree are less likely to find work in information and communications technology (ICT) than young men with the same degree.
- While women in STEM studies are less likely than men to find work in the field of ICT, they are equally likely to find work in science and engineering occupations.
- Gender gaps in earnings are larger in the field of computer and information science than in any other field among women and men aged 25–34. Non-immigrant women with a bachelor's degree in this field earn 76% of what non-immigrant men do.

Background

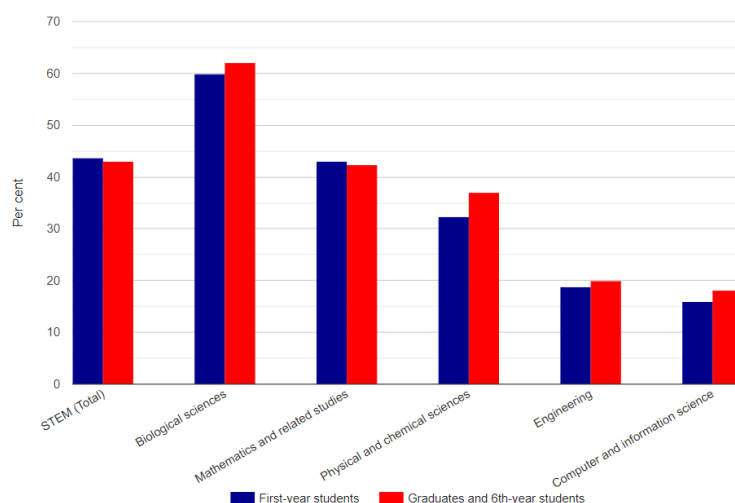
While women make up the majority of university students in Canada and in most developed countries, they comprise a minority in STEM fields, particularly in the fields of engineering and computer and information sciences.¹ This may limit women's economic equality since jobs in the field of science and technology, especially in engineering and computer science, are among the highest-paying and fastest-growing occupations.²

Women's representation in **STEM fields of study** and occupations can be affected by dynamics at several major points in their education and in their careers. The present paper explores changes in young women's representation in STEM education from initial enrolment in tertiary education through to graduation and transition into the workforce.

Women's representation in STEM studies remained largely stable or increased between initial enrolment and graduation over the period 2010–2016

Within a cohort of undergraduate students who began their studies in 2010, women's representation in STEM studies remained largely stable or increased between initial enrolment and graduation (see figure I).³ However, the share of women differed considerably between STEM fields, with women making up the majority of graduates in biological sciences, but only 20% in engineering and 18% in computer and information sciences: these data are of interest in terms of gender because the majority of STEM-related jobs are in engineering and computer and information sciences.⁴

Figure I: Proportion of women in selected undergraduate STEM fields of study at initial enrolment (first-year) and at graduation or sixth year of study 2010 cohort, persons who initially enrolled at age 19 or younger: 2010—2016



Source: Statistics Canada, Postsecondary Student Information System, longitudinal data, 2010—2011 to 2015—2016 (<https://www.statcan.gc.ca/eng/survey/business/5017>).

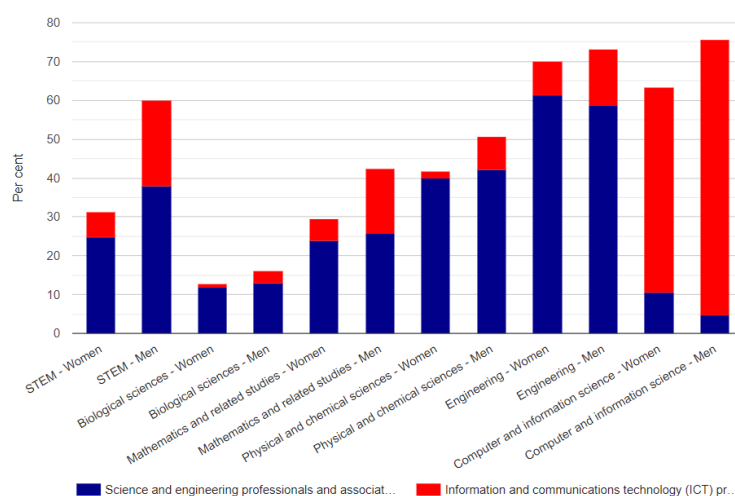
Young women with STEM undergraduate degrees are less likely to find work in ICT than young men with the same degree

Young women who graduate with degrees in STEM are less likely to find work in science and technology-based occupations than young men (see figure II). This disparity exists for two reasons. Firstly, the fields of study where women's representation is highest (see figure I), such as biological sciences, are the least likely to lead to a job in the field of science or technology, whereas the fields where their representation is lowest, engineering and computer and information sciences, are the most likely to lead to such a job.

While women in STEM studies are less likely to find work in ICT jobs than men, they are equally likely to find work in science and engineering occupations

Secondly, women in each STEM field of study are less likely to find work in ICT jobs than men (see figure II). The difference is particularly large for women who study mathematics or computer and information science, but it exists for woman graduates from each STEM field. In contrast, within each STEM field of study, women are about as likely as men to find work in science and engineering occupations.

Figure II: Percentage of women and men working in science and technology-based occupations, by selected fields of study, among employed bachelor's degree holders aged 25–34: 2016 (Percentage)



Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 Census (<https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/index-eng.cfm>).

Note: The population comprises persons aged 25–34 with a bachelor's degree completed in Canada as their highest level of education (excluding law and pharmacy degrees), who had an occupation (excluding non-permanent residents).

Gender gaps in earnings are largest in the field of computer and information science than any other field of study among women and men aged 25–34

Computer and information science also has one of the largest gender gaps in earnings of any field among women and men aged 25–34. Non-immigrant women with a bachelor's degree in this field make 76% of what non-immigrant men make, and immigrant women make 66% of what immigrant men make. For comparison, in fields like health care, biological sciences, law and engineering, non-immigrant women make at least 86% of what non-immigrant men do, and immigrant women make at least 79% of what immigrant men do. Women's lower wages and lower likelihood of finding a job relevant to their fields of study may give them less incentive than men to choose to study computer and information science when beginning their tertiary education.

There are two key barriers to women's equal representation in STEM in Canada: (a) lower **enrollment** rates in engineering and computer and information science degrees; and (b) women with STEM degrees having a lower rate of job matches and lower wages than men, specifically connected to gender disparities in the ICT sector.

About the data

This narrative examines the share of women studying science, engineering and mathematics (STEM) among first-year enrollees in undergraduate programmes in 2010 and among members of the same group who had graduated from those programmes or were still enrolled in their studies six years later.

Coverage

Students in Canada who began a full-time undergraduate degree in STEM in 2010 at age 19 or younger.

Availability

Longitudinal data from the Statistics Canada Postsecondary Student Information System⁵ are available from the period 2010–2011 onwards.

From 2010 onwards, Canada has a complete administrative database of enrolments and graduations from public colleges and universities, allowing the tracking of students' pathways through tertiary education. Administrative data on enrolments and graduations, which are available from 1992 onwards, cannot be used to track student pathways at the national level prior to 2010.

Footnotes

1. Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), "How have women's participation and fields of study choice in higher education evolved over time?", Education Indicators in Focus. No. 74, OECD Publishing, Paris, March 2020 .
2. Statistics Canada, 2016 Census; and Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey 1990—2018 .
3. The group of graduates also contains those who had not yet graduated from their STEM programmes as of their sixth year of studies. This is not likely to have a major impact on the data as drop-outs from postsecondary are uncommon in the later years of a degree. On average, women completed their STEM programmes in fewer years than men and were less likely than men to take six years or more to complete them.
4. Statistics Canada, 2016 Census : nearly three-quarters (72%) of people in science and technology occupations work in engineering and engineering technology or computer and information systems (NOC minor groups 213, 214, 217, 223, 224 and 228) (table 98-400-X2016271).
5. Statistics Canada, Postsecondary Student Information System .

① Safety

1 volt \rightarrow threshold of feeling tingling

5 volts \rightarrow Maximum current level human can withstand

② Basic Circuits

Current - equals flow and is measured in amps

Voltage - is the force and it is labeled as volts

Resistance - is the opposition and is measured in Ohms (Ω)

③ Circuit theory

Series Circuit

Parallel

④ Digital Logic

Or logic

And logic

NAND

NOR

Inverter

XOR

XNOR

2.5V

Hexadecimal

69

4

16 16 16 16 16

655 36 4096 256 16 1

Key points

- Females graduating at the tertiary level are vastly underrepresented in the three fields of STEM in both developed and developing regions, constituting slightly more than one-third (35%) of the world's STEM graduates.
- There is a severe gender disparity in graduates in STEM education in all parts of the world, and mostly to the disadvantage of women. Northern Africa and Western Asia is the one region where women are better represented among STEM graduates.
- Women make up the majority of graduates in fields related to education, health, arts and humanities and social sciences; men make up the majority of graduates in fields related to information technologies and engineering.
- Due to significant gains in enrolment in recent decades, gender parity has been achieved among students graduating in natural sciences, mathematics and statistics.

Background

Science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) are key drivers of economic growth. They are also key to the achievement of the SDGs and to tackling the environmental, social and economic concerns facing the world today. Furthermore, they are critical to efforts to address the impact of climate change, increase food security, improve health care, manage limited freshwater resources and protect biodiversity.¹ If women are to play important roles in crafting solutions to improve lives and generate inclusive growth that benefits all, they need to be adequately represented in the next generation of STEM professionals.

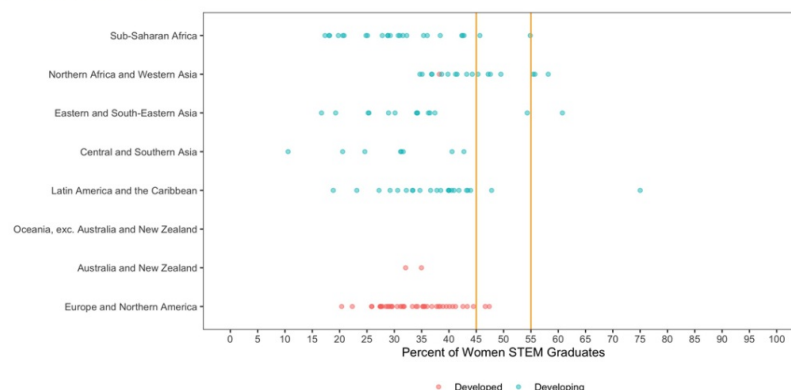
Female graduates in STEM at the tertiary level are vastly underrepresented in both developed and developing regions

Gender differences in STEM graduates at the tertiary level are evident in both developed and developing regions of the world. According to data available on the share of female STEM graduates for 131 countries for the period 2010–2019 (see figure 1): slightly more than one-third (35%) of the world's STEM graduates were women (unweighted average); women represented less than 30% of STEM graduates in 37 countries; and only 11 countries achieved gender parity in the proportion of STEM graduates (defined as a share of between 45% and 55% of either sex). In four countries, however, significantly more women than men graduated in STEM.

In 45 countries with data, almost all in Europe and Northern America, the proportion of women among STEM graduates at the tertiary level was less than 45%, with the exception of Albania and North Macedonia, which, with 47% of female graduates in STEM education, achieved gender parity.

The situation was similar among 86 countries with data in developing regions. In nearly 9 out of 10 developing countries, the proportion of women graduates in STEM at the tertiary level was less than 45%, although in three countries and one territory (Algeria, Myanmar, Oman and Sint Maartin) women were more likely than men to graduate in fields related to STEM. Women's share was within the range of parity in five countries in Northern Africa and Western Asia (Morocco, Qatar, the Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic and Tunisia) and in four other countries (Benin, Brunei Darussalam, the Gambia and Peru).

Figure I: Share of female STEM graduates at the tertiary level of education by region: 2010–2019 (latest available) (Percentage)



Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics, Database for the Sustainable Development Goals (accessed April 2020) (<http://uis.unesco.org/>).

All regions of the world display severe gender disparities in STEM, mostly to the disadvantage of women

In half of the countries with data in sub-Saharan Africa (24 countries), women accounted for less than 30% of STEM graduates at the tertiary level. Benin and the Gambia were the only countries in the region to report gender parity. No country (out of eight with data) in Central and Southern Asia reported gender parity, and in three of those countries women represented less than 30% of STEM graduates. Half of the countries in Eastern and South-Eastern Asia displayed moderate male predominance (with a 30% to 45% share of female graduates in STEM education).

In the Latin America and the Caribbean region, the proportions of women among STEM graduates covered a significant range, from 19% in Chile to 75% in Sint Maarten, and in 7 out of 10 countries in the region there was a moderate male predominance (30% to 45% female). Out of 23 countries with data, only one country, Peru, has achieved gender parity among STEM graduates.

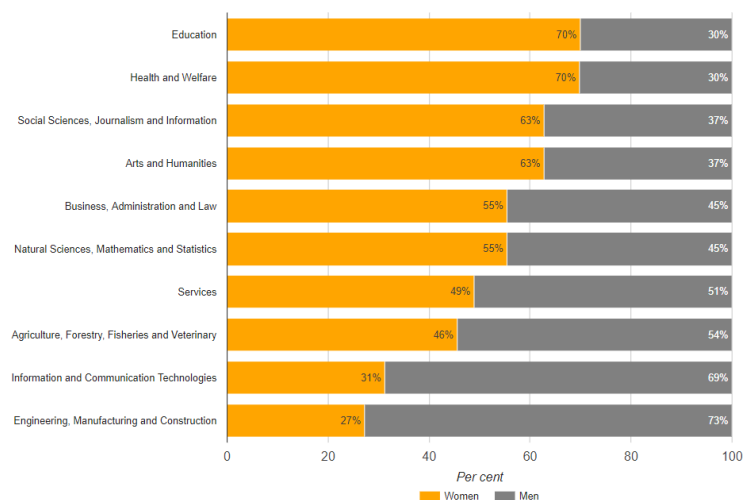
Women were more prominently represented among STEM graduates in Northern Africa and Western Asia, where their share among STEM graduates ranged from 35% in Turkey to 58% in Algeria. Women were also more likely than men to graduate in fields related to STEM in Oman and Tunisia.

Women make up the majority of graduates in fields related to education, health, the arts and humanities and social sciences: men make up the majority of graduates in fields related to information technologies and engineering

Significant gender differences emerge among the fields of study pursued by women and men in tertiary education. Female graduates comprise the vast majority of graduates (over 60%) in education, health and welfare, social sciences, journalism and information, and arts and humanities (see figure II), and are particularly prominent in education and health and welfare (70% of graduates). Moreover, gender parity (female share in the range of 45% to 55%) has been achieved among students graduating in natural sciences, mathematics and statistics, as a result of significant gains in **enrolment in tertiary education** in recent decades.

In contrast, male graduates are the vast majority in two of the three STEM-related fields: information and communication technologies; and engineering, manufacturing and construction. Men were more than twice as likely to graduate in information technologies, and almost three times as likely to graduate in engineering, manufacturing and construction. This pattern is consistent, with women constituting only slightly more than one-third of the world's STEM graduates, indicating that, despite enjoying better access to tertiary education than ever before, women continue to face challenges in participating in STEM-related fields of study (see figure II).

Figure II: Proportion of female and male tertiary graduates by field of study (global average): 2010–2019 (latest available) (Percentage)



Source: Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics, Database for the Sustainable Development Goals (accessed April 2020) (<http://uis.unesco.org/>).

Sources

- UNESCO, *Cracking the code: girls' and women's education in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM)*, Paris, 2017.
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), *Measuring Gender Equality in Science and Engineering: the SAGA Toolkit*, SAGA Working Paper 2, Paris, 2017.

Related stories and further reading

- [Women's gross enrolment ratio in tertiary education.](#)
- [Women in research and development](#)

About the data

Definitions

The acronym STEM, which stands for science, technology, engineering and mathematics, is a term used to group together these three fields of knowledge and study and to refer to the formal education and qualifications individuals acquire through their training in those fields.² Among the 11 broad fields of study specified in the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED),³ STEM education encompasses: "Natural sciences and mathematics"; "Information and communication technology"; and "Engineering, manufacturing and construction". To be qualified in STEM, individuals must have an academic degree at the tertiary level of education, that is, between level 5 and level 8, as classified under ISCED,⁴ in one of these three fields.

- **Proportion of tertiary graduates by field of study:** Number of graduates expressed as a percentage of the total number of graduates in the given field of study.
- **Female share of STEM graduates at the tertiary education level:** Number of female graduates in the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics expressed as a percentage of the total number of graduates in these fields of education.

Coverage

Female and male graduates of STEM programmes at the tertiary level of education.

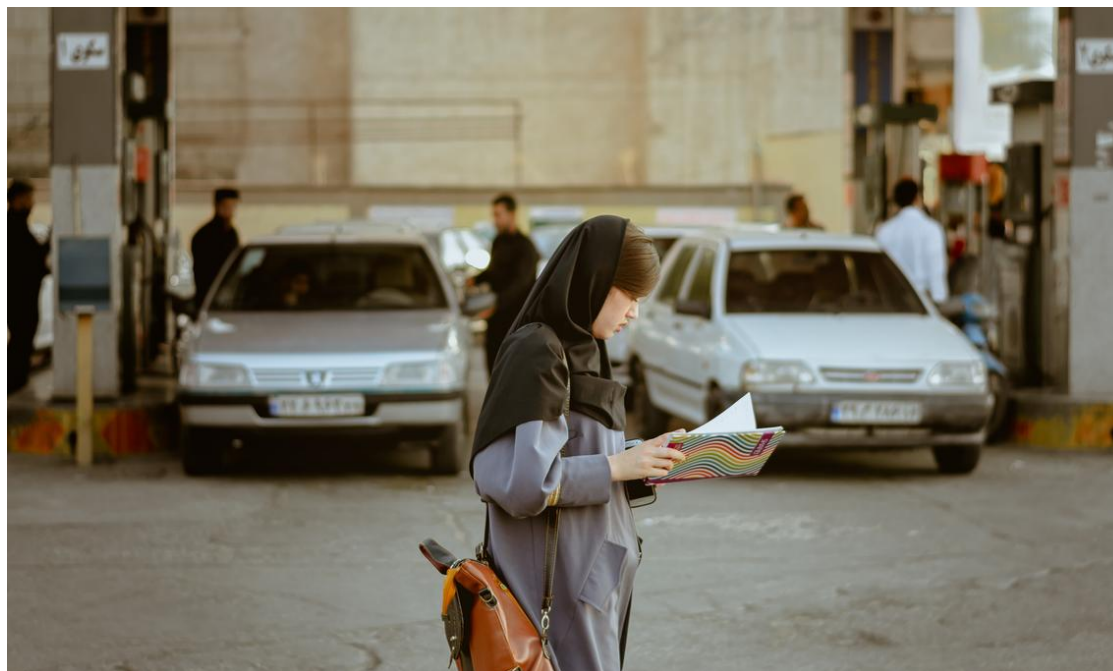
Availability

Data are available for 131 countries, corresponding to the period 2010–2019 (the latest available year),⁵ and by regional groupings under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) indicators framework.⁶

Footnotes

1. UNESCO, *Cracking the code: girls' and women's education in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM)*, Paris, 2017.
2. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), *Measuring Gender Equality in Science and Engineering: the SAGA Toolkit*, SAGA Working Paper 2, Paris, 2017.
3. UNESCO, *International Standard Classification of Education: Fields of Education and Training 2013 (ISCED-F 2013)*, Paris, 2014.
4. International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED): levels of education at the tertiary level consist of: level 5: short-cycle tertiary education; level 6: Bachelor's degree or equivalent level; level 7: Master's degree or equivalent level; and level 8: Doctoral degree or equivalent level.
5. UNESCO, *UNESCO Institute for Statistics Database for the Sustainable Development Goals* (accessed April 2020).
6. *Regional groupings under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) indicators framework*.

The impact of birth registration on educational outcomes in Pakistan [ESCAP]



Key points

- Birth registration is associated with positive educational outcomes for all children, but the impact is even greater for girls.
- The gender gap to the disadvantage of girls is higher than 20 percentage points for unregistered children across all three education levels, (a) any education, (b) completed primary education, and (c) secondary education; the gap falls to around 8 percentage points for registered children and is under 3 percentage points for those who have a birth certificate.
- Birth registration is a way to narrow the gender gap in access to education.

Background

As set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the foundational document of the United Nations, birth registration is the first step to acquiring a legal identity, which is the key enabler of the "right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law",¹ a fundamental human right often referred to as the "right to have other rights".² In many countries, including Pakistan, birth registration provides direct access to a range of essential services, including schooling, banking and obtaining a passport. It is evident that ensuring birth registration constitutes a powerful tool to leverage equality and a pathway to opportunities otherwise unattainable. Its role is even more essential for those at higher risk of exclusion from those opportunities: women and girls, migrants, minorities, stateless and displaced persons or persons with disabilities. Birth registration also facilitates access to social security and is a critical resource for those who lack other forms of protection.

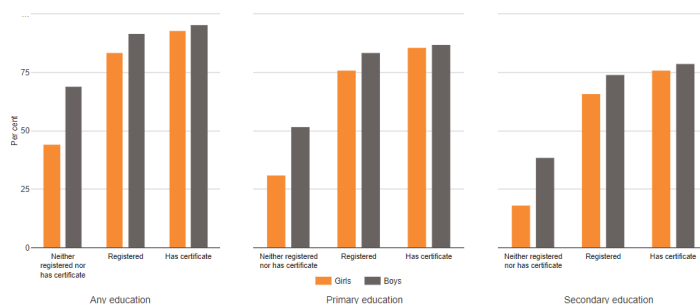
The issue of lack of birth registration is of paramount importance in countries in the Asia-Pacific region, which is home to 65 million still unregistered children under age five³—and particularly in South Asia, where 50 million unregistered children live. This story focuses on the impact of birth registration on education in Pakistan, in particular on oldest children (aged 14–17), in order to better understand how birth registration affects educational outcomes. In Pakistan, as in many low-income and middle-income countries,⁴ girls and boys have an equal chance of being registered: 42.5% of boys and 41.9% of girls are registered under age five.⁵ Looking at the data through a gender lens helps to ensure evidence-informed and gender-oriented social action.

Birth registration is associated with positive educational outcomes for all children, but the impact of registration is even greater for girls

Although a causal relationship cannot be ascertained, educational outcomes in Pakistan are far higher for children who have their births registered than for those who do not, and even more so for those with a birth certificate (see figure). The gender gap in **school completion** at each of the three education levels, (a) any education, (b) completed primary education and (c) completed secondary education, is higher than 20 percentage points for unregistered children. It falls to around 8 percentage points for registered children and is under 3 percentage points for those who have a birth certificate. Although a birth certificate is not required to attend school in Pakistan, some local or provincial school requirements (for example, to produce a birth certificate before registration) probably affect outcomes. What stands out is the specific importance of registration for girls. Boys without registration have far greater access to all levels of education than girls in the same situation; this gap narrows for registered children, both girls and boys.

Even after controlling for other socioeconomic factors such as wealth, type of residence or mothers' highest educational attainment, the positive effect of birth registration remains statistically significant. With all other factors being equal, unregistered boys have better access to education than unregistered girls, but this effect is significantly reduced for those who are registered. While all children benefit from registration, the link is especially strong for girls, effectively reducing, if not eliminating, the gender gap in educational outcomes for those who have been registered.

Figure Percentage of children aged 14-17 by educational level attained, sex and birth registration status: 2017-2018



Source: Data from National Institute of Population Studies, Pakistan, and ICF, Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey 2017-18, Islamabad and Rockville, Maryland, 2019 (<https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/FR354/FR354.pdf>).
Note: Data do not include the provinces of Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan, which were excluded because of a different sampling methodology.

Birth registration is a way to narrow the gender gap in access to education

Although some other factors such as girls' mobility⁶ or the "missing girls" effect⁷ could partially explain the gender differences in the link between educational attainment and birth registration, data for Pakistan show the potential of birth registration in ensuring that everyone has an equal opportunity to access essential services, most importantly education. Strengthening and developing existing civil registration systems further could yield significant results, even in the short term, and could contribute to reducing the gender gap in educational outcomes.

Regional cooperation

In 2014, the first ever Ministerial Conference on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific issued a ministerial declaration entitled "Get everyone in the picture", accompanied by a regional action framework detailing steps and objectives to achieve universal birth registration and facilitating regional collaboration over the course of the Asian and Pacific Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Decade 2015–2024.⁸

About the data

Definitions

Civil registration is the continuous, permanent, compulsory and universal recording of the occurrence and characteristics of vital events pertaining to the population. Birth registration is especially important as the issuance of birth certificates provides individuals with their legal identity and ensures their access to rights and services. The importance of birth registration is reflected in Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16, target 16.9, as measured by indicator 16.9.1: "Proportion of children under 5 years of age whose births have been registered with a civil authority, by age". Disaggregation by sex is recommended to ensure that girls are not excluded from registration procedures and to compare the differential impact of birth registration, which can help track progress towards achieving SDG target 4.5, aimed at equal access to education for the most vulnerable and the elimination of gender disparities.

Coverage

Girls and boys aged 14–17.

Availability

Data from the Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey 2017–18³ by sex, educational outcome and birth registration status.

Limitations

Demographic and Health Surveys have two major limitations regarding the computation of registration completeness: they include only those living in households, potentially not counting the most disadvantaged; and the registration variable is solely declarative. Registration estimations are therefore likely to be overestimations.

Footnotes

1. United Nations, General Assembly, resolution 217 A, December 1948 .
2. Bali Process Civil Registration Assessment Toolkit, Bangkok, 2018 .
3. United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Birth Registration for Every Child by 2030: Are we on track?, New York, 2019 .
4. Bhatia, A., Krieger, N., Beckfield, J., Barros, A.J.D., and Victoria, C., "Are inequities decreasing? Birth registration for children under five in low-income and middle-income countries, 1999–2016", *BMJ Journals: BMJ Global Health*, vol. 4, Issue 6 .
5. National Institute of Population Studies, Pakistan, and ICF, Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey 2017–18, Islamabad and Rockville, Maryland, 2019 .
6. Callum, C., Sathar, Z., and Ul Haque, M., « Is Mobility the Missing Link in Improving Girls' Schooling in Pakistan ? », *Asian Population Studies*, vol. 8, Issue 1, February 2012 .
7. Guilmoto, C. Z., "Sex imbalances at birth: Trends consequences and policy implications", United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), 2012 .
8. United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), Ministerial Conference on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific, Bangkok, November 2014 .
9. National Institute of Population Studies, Pakistan, and ICF, Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey 2017–18, Islamabad and Rockville, Maryland, 2019 .

Proportion of children aged 7-14 and children in grades 2 and 3 achieving minimum proficiency in reading and mathematics in Zimbabwe



Key points

- A higher proportion of girls than boys demonstrate foundational skills in reading across the two categories: children aged 7–14 and children in grades 2 and 3.
- With regard to foundational numeracy skills, girls aged 7–14 slightly outperform boys at the same ages, while boys marginally outperform girls in grades 2 and 3.
- Regional disparities are apparent in the distribution of proficiency levels among children, with children in the predominantly urban provinces of Bulawayo and Harare showing higher levels of proficiency in both reading and numeracy.
- Functional difficulties have an effect on children's performance; the proportion of children who demonstrated reading and numeracy skills was higher among children without functional difficulties than it was for children who had functional difficulties. While girls' advantage in reading was also visible among children with difficulties, their advantage over boys in numeracy skills was less significant.

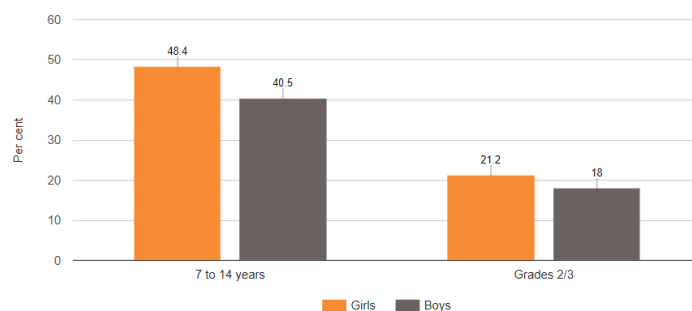
Background

Gender differentials in employment levels, in terms of participation rates and job types, have often been attributed to the education that women and men acquire at secondary and tertiary levels, yet the foundational education received in the early years of life are key determinants of skills obtained later on. In basic economic terms, the education of young children is the most cost-effective way to ensure their success throughout their lifecourse.¹ In Zimbabwe, possession of a pass in English and mathematics in lower secondary schooling is a requirement for enrolment in certain tertiary studies and for employment.

A higher proportion of girls than boys demonstrate foundational skills in reading across the two categories: ages 7-14 and in grades 2 and 3

In 2019, **foundational skills in reading** were higher among girls than boys (see figure I) across the two categories, by a measure of 8 percentage points among children aged 7–14 and by 3 percentage points among children in grades 2 and 3.

Figure I: Proportion of girls and boys aged 7-14 and in grades 2 and 3 demonstrating foundational reading skills: 2019

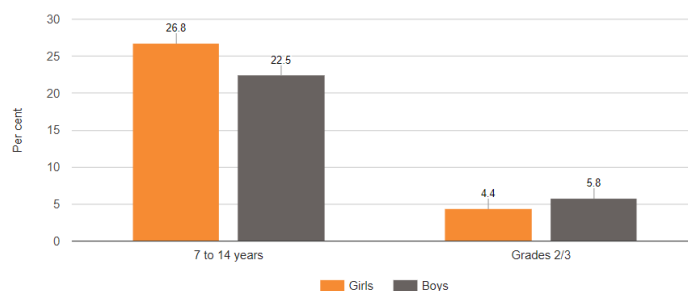


Source: Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency, Zimbabwe Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2019, Snapshots of Key Findings, Harare, 2019.

With regard to **foundational numeracy skills**, girls outperformed boys aged 7–14 (by 4 percentage points), while boys slightly outperformed girls in grades 2 and 3 (by 1.4 percentage points) (see figure II).

National examinations administered by the Zimbabwe Schools Examinations Council at the end of primary schooling confirm that girls outperformed boys, with a gender parity index (GPI) of pass rates ranging from 1.10 (110 girls to 100 boys) to 1.13 (113 girls to 100 boys), during the period 2014–2018. However, data on learning outcomes (pass rates) at the end of lower secondary schooling show that boys performed better than girls.²

Figure II: Proportion of girls and boys aged 7-14 and in grades 2 and 3 demonstrating foundational numeracy skills: 2019

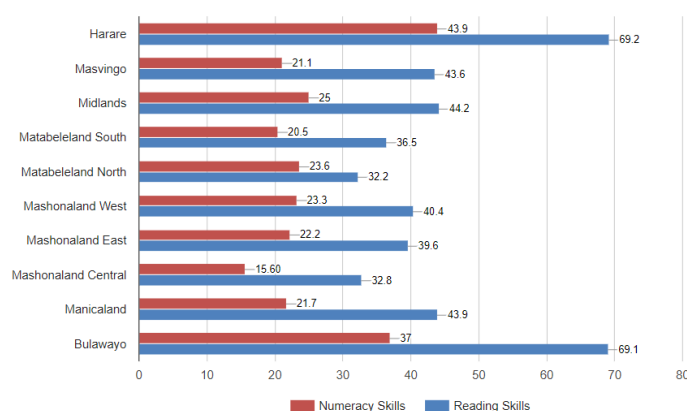


Source: Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency, Zimbabwe Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2019, Snapshots of Key Findings, Harare, 2019.

Regional disparities are apparent in the distribution of proficiency levels among children

High levels of proficiency in reading and numeracy have been observed in Bulawayo and Harare, the two predominantly urban provinces in Zimbabwe (see figure III). These rates can be attributed to the broader access to early childhood education in Bulawayo and Harare compared to other, predominantly rural, provinces. In 2019, the net attendance rate in primary schooling was 95% in Bulawayo and 94% in Harare. It is noted that the province with the lowest proportion of children with foundational learning skills, Mashonaland Central, is the province with the lowest literacy rates among women and men aged 15–49.

Figure III: Proportion of girls and boys demonstrating foundational reading and numeracy skills by province: 2019



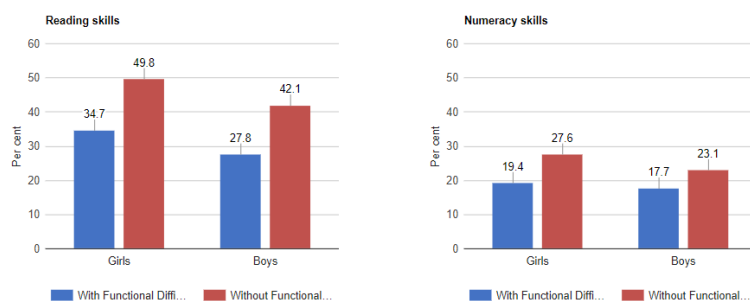
Source: Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency, Zimbabwe Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2019, Snapshots of Key Findings, Harare, 2019.

Functional difficulties have an effect on children's performance

The proportion of children aged 7–14 who demonstrated foundational reading and numeracy skills was higher among children

without functional difficulties³ than it was for the children who had functional difficulties (see figure IV). In terms of the gender gap, while girls' advantage in reading was also visible among children with difficulties (6.9 percentage points compared to 7.7 percentage points among children without difficulties), their advantage over boys in numeracy skills was less significant (1.7 percentage points among children with difficulties compared to 4.5 percentage points among those without).

Figure IV: Percentage distribution of children aged 7-14 demonstrating foundational learning skills in reading and numeracy by functional difficulties: 2019



Source: Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency, Zimbabwe Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2019, Snapshots of Key Findings, Harare, 2019.

About the data

Definitions

The indicator measures foundational reading and numeracy skills among children aged 7–14 and children in grades 2 and 3. The ability to read and understand simple statements is a skill that, when acquired at early ages, shapes learning outcomes in future grades. This also extends to the acquisition of basic numeracy skills, which are crucial for success in the sciences and mathematics. The methodological development of the Foundation Skills Assessment Tool can be accessed in the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS) Methodological Papers, No. 5 ⁴ and No. 9. ⁵

Coverage

Children aged 7–14 years and children in grades 2 and 3.

Availability

Data, by national and provincial levels and by functional difficulties, are from the Zimbabwe Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2019 carried out by the Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency. ⁶

Footnotes

1. Van der Gaag, J. and Tan, J.P, The Benefits of Early Child Development Program: An Economic Analysis, World Bank, Washington, D.C., 1998 and Barnett, W. S. and Masse, L. N., "Early childhood program design and economic returns: Comparative benefit-cost analysis of the Abecedarian program and policy implications", *Economics of Education Review* 26, 2007.
2. Government of Zimbabwe, Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, Harare, 2018 .
3. Functional domains covered in the questionnaire for children ages 5–17 in the Zimbabwe Multiple Indicator Survey 2019 included: seeing, hearing, walking, self-care, communication, learning, remembering, concentrating, accepting change, controlling behaviour, making friends, anxiety and depression.
4. Hiroyuki, H., Cardoso, M. and Ledoux, B., "Collecting Data on Foundational Learning Skills and Parental Involvement in Education", *MICS Methodological Papers*, No. 5, Data and Analytics Section, Division of Data, Research and Policy, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) New York, 2017 .
5. Gochyyev, P., Mizunoya, S. and Cardoso, M., "Validity and reliability of the MICS foundational learning module", *MICS Methodological Papers*, No. 9, Data and Analytics Section, Division of Data, Research and Policy, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), New York, 2019 .
6. Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency, Zimbabwe Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2019, Snapshots of Key Findings, Harare, 2019.

Gross enrolment ratio in secondary education



Key points

- Global enrolment ratios in secondary education for both girls and boys are lower than the corresponding ratios in primary education.
- Participation in secondary education has expanded steadily in all regions of the world over the past three decades.
- Despite this remarkable improvement, globally, only 75% of girls and 76% of boys in the official school-age population attended secondary school in 2018.
- Gender disparities in secondary education have been significantly reduced worldwide, shrinking to 1 percentage point in 2018.
- There are variations in secondary enrolment ratios among regions, with ratios close to universal in Northern America and Europe and Latin America and the Caribbean, above 90% in Central Asia and lagging behind significantly in sub-Saharan Africa and Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand).

Background

Secondary education is key to more complex skills and knowledge, which offer individuals more opportunities in life and prepare them for tertiary level education. The foundational skills obtained in secondary school are considered essential for career advancement, active citizenship and safe choices about personal health. These are important reasons for the enactment by many countries of policies or laws making both primary education and lower secondary education free and compulsory.¹

Participation in secondary education has increased steadily for both girls and boys

Participation in secondary education has expanded steadily in all regions of the world (see figure I). Over the period 1990–2018, global gross enrolment ratios in secondary education have improved by 28 percentage points for girls and 20 percentage points for boys. Despite this remarkable improvement, only 75% of girls and 76% of boys attended secondary school in 2018. Global enrolment ratios in secondary education for both girls and boys were lower than the corresponding ratios in primary education.

Figure I: Global gross enrolment ratio in secondary education by sex, world and region: 1990, 2005 and 2018 (Percentage)



Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics database (accessed April 2020) (<http://uis.unesco.org/>).

Secondary gross enrolment ratios show significant variation among regions

Gross enrolment ratios in secondary education show significant variation among regions (see figure I). In 2018, the ratio was close to 100% for both girls and boys in Northern America and Europe and Latin America and the Caribbean, and above 90% in Central Asia. However, despite the steady expansion of post-primary education, secondary enrolment was low in many developing countries. In countries in sub-Saharan Africa, the secondary enrolment ratio was 41% for girls and 46% for boys. In Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand), the ratio was 48% for girls and 59% for boys. Secondary enrolment ratios were close to or over 80% for both girls and boys in all the other regions, and in both Australia and New Zealand ratios were far above 100% for both girls and boys, indicating a significant enrolment of over-age students and students repeating grades.

Globally, gender disparities in secondary education have been significantly reduced

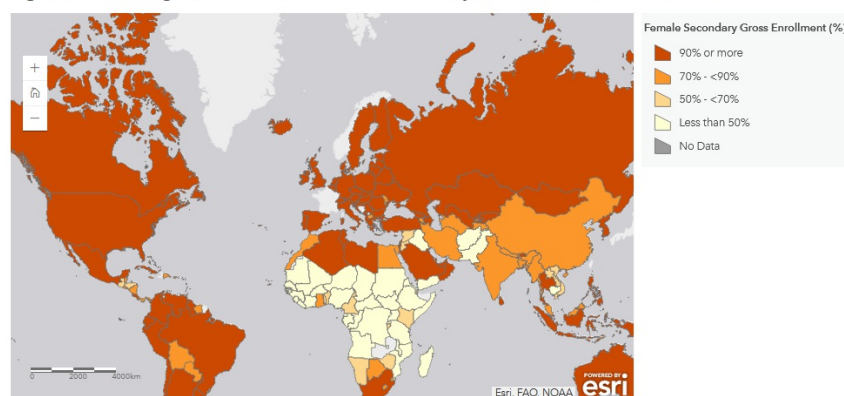
Between 1990 and 2005, the global gender gap in gross enrolment ratios for girls and boys declined from 9 to 3 percentage points (see figure I). The decline has continued steadily, shrinking to 1 percentage point in 2018.

Girls still face significant disadvantages in enrolment in

secondary education in several regions worldwide

Despite the gains made over the past three decades, girls are still less likely than boys to be enrolled in secondary school in Oceania, sub-Saharan Africa and Western Asia—all regions with low overall enrolment rates for both girls and boys. National level data (see figure II) show that, in the majority of cases, gross enrolment ratios of under 50% of girls in secondary education are reported in sub-Saharan Africa, and to a lesser extent in Asia and Oceania (Afghanistan, Cambodia, Iraq, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Yemen). In regions with higher overall secondary enrolment ratios, such as Eastern and South-Eastern Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean, disparities favour girls. Countries in Northern America and Europe and in Central Asia achieved and maintained equal access to secondary education for both girls and boys throughout the period 1990–2018, while Northern Africa and Southern Asia eliminated gender disparities over the same period.

Figure II: Female gross enrolment ratios in secondary education, 2018 (or latest available)



Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics database (<http://uis.unesco.org/>) (accessed April 2020).

The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this and other maps throughout this publication do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

About the data

Definitions

- **Gross enrolment ratio (GER) in secondary education:** Number of students enrolled in secondary education, regardless of age, expressed as a percentage of the official school-age population corresponding to the same level of education. The gross enrolment ratio in secondary education makes no distinction between lower and upper secondary levels, treating enrolment and participation in secondary education as a whole by combining both lower and upper secondary levels into a single educational cycle. Because the gross enrolment ratio includes all students in secondary education regardless of their age, its values can exceed 100% in countries where children enter school late or repeat grades.

Coverage

Girls and boys enrolled in secondary education.

Availability

Data are available for 210 countries for the period 1990–2018 (latest available)² in all regional groupings under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) indicator framework.³

Methodological note

In some instances, owing to the inclusion of over-aged and under-aged students because of early or late entrants and/or grade repetition, gross enrolment ratios can exceed 100%. In such cases, a rigorous interpretation of the ratio requires additional information to assess the extent of the effect of those factors. A high gross enrolment ratio generally indicates a high degree of participation, whether pupils belong to the official age group or not. A value approaching or exceeding 100% indicates that a country is, in principle, able to accommodate all of its school-age population, but does not indicate the proportion already enrolled. The achievement of a ratio of 100% is therefore a necessary but not sufficient condition for enrolling all eligible children in school. A gross enrolment ratio exceeding 90% for a particular level of education means that the aggregate number of places for students is approaching the number required for universal access of the official age group. However, this is a meaningful interpretation only if it is expected that the under-aged and over-aged enrolment will decline in the future to free up places for pupils from the expected age group. Lower gross enrolment ratios may reflect a shortage of supply, as well as the impact of other factors, such as the indirect and direct costs of attending school, which may limit enrolment. Furthermore, an upward or downward trend in the school-age population can have an impact on the gross enrolment ratio.

Footnotes

1. Data are from the [United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization \(UNESCO\), UNESCO Institute for Statistics database](#). (accessed in April 2020)
 2. [United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs \(UNDESA\), Statistics Division, Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\) indicator framework](#).
 3. Benavot, A., "The Diversification of Secondary Education: School Curricula in Comparative Perspective", UNESCO International Bureau of Education, Geneva, November 2006.
-

Children and adolescents with minimum proficiency in reading and mathematics



Key points

- Girls outperform boys in reading proficiency in every region of the world and across all three levels of education (early and late primary education and at the end of lower secondary education).
- Girls performed better than boys in reading in all but one country (85 out of 86 countries) at the end of lower secondary education. Girls' overperformance in reading skills is more pronounced at the end of lower secondary education than at lower levels of education.
- Large regional differences exist in minimum proficiency in reading skills; extremely low proficiency levels in reading were observed in the majority of countries in sub-Saharan Africa (proficiency level of less than 30% in grades 2 or 3 of primary education).
- Overall gender disparities in proficiency in mathematics is not significant as opposed to gender differences in reading skills; however, boys slightly outperform girls in mathematics at the end of primary education and girls outperform boys at the end of lower secondary education.
- Gender disparity in student learning changes over young adulthood, and the gender gap in reading, at the advantage of girls, is almost completely closed at around age 30.

Background

The main purpose of education is to impart skills to young people so that they can effectively participate in social, economic and political life. Ensuring that children are **in school** is not an end in itself. Reading and mathematics are considered to be the most important, most basic, skills as they serve as the foundation for all other skills and are needed to obtain further education and training. People who cannot read, write and do basic arithmetic have fewer opportunities for gainful employment, entrepreneurial activity or civic participation.

Foundation skills are also essential for active citizenship and safe choices about personal health. A lack of basic knowledge in those two subject areas not only threatens an individual's ability to climb out of poverty, it also jeopardizes the economic future of entire nations if they are obliged to compete in a global marketplace with less-than-skilled human resources.¹ Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4, indicator 4.1.1, measures the quality of student learning outcomes in two subject areas (mathematics and reading) in early and late primary education and at the end of lower secondary education.

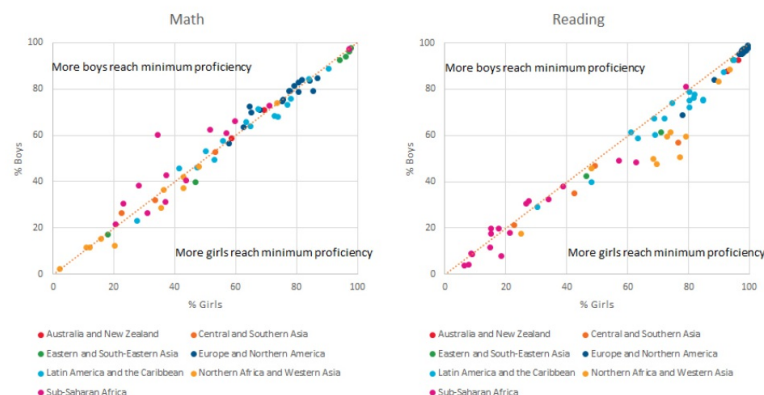
Current situation

Girls outperformed boys in reading skills in the vast majority of countries; this gap is more pronounced at the end of lower secondary than at lower levels of education

Girls' advantage in reading is well documented. Girls outperformed boys in reading proficiency in every region of the world and across all three levels of education—early and late primary education and at the end of lower secondary education (see figures I, II and III). This was the case in 64 out of 73 countries with data at the level of grades 2 or 3 of primary education, and this was also the case in 31 out of 35 countries at the end of primary education. Girls performed better than boys in reading in all but one country (85 out of 86 countries) at the end of lower **secondary education**. These gaps underscore the importance of a gender-sensitive approach in teaching.

Gender gaps in reading proficiency, which generally favour girls, tend to be more pronounced at the end of lower secondary than at the other two lower levels of education. This is the case in both developing and developed countries.

Figure I: Proportion of girls and boys in grades 2 or 3 of primary education achieving a minimum proficiency level in reading and mathematics by region: 2010–2019 (latest available) (Percentage)



Source: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), UNESCO Institute for Statistics education database (accessed in February 2020) (http://data.uis.unesco.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=EDULIT_DS&popupcustomise=true&lang=en).

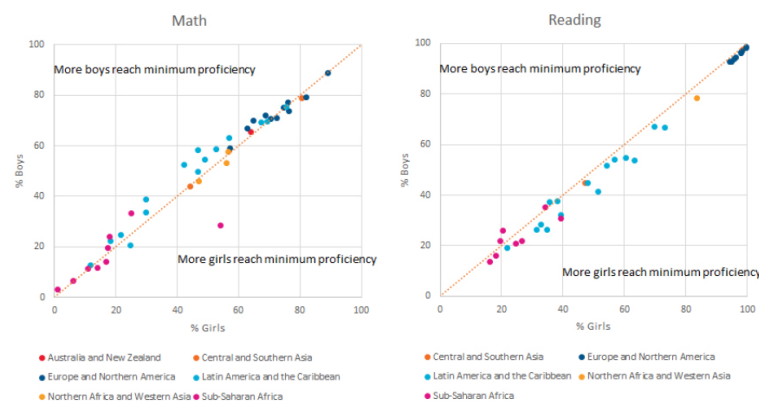
Note: Each point represents data for one country. Data are available for 73 countries for reading and 66 for mathematics. Data correspond to the latest available year in the period 2010–2019. The diagonal line represents the gender parity line. Below the gender parity line, higher proportions of girls than boys achieved minimum proficiency.

Proficiency in reading was extremely low in countries in sub-Saharan Africa

Large regional differences exist in minimum proficiency in reading. Extremely low proficiency levels in reading were observed in the majority of countries in sub-Saharan Africa, where more than 7 out of 10 countries with data show a proficiency level of less than 30% at grades 2 or 3 of primary education. Proficiency in reading for both girls and boys at that level of education was similarly low in many countries in Central and Southern Asia. Despite years of steady growth in enrolment rates, proficiency rates in these regions remain extremely low. In contrast, proficiency in reading for both girls and boys was high (above 90%) in Europe and Northern America and Australia and New Zealand, as well as in some countries in Eastern and South-Eastern Asia. Proficiency in reading was moderate in the majority of the countries in Northern Africa and Western Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean.

The regional patterns of reading skills were similar for the other two levels of education (end of primary education and end of lower secondary education), although proficiency levels were more modest in comparison to those at grades 2 or 3 of primary education.

Figure II: Proportion of girls and boys at the end of primary education achieving a minimum proficiency level in reading and mathematics by region: 2010–2019 (latest available) (Percentage)



Source: UNESCO, UNESCO Institute for Statistics education database (accessed in February 2020) (http://data.uis.unesco.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=EDULIT_DS&popupcustomise=true&lang=en).

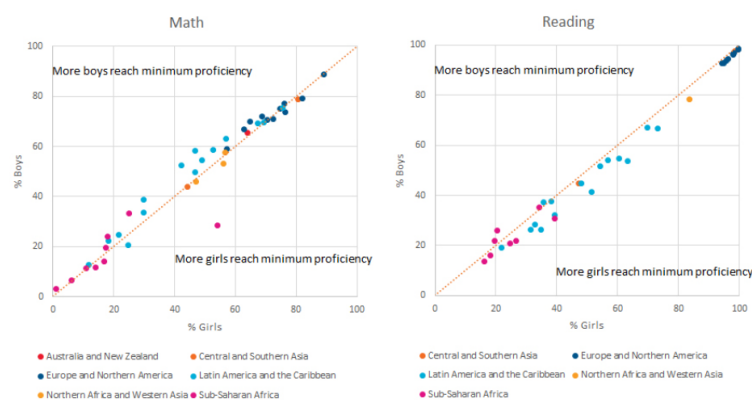
Note: Each point represents data for one country. Data are available for 35 countries for reading and for 41 for mathematics. Data correspond to the latest available year in the period 2010–2019. The diagonal line represents the gender parity line. Below the gender parity line, higher proportions of girls than boys achieved minimum proficiency.

Boys outperform girls in mathematics at the end of primary education, but girls outperform boys at the end of lower secondary education

Proficiency in mathematics presents a mixed picture than reading, though it is also characterized by gender differences. However, in contrast to what was observed for reading skills, with few exceptions, the gender gaps were not significant across educational levels and regions (see figures I, II and III).

Gender disparities pertaining to proficiency in mathematics display diverse patterns across educational levels. At the level of grades 2 or 3 of primary education, boys outperformed girls in 33 out of 66 countries with data, while in 31 countries girls did better. At the end of primary education, 29 out of 41 countries with data showed gender gaps in favour of boys, and in 11 countries, the gender disparity favoured girls. At the end of lower secondary education, only 43 out of 95 countries with data displayed gender disparities favouring boys; in 51 of the remaining countries girls slightly outperformed boys. Girls appear to be narrowing the gap in achievement in mathematics, an area where boys have historically held an advantage.

Figure III: Proportion of young girls and boys at the end of lower secondary education achieving a minimum proficiency level in reading and mathematics by region: 2010–2019 (latest available) (Percentage)



Source: UNESCO, UNESCO Institute for Statistics education database (accessed in February 2020) (http://data.uis.unesco.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=EDULIT_DS&popupcustomise=true&lang=en).

Note: Each point represents data for one country. Data are available for 86 countries for reading and for 95 for mathematics. Data correspond to the latest available year in the period 2010–2019. The diagonal line represents the gender parity line. Below the gender parity line, higher proportions of girls than boys achieved minimum proficiency.

Learning disparities change over young adulthood

Some studies² show that the gender disparity in student learning changes over young adulthood. Young people's literacy and numeracy skills continue to develop after primary and secondary education, reaching a peak at around age 30. The ways in which skills develop are influenced by the formative education and employment choices and paths young people pursue. In a comparison survey of students at age 15 carried out under the Programme for International Student Assessment, coordinated by the Organization for Economic and Cooperation and Development (OECD), followed by a Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies survey 12 years later, significant changes in disparities were reported: wide literacy gaps between girls and boys narrowed or disappeared in young adulthood. At age 15, girls in OECD countries outperformed boys in reading, but by age 27, the gender gap had almost completely closed.³

About the data

Definitions

- **Proportion of children and adolescents in grades 2 or 3 of primary education, at the end of primary education, and at the end of lower secondary education achieving at least a minimum proficiency level in reading and mathematics.** The indicator is calculated as the percentage of children and young people at the relevant stage of education achieving or exceeding a predefined minimum proficiency level in a given subject. The minimum proficiency level is defined as the benchmark of basic knowledge in a given domain (reading and mathematics) measured through learning assessments. Currently, there are no common standards for a global benchmark. Since each learning assessment sets its own objectives and standards, the performance levels defined in these assessments may not be consistent.

Coverage

Girls and boys: (a) in grades 2 or 3 of primary education; (b) at the end of primary education; and (c) at the end of lower secondary education.

Availability

Data for grades 2 or 3 of primary education are available for 73 countries for reading and 66 for mathematics. Data at the end of primary education are available for 35 countries for reading and for 41 for mathematics. Data at the end of lower secondary education are available for 86 countries for reading and for 95 for mathematics. Data correspond to the latest available year during the period 2010–2019.⁴ Countries are organized according to regional groupings under the Sustainable Development Goals indicators framework.⁵

Footnotes

1. United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), Statistics Division, Sustainable Development Report 2019, New York, 2019.
2. UNESCO, Global education monitoring report 2018: Gender Review: Meeting our commitments to gender equality in education, Paris, 2018.
3. Ibid.
4. Data source is the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), UNESCO Institute for Statistics education database (accessed in February 2020).
5. Regional groupings under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) indicators framework.

Educational attainment



Key points

- Regional variations in educational attainment are linked to the general level of socioeconomic development: in developed regions, where universal primary education has been attained, the proportions of women and men with no schooling or whose highest attainment is at the primary level are small while those whose highest level of education is at or above the secondary level are substantial; the reverse holds in developing regions where universal primary education has not been attained.
- Gender differences in educational attainment are most striking among the population with no schooling: differences are particularly large in sub-Saharan Africa (where 44% of women have never attended school, compared to 30% of men) and Southern Asia (where 48% of women have never attended school, compared to 28% of men).
- Primary education is the highest level of educational attainment for slightly above a quarter of the adult population in developing regions (28% for women and 27% for men). Secondary education is the highest educational level attained by most women (41%) and men (48%) both globally and across developed (53% of women and 57% of men) and developing regions (38% of women and 46% of men).
- Globally, nearly one in five adult women (17%) and men (19%) have attained tertiary education: more women (39%) and men (37%) in developed regions have completed tertiary education as compared to their counterparts in developing regions (11% for women and 13% for men).
- Tertiary education is the most common educational attainment in Central Asia, where about 6 in 10 women and men have attended or graduated from post-secondary education.

Background

Educational attainment is a measure of the stock of human capital, that is, the knowledge and the skills available in a given population. A higher level of educational attainment indicates the availability of a relatively high level of skills and knowledge in the labour force. The greater the level of educational attainment, the more likely it is that individuals will have the relevant skills for employment and entrepreneurship, and the greater their earning potential.

In addition to preparing individuals for the labour market, high levels of educational attainment also have a positive impact on broader social development goals, including increased levels of participation and representation in government and of political influence. Persons with higher levels of educational attainment are usually better equipped to make well-informed decisions, for example about their personal and family health or the environment. Raising educational attainment is a key mechanism for empowering women, improving their access to well-paid jobs, increasing their representation in government and enhancing their political influence.

Current situation

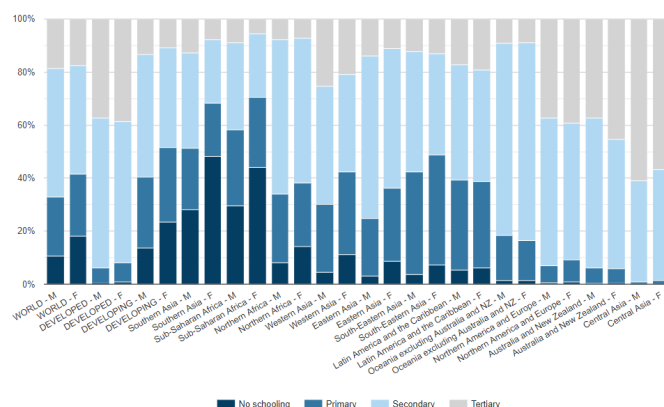
Levels of educational attainment are associated with levels of socioeconomic development

Regional averages¹ of educational attainment among men and women aged 25 and older, calculated according to four education levels:² "no schooling", "primary", "secondary" and "tertiary", show that educational attainment varies substantially across regions (see figure I).

In developed regions, where universal primary education has been attained, the proportions of women and men with no schooling or whose highest attainment is at the primary level are small (less than 10% both for women and men), while those whose highest attainment is at or above the secondary level are substantial (more than 90% for both women and men). Australia and New Zealand and countries in Central Asia and Northern America and Europe display this same pattern. Most countries in Eastern Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, Northern Africa, Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand), South-Eastern Asia and Western Asia also display a similar profile, although the proportion of the population whose highest attainment is at or above the secondary level are moderate (in the range of 50% to 90% for both women and men).

In contrast, in the developing regions of sub-Saharan Africa and Southern Asia, where the goal of universal primary education has not yet been achieved, the proportions of women and men without schooling, or whose highest educational attainment is at the primary level, are significant (over 50% for both women and men), whereas under 50% of women and men have completed either secondary or tertiary level education.

Figure: Distribution of educational attainment of women and men aged 25 and older worldwide and by region: 2005–2018 (latest available) (Percentage)



Source: Computed by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), Statistics Division, based on data from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), UNESCO Institute for Statistics database (accessed in February 2020) (<http://data.uis.unesco.org/>).

Note: Regional averages are weighted by population size of constituent countries. Populations whose education level is unknown have been proportionately distributed over the four main categories of educational attainment ("no schooling", "primary", "secondary" and "tertiary"). Regions, which are the regional groupings under the SDGs indicators framework, are listed in descending order of the percentage of women with no schooling.

Gender disparities against women are most evident among those with no schooling, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa and Southern Asia

Gender differences in the educational attainment of women and men aged 25 and older are most evident among the population with no schooling. Globally, 18% of women compared to 11% of men have no schooling. Some of the largest gaps are found in sub-Saharan Africa, where, on average, 44% of women have never attended school, compared to 30% of men. Gender differences are also large in Southern Asia, where, on average, 48% of women have no schooling, compared to 28% of men.

Primary education is the highest level of educational attainment for slightly above a quarter of the adult population in developing regions of the world

Primary education is the highest level of educational attainment for slightly above a quarter of the adult population in developing regions (27% for women and 28% for men). Primary education is the highest level of attainment for over 30% of women and men in Latin America and the Caribbean and South-Eastern Asia. Corresponding figures for Eastern Asia, Northern Africa, Southern Asia, sub-Saharan Africa and Western Asia are in the range of 20% to 30% for both women and men. In Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand), 15% of women and 17% of men have only attained primary level education, whereas in Australia and New Zealand, Central Asia and Northern America and Europe, less than 10% of women and men have only primary education.

Secondary education is the highest educational level attained by most women and men globally, across both developed and developing regions

Secondary education is attained by the majority of adults, both women and men, across both developed and developing regions: worldwide, on average, 41% of women and 48% of men have completed their secondary education; in developed regions, 53% of women and 57% of men have attained that level; and in developing regions, 38% of women and 46% of men have secondary education qualifications.

By region, in Eastern Asia, Northern Africa, Northern America and Europe and Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand), secondary education is the highest educational level achieved by the majority of the adult population (50% to 75% of both women and men).

In Central Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, South-Eastern Asia and Western Asia, secondary education is the highest level achieved by between 33% and 50% of women and men.

About one in four (24%) women in sub-Saharan Africa, on average, have some secondary education, compared to one in three (33%) men. Secondary education is the highest level of attainment for 24% of women and 36% of men in Southern Asia, revealing a gender gap in the range of 1 to 16 percentage points, representing moderate to severe educational disadvantages against women. Large

gender gaps to the disadvantage of women (in the range of 13 to 16 percentage points) are also observed in India, Nepal and Pakistan.

Globally, nearly 20% of adult women and men have attained tertiary level education; and more women and men in developed regions have attained tertiary education compared to their counterparts in developing regions

Globally, an average of nearly one in five adult women (17%) and men (19%) have attained tertiary education. More women (39%) and men (37%) in developed regions have attained tertiary education as compared to their counterparts in developing regions (11% for women and 13% for men). Tertiary level education is the most common educational attainment in Central Asia, where about 6 in 10 women and men have attended or graduated from post-secondary education. Attainment of tertiary level education is relatively high in Australia and New Zealand, Northern America and Europe and Western Asia (20% to 50% for both women and men). In Eastern Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean and South-Eastern Asia, 10% to 20% of women and men are graduates of tertiary education. In Northern Africa, Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand), Southern Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, tertiary education is least common, with women constituting a minority of the small proportion of the population (less than 10%) that has attained post-secondary education.

Definitions

About the data

- **Educational attainment:**³ Highest level of education, as classified under the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED), an individual has successfully completed, which is typically certified by a recognized qualification certificate. Recognized intermediate qualifications are classified at a lower level.
- **Educational attainment of the population aged 25 and older:** Percentage distribution of the population aged 25 and older according to the highest level of education attained or completed with reference to ISCED. The indicator is closely related to the skills and competencies of national populations, and may be seen as a proxy of both the quantitative and qualitative aspects of the stock of human capital. Higher levels of educational attainment in a population are associated with greater personal, household or national wealth and economic growth.

Coverage

Population aged 25 and older.

Availability

Data on educational attainment are available for 153 countries⁴ for the period 2005–2018 (latest available).⁵

Footnotes

1. It should be noted that the regional averages, which were computed weighted by the population sizes of constituent countries, should not be regarded as exact because of the lack of data for some countries. However, they provide a basis for broad comparison of educational attainment across regions. It is also important to bear in mind that comparability of data is limited because of differing definitions pertaining to educational attainment used by countries and because educational systems in different countries do not necessarily impart the same degree of skills and knowledge at each level of education.
2. The educational attainment category of "no schooling" refers to all persons who have attended less than one grade at the primary level; "primary" comprises those who have completed primary education (ISCED 1) or at least one grade of primary education; "secondary" represents those who have attended lower secondary (ISCED 2), upper secondary (ISCED 3) or post-secondary non-tertiary education (ISCED 4); and "tertiary" comprises those who have attended any level of tertiary education (ISCED 5-8).
3. Caution is required when using this indicator for cross-country comparison, since countries do not always classify degrees and qualifications using the same levels as those set out in the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED), even if they are received at roughly the same age or after a similar number of years of schooling. Also, certain educational programmes and courses of study cannot be easily classified under ISCED. This indicator only measures educational attainment in terms of level of education attained, that is, years of schooling, and does not necessarily reveal the quality of education (learning achievement and other impacts).
4. Countries are organized in [regional groupings](#) under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) indicators framework.
5. Data is from the [United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization \(UNESCO\), UNESCO Institute for Statistics database \(accessed in February 2020\)](#).

School completion at primary and secondary levels of education



Key points

- Gender disparities in school completion rates show different patterns, depending on the level of education and income group.
- Among low-income countries, disparities in school completion, to the disadvantage of girls, are more common at higher levels of education; the converse is true among upper-income, middle-income and high-income countries.
- In upper-income, middle-income and high-income countries, boys are more likely than girls to drop out of school at the upper secondary levels of education as a result of a variety of factors, including poverty, which compels some to choose employment over continued education.
- Among poorer countries, particularly those in sub-Saharan Africa, lower levels of school completion among girls than boys tend to be more common among children from poor households than those from wealthier households, particularly at higher levels of education.

Background

The school completion rate indicates how many persons in a given age group have completed primary, lower secondary or upper secondary education. It indicates how many children and adolescents enter school on time and progress through the education system without excessive delays.

A completion rate at or near 100% indicates that all or most children and adolescents have completed a level of education by the time they are 3–5 years older than the official age of entry into the last grade of that level of education.

A low completion rate indicates low or delayed entry into a given level of education, high drop-out, high repetition, late completion or a combination of those elements.

Difficulty in timely progression through primary and secondary grades occurs for a variety of reasons, mostly related to the educational system and social and economic factors. Gender also plays a significant role in school progression and completion in most countries.

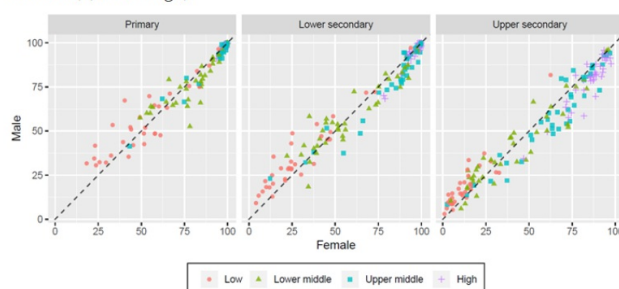
Gender disparities differ across income groups and levels of education

Gender differences in completion rates show different patterns, depending on the level of education and country income group (see figure 1).

Among low-income countries (and to a lesser extent lower-income and middle-income countries), the school completion rate for boys is generally higher than for girls at higher levels of education. This is indicated by the proportion of countries above the parity line, together with the vertical distance between the observation and the parity line.

The converse is true among upper-income, middle-income and high-income countries: male and female completion rates are very similar at the primary level, but diverge increasingly, to the disadvantage of boys, at secondary levels of education. In upper-income, middle-income and high-income countries, boys are more likely than girls to drop out of school at the upper secondary levels of education due to a variety of factors, including poverty, which compels some to choose employment over continuing their education.

Figure I: Completion rates by sex, level of education and country income group: 2018 (or latest year available) (Percentage)



Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics database (<http://uis.unesco.org/>) (accessed February 2020).

Note: Observations below the parity line show disparity in performance to the disadvantage of boys, and observations above the parity line show disparity in performance to the disadvantage of girls. Each country is categorized according to the following broad income groups: low, lower-middle, upper-middle and high.

Gender disparities tend to be greater among poor households than among rich households

Poverty interacts with gender in determining school completion rates. In most countries, disparities between girls and boys from poor households tend to be greater than those from wealthier households, particularly at higher levels of education.

The interaction between poverty and gender can work for or against girls, depending on the circumstances in a given country. As highlighted in the 2019 report of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) on gender equality, among poorer countries, particularly those in sub-Saharan Africa, gender disparities in school performance to the disadvantage of girls tend to be of greater magnitude among girls from poor households than among those from wealthy ones.¹

This is due, in part, to strong social expectations that girls from poor households will marry early. For example, among poor households in Nigeria, on average, only 80 girls complete primary education for every 100 boys, and only 20 girls for every 100 boys at the upper secondary level, whereas there is gender parity among boys and girls from wealthy households.

Among relatively richer countries, gender disparities in performance tend to be to the disadvantage of boys, and, to a greater extent, boys from poor households, possibly because of the greater pressures on poor male students to enter the labour market.² In Thailand (an upper-middle income country), for example, roughly 140 girls for every 100 boys from poor households complete upper secondary education, while there is gender parity among the rich.

Sustained efforts are needed to improve girls' and boys' education

Despite substantial progress in improving school completion rates, more needs to be done to ensure universal primary and secondary education. Sustained efforts are needed to improve educational outcomes for both girls and boys. As stressed by UNESCO in its reports on education for all, policies and programmes need to aim at changing social attitudes, making schools more accessible, monitoring trends in child labour and providing financial support for poor adolescents and youth to continue their education. Social protection programmes, such as cash transfers, family or child allowances, could be considered to reduce direct and opportunity costs for vulnerable children and keep them from having to leave school to work.

Sources

- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, (UNESCO), Gender Report: Building bridges for gender equality, Global Education Monitoring Report, Paris, 2019

- Bruns, B., Evans, D. and Luque, J., *Achieving World-Class Education in Brazil: The Next Agenda*, World Bank, Washington, D.C., 2012
- Evans, D., Kremer, M. and Ngatia, M., "The Impact of Distributing School Uniforms on Children's Education in Kenya", World Bank eLibrary, Washington, D.C., 2009

About the data

Definitions

- **School completion rate:** Percentage of a cohort of children or young people aged 3–5 years above the intended age for the last grade of each level of education who have completed that grade.³ The intended age for the last grade of each level of education is the age at which pupils would enter the grade if they had started school at the official primary entrance age, had studied full-time and had progressed without repeating or skipping a grade. For example, if the official age of entry into primary education is 6 years, and if primary education has 6 grades, the intended age for the last grade of primary education is 11 years old: in this case, 14–16 years ($11 + 3 = 14$ and $11 + 5 = 16$) would be the reference age group for the calculation of the primary completion rate.

Coverage

Girls and boys aged 3–5 years above the intended age for the last grade of: (a) primary; (b) lower secondary; and (c) upper secondary school.

Availability

Data are available for: 86 countries at the primary education level; 117 countries at the lower secondary level; and 120 countries at the upper secondary education level (latest available for the period 2013–2018).

Footnotes

1. UNESCO, Gender Report: Building bridges for gender equality, Global Education Monitoring Report, Paris, 2019.
2. Ibid.
3. Definition and data from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), UNESCO Institute for Statistics, Glossary . (accessed February 2020)

Chapter 4

Economic Empowerment

Introduction

The unequal distribution of unpaid domestic and care work restrains women's economic potential

As of 2020, only less than 50% of women of working age participated in the labour market, compared to around 75% of men, resulting in a gender gap of 27 percentage points globally, similar to the gap observed in 1995, despite a slight decline in participation for both women and men over the past 25 years. In Southern Asia, Northern Africa and Western Asia, women's participation in the labour market is particularly low, below 30%, and there are significant gender differences, of around 50 percentage points, in participation.

The most significant gender gap in labour market participation, which has remained relatively unchanged at above 30 percentage points since 1995, is observed during the prime working ages (25–54), when family responsibilities and the unequal distribution of unpaid domestic and care work in the household impede the ability of women to join the labour force. Household composition is a major factor in explaining the large gender gaps in labour market participation observed in countries worldwide: on average, 82% of women of prime working age living alone are in the labour market, compared to 64% of women living with a partner and 48% of women living with a partner and children. Women's participation rates show a gradual recovery as children grow older, family responsibilities are reduced and mothers have the time and energy to enter or re-enter the labour force.

Women's working conditions differ from men's. According to available data, women are more likely than men to work part-time in almost all countries (95%), to have informal jobs in a majority of countries (56%) and to be engaged as contributing family workers to a much greater extent than men (18% of women versus 7% of men). While these jobs offer more flexibility in terms of working hours, they provide lower pay, reduced job security, fewer training and promotion opportunities and limited access to social protections. Women's higher rate of participation in part-time work may also partially explain the observed persistent gender pay gap at around 12% in favour of men, although, the fact that women and men are oftentimes employed in different sectors and occupations appears to have a more significant impact.

Family responsibilities and the unequal distribution of unpaid domestic and care work between women and men add to women's daily work and may prevent them from participating in the labour market. On an average day, women spend about three times as many hours on unpaid domestic and care work as men (4.2 hours compared to 1.7). Gender inequalities in the amount of time spent on unpaid domestic and care work is lowest in developed regions (where women spend twice as much time as men) and highest in Northern Africa and Western Asia (where women spend more than seven times as much time as men on these activities). In 65% of countries with comparable trend data a small decrease has been observed in the time spent by women on unpaid domestic and care work relative to that spent by men. However, preliminary data from some countries show that the COVID-19 pandemic may have diminished that positive trend. While unpaid domestic and care work has intensified during the pandemic for both sexes, with an observed reduction in the gender gap thanks to a higher contribution by men, women continue to take on the majority of such work, spending about two more hours per day than men.

Asset ownership is beneficial for both women and men, protecting them and their families from economic shocks, yet gender differentials in asset ownership and ownership rights are substantial. As reported in 2017, women continue to have less access to formal financial services (65%) than men (72%), particularly in Western Asia and Northern Africa, and are thus less likely to be able to carry on businesses or fulfil their potential as entrepreneurs. Globally, women are also less likely than men to own a mobile phone (by 7 percentage points) or to have access to the Internet (by 10 percentage points), a gender gap in access to basic ICT services that has grown wider since 2013 in developing regions.

The COVID-19 pandemic may exacerbate gender disparities in labour market outcomes, as many women work in the subsectors hardest hit by COVID-19 and the imposition of lockdown measures, including in paid domestic work, accommodation and food service activities and the retail trade. Women are also on the front lines in the battle against the pandemic, making up over 70% of workers in the health sector and facing higher infection risks than men in the workplace.

Access to formal financial services



Key points

- Since 2011, while levels of financial inclusion have been increasing at a steady rate for both men and women around the world, women's level of access was still behind that of men by 7 percentage points in 2017. This gender gap is more pronounced in developing regions, particularly in Western Asia and in Northern Africa, where the gap stands at 21 percentage points.
- Data collected through the Evidence and Data for Gender Equality (EDGE) project reveal that women entrepreneurs are less likely than men to fulfil their productive and innovative potential for a variety of reasons, including, notably, lack of access to formal financial services.
- In 2017, 45% of women 15 years and above worldwide had saved money in the past 12 months, compared with 52% of men in the same age group. Savings patterns of women and men also differed, with men saving formally and women in alternative ways.

Background

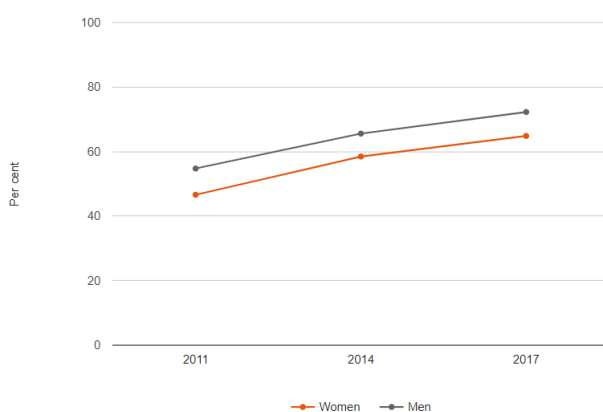
An account at a financial institution or through a mobile-money service gives people access to the formal financial systems and thus to an array of banking services and instruments. Addressing the persistent gender gap in account ownership would boost women's economic empowerment and improve gender parity in other dimensions.¹

Current situation

The global gender gap in financial or mobile-money-account ownership persists

Women are lagging behind men in making use of financial services. In 2017, 65% of women worldwide had an individual or joint account at a financial institution, a bank, credit union, microfinance institution, cooperative or post office, or through a mobile-money service, compared to 72% of men. Despite the overall upward trajectory in financial inclusion for both women and men since 2011, a 7 percentage point gender gap has persisted globally (see figure I).

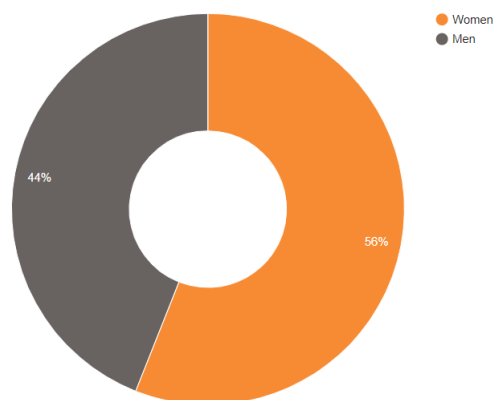
Figure I: Proportion of women and men aged 15 years or older with an account at a bank or other financial institution or with a mobile-money-service provider: 2011-2017 (Percentage)



Source: World Bank, Global Findex Database 2017 (last accessed on 26 June 2020) (<https://globalfindex.worldbank.org/>).

Women constitute a disproportionate share of unbanked individuals compared with men in 2017 (56% versus 44%, respectively) (see figure II).

Figure II: Share of women and men without access to formal financial services: 2017 (Percentage)

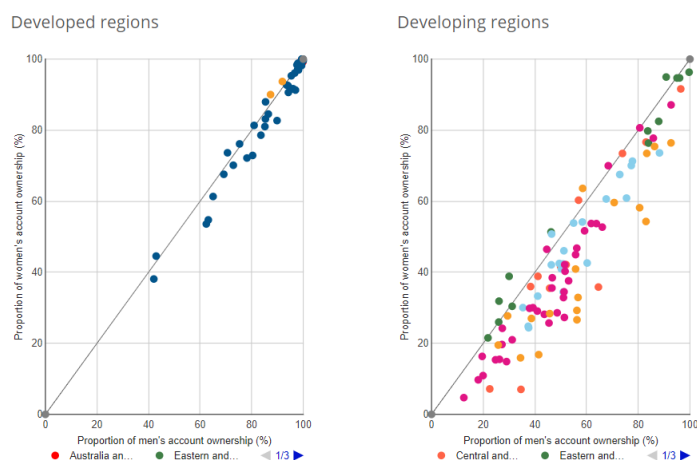


Source: World Bank, Global Findex Database 2017 (last accessed on 26 June 2020) (<https://globalfindex.worldbank.org/>).

The gender gap in financial or mobile-money account ownership is larger in developing regions

In 2017, the proportion of women in developing regions with financial or mobile-money accounts was lower than the proportion of men. Differences in account ownership between women and men were the highest in Western Asia (21 percentage points)² and Northern Africa (21 percentage points),³ with a wide disparity among countries in those regions. Among countries in developing regions, the highest gender gap was observed in Jordan, where 27% of women and 56% of men had banking or mobile-money accounts, a difference of 30 percentage points. In developed regions, there was a less discernable gender gap in account ownership, on average (see figure III).

Figure III: Percentage point difference in account ownership between women and men in developing and developed regions: 2017



Source: Calculated by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), Statistics Division, based on data retrieved from the Global Findex Database 2017 (last accessed on 26 June 2020) (<https://globalfindex.worldbank.org/>).

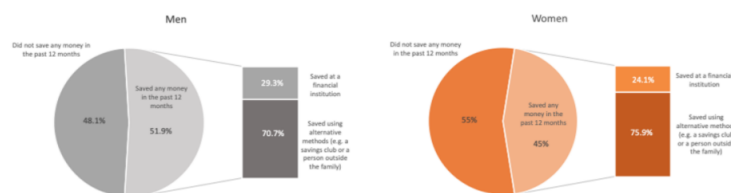
A bank account provides a secure avenue to save and borrow money, which opens up formal channels for women to invest in capital for their businesses and entrepreneurial activities, and for themselves, their families and their children. Findings of the Evidence and Data for Gender Equality (EDGE) project⁴ reveal that women entrepreneurs are less likely than men to fulfil their productive and innovative potential due to a variety of factors, including lack of account ownership (including financial asset accumulation and ownership) and reduced access to external financing through formal channels. In Mongolia, where the proportion of women with financial or mobile-money accounts was four percentage points higher than that of men, data collected in 2016 under the EDGE project revealed that women entrepreneurs were more likely than men to register their businesses in public records (47% versus 32%, respectively)⁵ and were exposed to less economic vulnerability as a result.

In addition, having a financial or mobile-money account increases women's economic freedom and **decision-making power in the home**, including managing the flow of earnings from employment and/or the stock of owned assets and deciding on major purchases. Furthermore, having a banking account connects women with far more agents in the economy, giving them access to and control over information, networks and payments, such as remittances, installments, wages, taxes and government cash transfers, through reliable and affordable payment systems.

Saving patterns vary among women and men

Account ownership enables women to safeguard their savings in banks and other financial institutions, increasing their resilience to withstand possible exogenous shocks during different stages of the life cycle and to escape poverty. Globally, it is estimated that 45% of women aged 15 and above saved money in 2017, compared with 52% of men in the same age group. While a relatively higher proportion of men saved formally at financial institutions (29%), women tended to save money in alternative ways, including through semi-formal savings clubs or by entrusting savings to an individual outside the family (see figure IV).

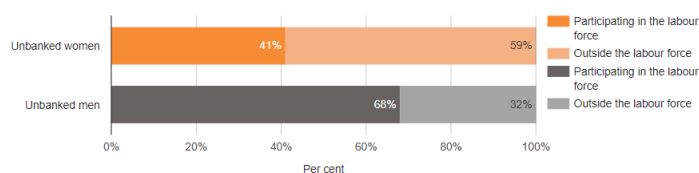
Figure IV: Proportion of women and men aged 15 years or older who saved (or did not save) money in the past 12 months, by method of savings: 2017



Source: Calculated by UNDESA, Statistics Division, from the World Bank Global Findex Database 2017 (last accessed on 26 June 2020) (<https://globalfindex.worldbank.org/>).

In addition to the legal barriers that may restrict women's ability to have a banking account, structural differences can also help explain the gender gap in account ownership. The effect of gender on bank account ownership remains significant in developing regions, even after controlling for income, education, employment status, rural residency and age.⁶ Furthermore, in 2017, among adults without an account worldwide, women were less likely than men to participate in the **labour force** (41% versus 68%, respectively) (see figure V). In a study conducted in the State of Madhya Pradesh in India, it was found that boosting women's bargaining power by helping them to open bank accounts and understand the basic principles of banking and by advising them to deposit their public workfare programme wages into their own accounts rather than into those owned by male household heads, increased women's labour force participation rate in both the public and private sectors, particularly in the case of women who were least involved in the labour force prior to the State intervention and whose husbands were most opposed to them working.⁷

Figure V: Participation level in the labour force of women and men aged 15 and above without an account at a bank or other financial institution: 2017 (Percentage)



Source: World Bank, Global Findex Database 2017 (last accessed on 26 June 2020) (<https://globalfindex.worldbank.org/>).

Country in focus: Turkey

Adult women with accounts at a bank or other financial institution may still face a gender bias in the use of financial services and instruments. In 2017, the gender gap in account ownership in Turkey remained considerable, at 29 percentage points. In a controlled experiment, fictional women-owned businesses received, *ceteris paribus* and independent of their credit riskiness, owing to a gender bias on the part of loan officers, 10% less in loan amounts, on average, compared to fictional men-owned businesses.⁸

Legal frameworks

Women in Cameroon, Chad, Gabon, Guinea-Bissau and Niger cannot legally open a bank account in the same way as men do. In addition, women in 16 countries (10 in Western Asia) cannot legally travel outside their homes in the same way as men and may face obstacles to going into banks or other financial institutions.⁹

About the data

Definition

- **Proportion of women and men aged 15 and above with an account at a bank or other financial institution or with a mobile-money-service provider:** This indicator provides information on access to formal financial services. It measures the percentage of adult women and men aged 15 and above who report having an individual or joint account at a bank or other type of financial institution or using a mobile-money-service provider in the past 12 months. Other types of financial institutions include credit unions, microfinance institutions, cooperatives or post offices.

Coverage

Women and men aged 15 and above.

Footnotes

1. Holloway, K., Niazi, Z. and Rouse, R., "Women's Economic Empowerment through Financial Inclusion", Policy Brief, Innovations for Poverty Action, New Haven, 2017 .
2. Unweighted average for the region calculated by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), Statistics Division.
3. Ibid.
4. Outputs and findings of the [Evidence and Data for Gender Equality \(EDGE\) project](#), implemented by UNDESA, Statistics Division, in collaboration with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women)
5. Results of the EDGE survey piloted in Mongolia in 2015 to measure entrepreneurship from a gender perspective.
6. Demirgüç-Kunt, A., Klapper, L.F., and Singer, D., "Financial inclusion and legal discrimination against women: evidence from developing countries", Policy Research Working Paper, No. 6416, World Bank, 2013 .
7. Field, E., Pande, R., Rigol, N., Schaner, S. and Troyer, C., "On Her Own Account: How Strengthening Women's Financial Control Impacts Labor Supply and Gender Norms", Discussion Paper No. 2201, Cowles Foundation for Research in Economics, Yale University Press, 2019 .
8. Source: World Bank, Project appraisal document on a proposed loan, report No. PAD2768 .
9. Source: World Bank, Women, Business and the Law 2020, Washington, D.C., 2020 .

Italy: behaviour and activities during the Coronavirus-19 lockdown: a gender approach

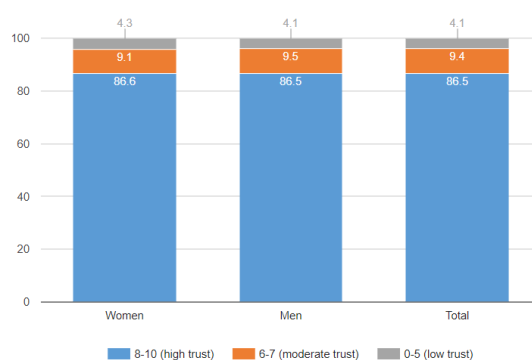


COVID-19 lockdown in Italy: close-knit country and close-knit families

A feeling of strong cohesion characterized the mood in Italy during the lockdown phase of the COVID-19 epidemic in April 2020.¹ People reacted to the restrictions imposed during the lockdown in a consistent manner and no gender differences emerged in the behaviours adopted. The feeling of solidarity was primarily manifested in a strong and widespread trust in the central institutions engaged in the fight against the spread of COVID-19.

In response to the survey, on a scale from 0 (no trust) to 10 (maximum trust), the majority of citizens reported that they totally trusted medical staff (55.4%), paramedics (55.8%) and civil protection officials (50.8%), and over 80% of citizens responded within the scale from 8 to 10 in reply to the same questions.

Figure I: Proportion of people 18 and over by level of trust in the medical staff of the national health system by sex (on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 indicates no trust and 10 maximum trust): April 2020 (Percentage)



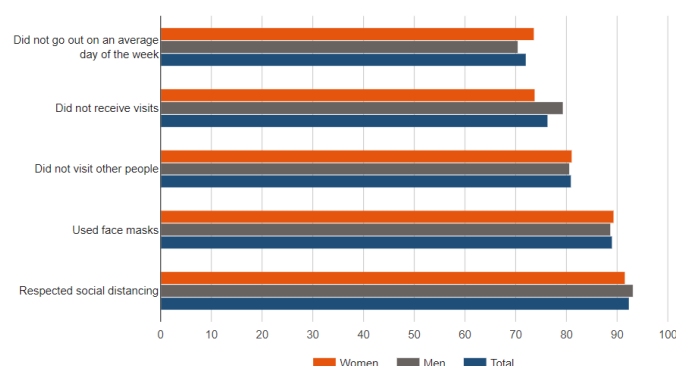
Source: National Statistical Institute (ISTAT), Survey on day diary and activities at the time of the Coronavirus (<https://www.istat.it/it/archivio/241013>).

Overall, the population showed a heightened sense of civic responsibility, as indicated by the data collected on behaviours (see figure II). The use of face masks was widespread (89.1%) throughout the entire country, regardless of local conditions of greater or lesser risk of contagion.

Guidance on social distancing was also respected by most people, regardless of age and gender; 92.4% of people stated that they consistently observed this rule. Importantly, the stay-at-home advisory to avoid the spread of the virus, with a view to protecting oneself and others, was followed by the vast majority of the population.

On an average day, 72% of the adult population did not go out at all, 22.7% went out once and only 5.2% twice or more. In this regard, for purposes of comparison, it must be remembered that, under normal conditions, 90% of the adult population make at least one trip outside the house during the day. People also stayed at home to protect loved ones from contagion: less than one-fifth of the adult population visited other people to bring them groceries, medications or to keep them company, and a low percentage of people received visits (23.6%). No significant gender differences were recorded.

Figure II: Proportion of the population aged 18 and over by level of compliance with selected rules aimed at reducing the contagion by sex: April 2020 (Percentage)



Source: National Statistical Institute (ISTAT), Survey on day diary and activities at the time of the Coronavirus (<https://www.istat.it/it/archivio/241013>)

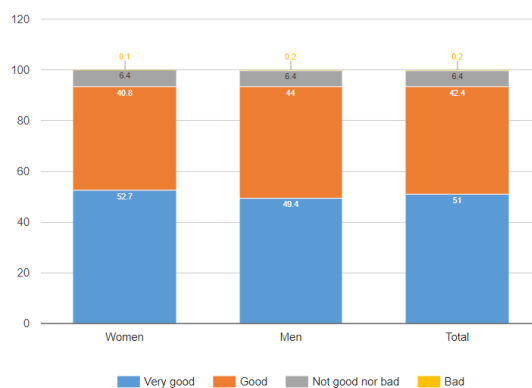
The family played a positive role in ensuring that the COVID-19 lockdown period was sustainable: in general, the family environment was described as a peaceful and positive (see figure III).

Among those living in households of two or more, 51% defined family relationships as excellent and 42.4% as good. From the survey data, it is clear that 9 out of 10 citizens were able to spend lockdown in a pleasant family context. Only 6.4% of respondents indicated that they could not define relationships as either good or bad, and almost no one (0.2%) gave a negative rating.

Relationships among household members during the lockdown remained unchanged for 81.3% of the population. For 15.6% of the population, family relationships improved, while only 2.6% reported that they had worsened. Most people reported that they found comfort in their families and devoted more time to relationships, and relationships between couples do not seem to have been negatively affected. In 86.1% of cases, people indicated that their relationships were as good as before the lockdown, while in 2.8% of cases people reported them to be as bad as they had been previously.

Overall, the situation remained stable: 8.6% of people living with a partner reported that their relationships had changed for the better, only 1.9% of people reported having experienced a period with more misunderstandings and 0.2% reported having major quarrels.

Figure III: Proportion of the population aged 18 and over by evaluation of family environment by sex: April 2020 (Percentage)

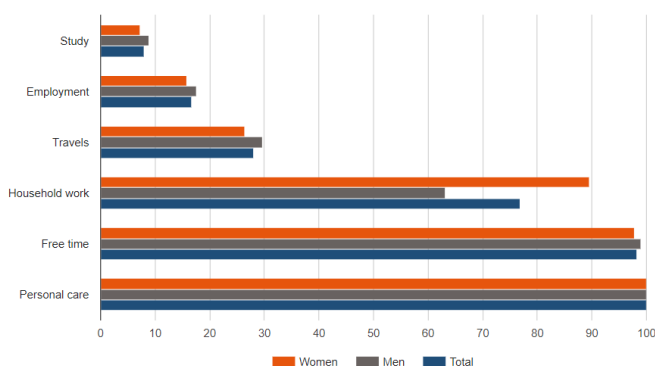


Source: National Statistical Institute (ISTAT), Survey on day diary and activities at the time of the Coronavirus (<https://www.istat.it/it/archivio/241013>).

The need to stay at home during the lockdown had a marked impact on the daily activities of a large part of the population. Many individuals had to change, cancel or reorganize planned activities, focusing their energies on work within the home, devoting time to matters that had been postponed or seizing the opportunity to express creativity and experiment with new activities: the variety of everyday chores and activities that occupied people during lockdown is rich and heterogeneous (see figure IV). Most people found that they had free time to devote to recreational activities, while more than three quarters had household and family-care activities to do; only 28% went out for a walk, went to work or went shopping for food. Work and educational activities engaged 16.7% and 8% of the population, respectively. No significant gender differences were recorded in daily activities, apart from unpaid household work.

While there is a pronounced and continuing gender gap in terms of unpaid household work in Italy (see figure IV), there has been a growing tendency in recent years for men and women to share domestic chores and childcare. During the lockdown, with couples spending longer periods of time together at home and the increased burden of childcare resulting from the closure of schools, domestic chores were shared to a greater degree, although not to such an extent as to obviate the gender gap in household responsibilities.

Figure IV: Proportion of people aged 18 and over by daily activities performed during lockdown by sex: April 2020



Source: National Statistical Institute (ISTAT), Survey on day diary and activities at the time of the Coronavirus (<https://www.istat.it/it/archivio/241013>)

Among many domestic chores (see figure V), the preparation of meals involved the largest proportion of the population (63.6%). Overall, there was a strong gender gap in this regard, with women more involved in this activity (82.9%, compared to 42.9% of men). However, in a third of households, meals were prepared by both sexes, without significant gender differences.

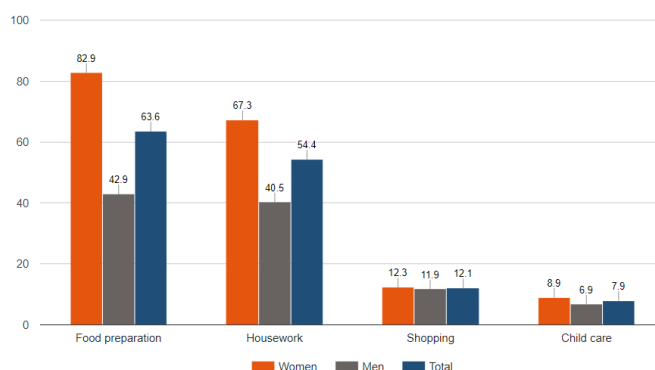
In addition, during the lockdown some gastronomic traditions were rediscovered, such as baking pizza, bread or cakes (53% of the population aged 18 and over). While the percentage was higher among women (69.6%), the percentage among men was also sizable (37.3%). The preparation of fruit jams, vegetables or family food packages also increased during the lockdown.

More than half of the population spent time on housecleaning (54.4%) and 40% reported that they spent more time doing housework than usual. The gender gap was also significant in this area (about 27 percentage points), although lower than that the gap seen in traditional time-use surveys (46 percentage points). The smaller gender gap can be explained by the fact that couples spent a significant amount of time together at home, had fewer work commitments and more opportunities to reconcile the responsibilities of work and family.

Among the usual household work activities, shopping during the pandemic involved fewer people (only 1 person out of 10), but it proved, once again, to be an activity more equally distributed between men and women. As was to be expected, about one in two people reported that they had spent more time shopping than they had done before the lockdown, mainly because of the queues.

During the month of April 2020, 85.9% of the population with children between 0–14 years (or 7.9% of the population as a whole) reported being involved in childcare activities. The constant presence of children in the home, and the need to monitor and assist them with distance learning, strongly affected the activities of both parents. Indeed, 67.2% of people involved in this activity indicated they spent more time than in the past on care work, with a very similar rate of increase for both sexes.

Figure V: Proportion of people aged 18 and over by household activities performed during lockdown by sex: April 2020 (Percentage)



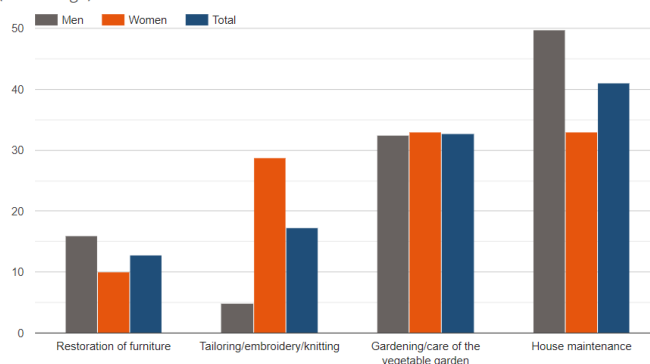
Source: National Statistical Institute (ISTAT), Survey on day diary and activities at the time of the Coronavirus (<https://www.istat.it/it/archivio/241013>)

Gender differences in free-time activities

Enforced confinement encouraged a substantial share of population to spend part of their free time on activities such as house maintenance, board games and practicing artistic activities, including painting, singing and writing (see figure VI). Household maintenance activities engaged 41% of the population, and 22.3% carried out such activities on a weekly basis. Almost a third of the population devoted time to gardening or garden care (27% at least weekly); 17.3% of people sewed, embroidered or knitted (10.9% at least weekly); and 12.8% dedicated themselves to the restoration of furniture or household items (5.4% at least weekly).

Men were more active in activities related to do-it-yourself projects, such as the restoration of furniture or objects for the home (15.9% of men versus 10% of women) or in home-maintenance work (49.7% of men versus 33% of women). Women, on the other hand, were mainly involved in tailoring/embroidery/knitting activities (28.7% of women versus 4.9% of men). No gender differences were observed in gardening or in taking care of vegetable gardens. Taking into account the frequency of free-time activities practiced compared to 2015 (on a weekly basis), there was an increase of at least 50% overall, with the exception of sewing and embroidery, where the rate of participation remained stable.

Figure VI: Proportion of people aged 18 and over engaged in selected free-time activities by sex: April 2020 (Percentage)



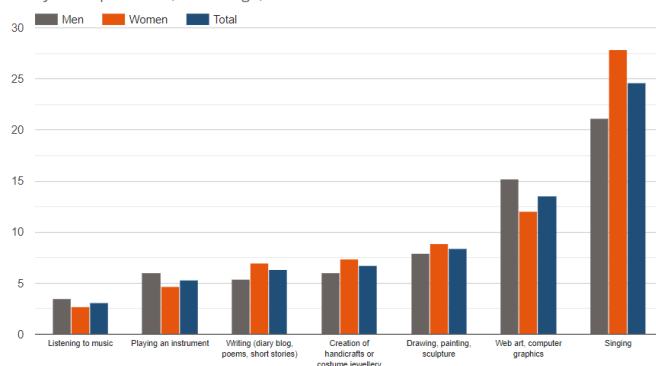
Source: National Statistical Institute (ISTAT), Survey on day diary and activities at the time of the Coronavirus (<https://www.istat.it/it/archivio/241013>)

During the lockdown, a significant proportion of the population devoted time to creative activities related to: music (singing, playing or listening to music); the figurative arts (drawing, painting, sculpture); writing; or the creation of handicrafts or costume jewellery (42.2% of the population aged 18 and over reported being involved in at least one of the above areas of creative activities). Singing was

reported to occupy the largest share (24.6%) of creative activities, especially among women (27.9% of women compared to 21.1% among men) (see figure VII).

If we consider the recreational activities performed at least on a weekly basis, a significant increase is observed compared to 2015. For example, the share of those who sang at least weekly was 2.6% in 2015, while it reached 15.9% during the lockdown.

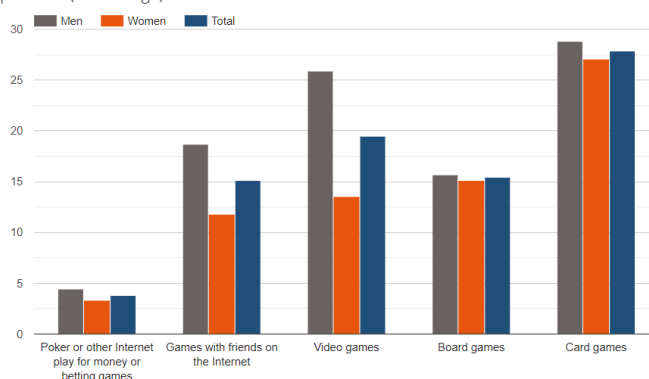
Figure VII: Proportion of people aged 18 and over engaged in selected free time activities during lockdown by sex: April 2020 (Percentage)



Source: National Statistical Institute (ISTAT), Survey on day diary and activities at the time of the Coronavirus (<https://www.istat.it/it/archivio/241013>)

Board games or other types of games were another activity reported to have occupied the time of 45% of the population aged 18 and over during the lockdown (see figure VIII). Card games and video games were the favourite choice. Gender differences were observed, with a higher proportion of men playing video games (25.9% of men versus 13.5% of women) and games with friends on the Internet (18.7% of men versus 11.8% of women), although this was not the case for other types of games.

Figure VIII: Proportion of people aged 18 and over engaged in selected games during the lockdown by sex: April 2020 (Percentage)



Source: National Statistical Institute (ISTAT), Survey on day diary and activities at the time of the Coronavirus (<https://www.istat.it/it/archivio/241013>)

Related stories and further reading

- Time spent on unpaid work, total work burden and work-life balance

Sources

- National Statistical Institute (ISTAT), Reazione dei cittadini al lockdown, Roma, 25 maggio 2020.
- Ibid., Fase 1: le giornate in casa durante il lockdown, Roma, 5 giugno 2020.
- Ibid., Rapporto annuale 2020 - La situazione del paese, Roma, 3 luglio 2020.

About the data

Definition

Behaviours and daily activities during the Coronavirus-19 (COVID-19) lockdown in Italy in April 2020

Coverage

Population aged 18 and over living/resident in households in Italy (April 2020).

Source

Survey carried out in Italy from 5–22 April 2020, providing estimates at the national level and covering three broad geographical areas with different levels of Coronavirus-19 (COVID-19) infection.²

Footnotes

1. [More information about the survey is available at the linked website \(Italian only\).](#)

2. The survey, entitled "Day-diary and activities during Coronavirus-19", was aimed at gaining an understanding of how the pandemic changed people's habits and how they carried out their daily lives during the height of the pandemic in Italy.

Colombia: effect of the Coronavirus-19 pandemic on women



Key points

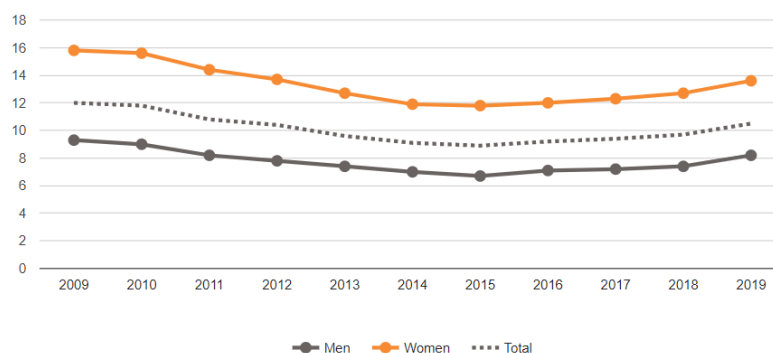
- The Coronavirus-19 (COVID-19) pandemic has had a major economic impact on women in Colombia, who represent 53.4% of the population employed in vulnerable sectors (excluding construction).
- In 2019, 79.4% of household enterprises operating in vulnerable sectors were owned by women.
- By the end of March 2020, 863,000 women and 721,000 men were no longer employed compared to March 2019.

Impacts on the labour market

In the last 10 years, on average, the unemployment rate among women has been between 5 and 6 percentage points higher than the rate among men (see figure I): the average employment rate has been 46% for women and 69% for men, a difference of 23 percentage points.

These data indicate that the Colombian labour market had unbalanced outcomes for women and men even before the crisis generated by the **COVID-19 pandemic**.

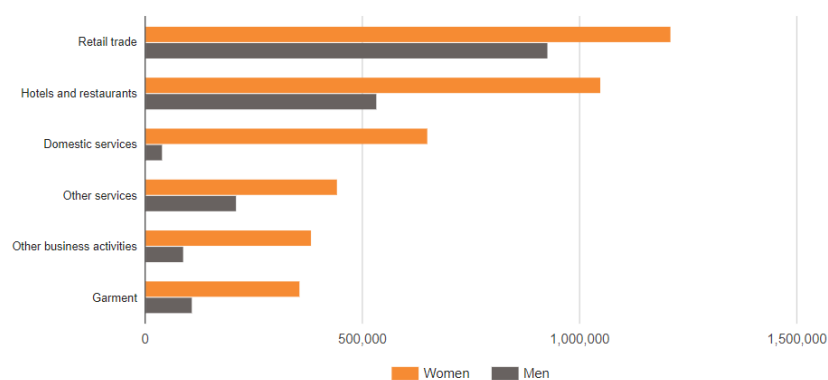
Figure I: Unemployment rate by sex: 2009-2019 (Percentage)



Source: Government of Colombia, National Department of Statistics (DANE), national integrated household survey (GEIH), 2019 (correspondence with the National Department of Statistics on 31 August 2020).

In cooperation with Javeriana University, the Colombian National Department of Statistics has identified 31 **economic sub-sectors**¹ that are considered vulnerable because they produce goods or provide services that are considered non-essential in times of economic crisis or because they cannot operate under the required social distancing mandate (for example, hairdressing shops, hotels and retail stores). In some of these sectors, including the retail trade, hotels and restaurants and paid domestic work, the majority of workers are women (see figure II).

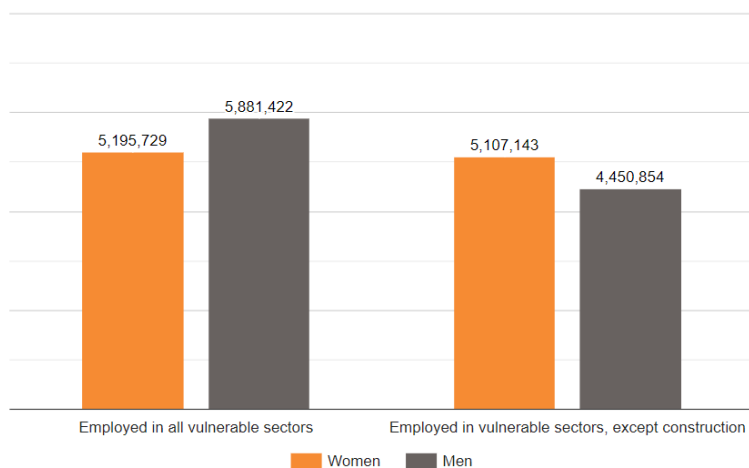
Figure II: Number of women and men working in selected vulnerable economic sectors with high prevalence of female workers: 2019



Source: Government of Colombia, National Department of Statistics (DANE), national integrated household survey (GEIH), 2019 (correspondence with the National Department of Statistics on 31 August 2020).

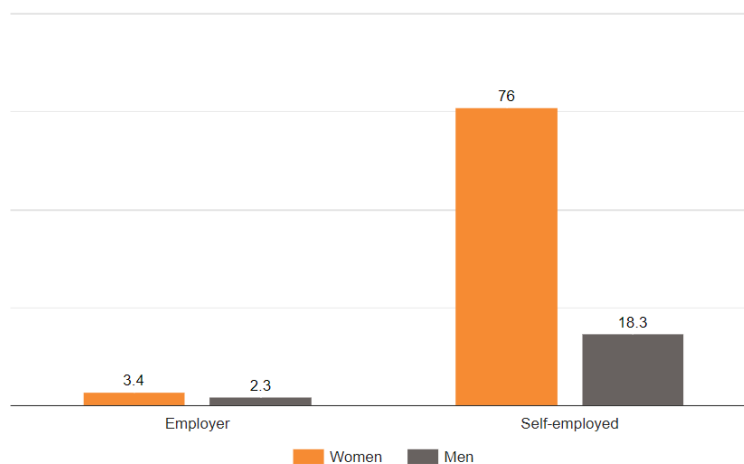
In 2019, over 5 million women and close to 6 million men were employed in vulnerable sectors, corresponding to 56.3% of all employed women and 45% of all employed men. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a severe economic impact on women, who make up more than half (53.4%) of those employed in vulnerable sectors (excluding the construction sector, which has seen minimal interruption) (see figure III).

Figure III: Number of women and men employed in vulnerable economic sectors (including and excluding construction): 2019



Source: Government of Colombia, National Department of Statistics (DANE), national integrated household survey (GEIH), 2019 (correspondence with the National Department of Statistics on 31 August 2020).

Hairdressing and other beauty-related businesses are considered to be part of the vulnerable economic sector — they were forced to close first, at the onset of the pandemic, and will reopen last. In 2019, there were 261,678 household enterprises in vulnerable economic sectors, 79.4% of which were owned by women, most of them self-employed (76%) (see figure IV).

Figure IV: Ownership of household enterprises by sex: 2019 (Percentage)

Source: Government of Colombia, National Department of Statistics (DANE), national integrated household survey (GEIH), 2019 (correspondence with the National Department of Statistics on 31 August 2020).

In the economically vulnerable sector, most household enterprises operate informally: 42% by delivery service, 33.9% from inside a home, 23.6% in premises and 0.3% in an uncovered site. In the same way, 78% do not have a tax registration identification and 88% do not have trade registration identification. For these reasons, many individuals in this sector may not easily be able to benefit from Government assistance provided during the pandemic.

As indicated in the first labour market report issued after the lockdown,² by 31 March 2020, 10 days after the lockdown, 863,000 women and 721,000 men were no longer employed (compared to March 2019).

Simultaneously, there was an increase in the economically inactive population of 1 million women and 0.7 million men (compared to March 2019). Most newly inactive women reported household chores as their main activity, compared to 42% of newly inactive men.

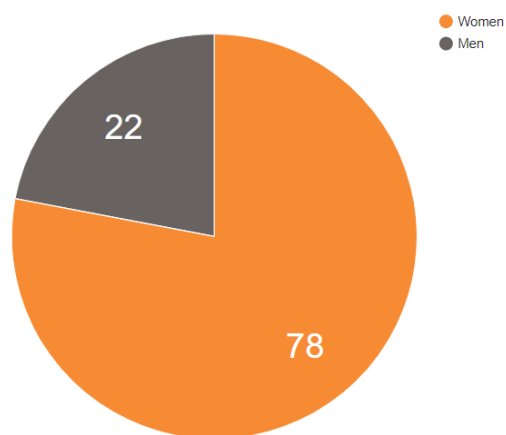
Impacts of increased care burden

In Colombia, approximately 30 million people take care of other people in their homes, by cooking, cleaning, helping them to bathe or dress and providing general care. Inside the household, 78% of unpaid care and domestic work is done by women (see figure V).

The unequal distribution of unpaid care work inside the household decreases the time women have for study, paid work, self-care, rest and leisure.

In addition, women in nuclear households with children spend 10 hours per day on unpaid work, twice as much time as women in households without children. During the pandemic, the work burden of women with children has increased due to the temporary closure of schools and day-care centres, as well as the unavailability of paid domestic workers and paid care services.

Figure V: Distribution of unpaid care work between women and men in hours per year: 2016-2017
(Percentage)



Source: Government of Colombia, National Department of Statistics (DANE), national time-use survey (ENUT 2016 - 2017)
(<https://www.dane.gov.co/index.php/estadisticas-por-tema/pobreza-y-condiciones-de-vida/encuesta-nacional-del-uso-del-tiempo-enut>).

About the data

Definitions

- **Employment/unemployment rate:** Provides information on the proportion of women and men in the labour force in Colombia (aged 12 and above in urban areas and 10 and above in rural areas) who were employed/unemployed during the reference period.
- **Unpaid work:** Includes activities not included in the System of National Accounts (SNA), including the provision of unpaid domestic and caregiving services for the household and family members, as well as volunteer work for other households, the community or organizations.

Footnotes

1. Government of Colombia, National Department of Statistics (DANE) database .
2. Government of Colombia, National Department of Statistics (DANE), Labour Market, statistics (January—March 2020)

Economic empowerment

Switzerland: employment models in couple households



Key points

- In Switzerland, employment is unequally divided between women and men in couple households with children; it is rare that both parents work part-time or both full-time.¹ Most commonly, fathers are employed full-time and mothers are employed part-time. In the next most frequent situation, fathers work full time and mothers are economically inactive.
- In 2019, the highest proportion of couples in which both parents work part-time (10.5%) was recorded in couple households with youngest children under age 4. As children grow older, there is a decline in the number of households with mothers who are economically inactive.
- The proportion of couple households with youngest children between ages 4–12 in which both parents work full-time increased from 8.9% in 2010 to 12.4% in 2019.
- In 2019, the proportion of couples in which men are economically inactive or employed part-time and women are employed full-time (6%) was observed in couple households without children.
- In couple households with youngest children aged 0–3, the highest proportion of couples with both parents working full-time (19.6%) was recorded (cumulatively) between 2015–2017 in the French-speaking part of Switzerland, partly due to the more widespread availability of childcare facilities.

Background

An equal share of paid and unpaid work between women and men contributes to gender equality. In the Sustainable Development Goal 5, target 5.4, of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development promotes "shared responsibility within the household and the family". The indicator on employment models in couple households contributes to the monitoring of SDG indicator 5.4.1 (proportion of time spent on unpaid domestic and care work, by sex, age and location).

Balancing work and family life is challenging in all countries in the world. In Switzerland, it is increasingly rare that a single salary is sufficient to meet the financial needs of the household, and consequently both parents often need to work to support the family. Furthermore, many women have higher educational qualifications and do not want to abandon their careers. Work-life balance is therefore a very important issue for both women and men.

The fact that women, and mothers in particular, are increasingly engaged in paid employment should not obscure the fact that most work **part-time** and that some are in employment with a low work-time percentage (under 50%) when they have children in the home. In a majority of cases, men, particularly fathers, work full-time, and thus the burden of balancing work and family is usually borne by mothers.

Part-time work offers an effective way to balance time spent on household responsibilities and childrearing,² and it should be an equal opportunity for both women and men. While part-time work is also seen a way to increase employment levels, particularly among women, a part-time job, in particular a job with a work-time percentage of less than 50%, may entail precarious working conditions, insufficient social security coverage (for example, a lack of a pension fund) and fewer opportunities for further education and training and career advancement.

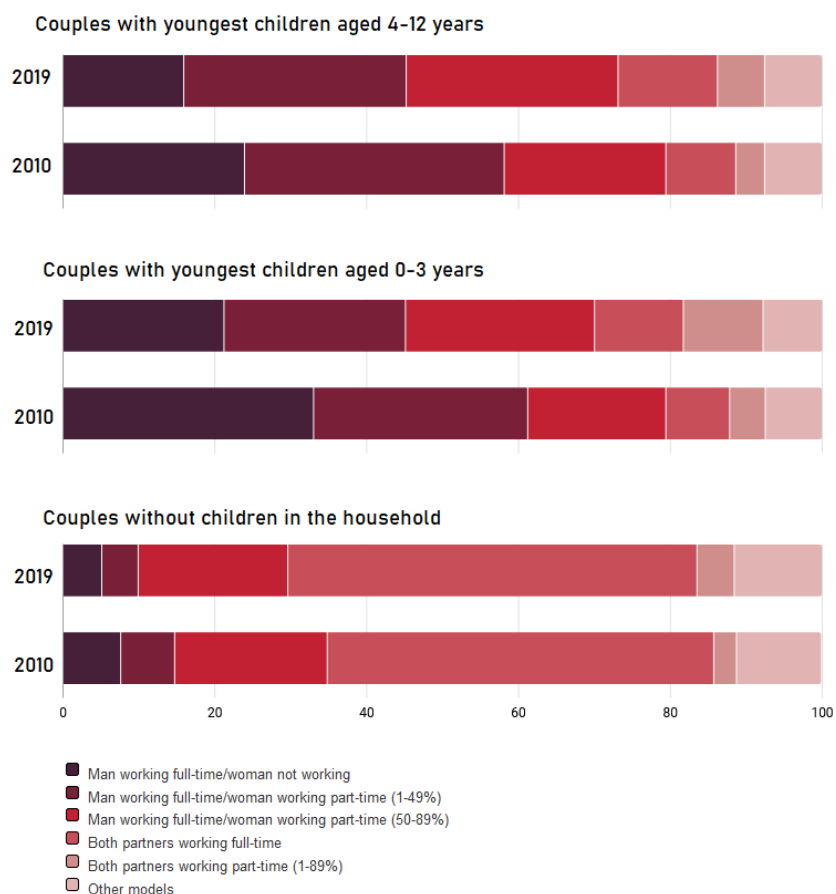
In Switzerland, women living in couple households bear greater responsibility for the domestic and family

workload, and this inequality extends also into the work arena, particularly for women with children. It is often the case that women reduce their working hours or give up their jobs, either temporarily or completely, when they have children. Most frequently, fathers are employed full-time and mothers part-time; to a lesser extent, fathers work in full-time employment and mothers are economically inactive.

As children grow older, a decline is seen in the number of households with mothers who are economically inactive and there is an observable increase in the number of households with mothers with a higher work-time percentage, that is, working part-time at 50% to 89% or working full-time. The proportion of couple households in which both partners work part-time is most common in families where the youngest child is under age 4 (10.5% of couple households). In a small share of couple households (3.5%), the man does not work or works part-time (at 1% to 89%) and the woman works full-time. This is more common when there are no children in the household (6%).

Although the share of fathers working part-time has increased slightly over the past 10 years, the proportion of couple households with youngest children aged 4–12 in which both partners work part-time is low (3.8 % in 2010, and 6.2% in 2019). Over the same time period, households with both parents working full-time increased from 9.2% to 13.1% (see figure I).

Figure I: Employment models in couple households by sex and age of children: 2010 and 2019 (Percentage)



Source: Government of Switzerland, Federal Statistical Office, Swiss Labour Force Survey, 2019 (correspondence with the Swiss Federal Statistical Office on 4 August 2020) (<https://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/en/home/statistics/work-income/surveys/slfs.html>).

Note: Couple households with both partners aged 25-54: full-time employment refers to work-time percentages of 90% to 100%.

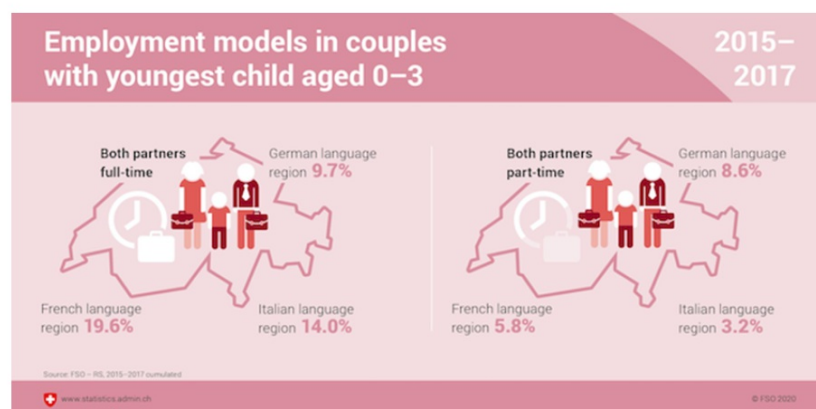
In cumulated data collected over three consecutive years for the annual structural survey, regional differences in the employment patterns of couple households with children are evident. The proportion of households with both parents working part-time is more common in the German-speaking part of Switzerland, and the proportion of households with both parents working full-time is more common in the French-speaking part of the country.

Taking only households with youngest children aged 0–3 into account, meaning that the youngest child is not of school age, regional differences remain. The highest proportion of households with couples working full time is in the French-speaking part of Switzerland, where, in one fifth (19.6%) of households with youngest children aged 0–3, both partners are employed full-time (see figure II). This is possible because of the greater availability of childcare facilities in the French-speaking part of Switzerland. In the German-speaking part of Switzerland, both parents are engaged in full-time work in only 9.7% of households with children ages 0–3.

In Switzerland, working parents often seek assistance from grandparents and neighbours, and use the services

provided by institutional childcare centres and out-of-school facilities to ease the burden on the household and to provide them with ways to achieve a better sharing of paid and unpaid work, as well as a better work-life balance. Childcare services in Switzerland are not always affordable, available in sufficient numbers or compatible with parents' work schedules.

Figure II: Employment models in couples with youngest children aged 0-3 by region: 2015-2017 (Percentage)



Source: Government of Switzerland, Federal Statistical Office, 2015-2017 cumulated (correspondence with the Swiss Federal Statistical Office on 4 August 2020) (https://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/en/home/search.html?dyn_search=Employment&dyn_tab=0&dyn_orderby=relevance).

Note: Part-time employment refers to work-time percentages 1% to 89%, and full-time employment refers to work-time percentages 90% to 100%. The results are based on three consecutive annual structural surveys.

Sources

- Government of Switzerland, Federal Statistical Office, "On the way to gender equality - Current situation and developments", 2019
- Government of Switzerland, Federal Statistical Office, "Employment models in couple households"
- United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, Population and Gender Database, work-life balance, "Couples with both partners aged 25-49 by working pattern and age of youngest child"

About the data

Definitions

- **Employment models in couple households:** Measure (a) the participation in the labour market and (b) the work-time percentage of both women and men in the household.

Coverage

Women and men aged 25–54 in couple households at the national and regional level.

Availability

Data on employment models have been provided by the Federal Statistical Office of the Government of Switzerland.³

Footnotes

1. Full-time employment refers to work-time percentages of 90% to 100%.
2. United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), Statistics Division, *The World's Women 2015: Trends and Statistics*, chap. 4, New York, 2015.
3. Government of Switzerland, Federal Statistical Office.

Unemployment rate by sex, age and persons with disabilities



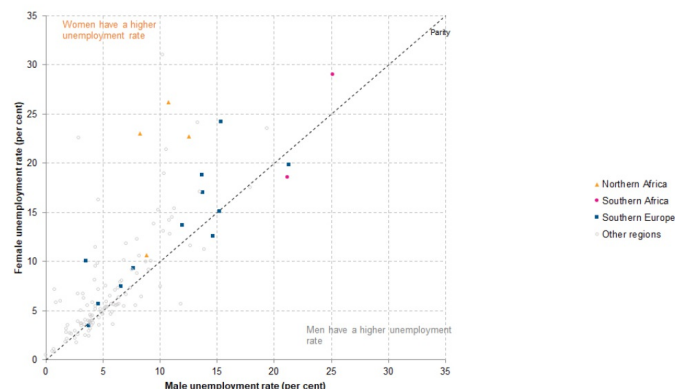
Key points

- In 2019, the worldwide unemployment rate for women aged 15 and older (5.6%) was slightly higher than that for men in the same age group (5.3%).
- Women's unemployment rates were higher than men's in 85 out of 129 countries with available data between 2015 and 2019 (66%), with higher rates observed in Northern Africa, resulting in a 12 percentage points gender gap in unemployment.
- Overall, the age gap in unemployment appears more significant than the gender gap. In 2019, global unemployment rates for young women and young men were more than twice as high as those for the overall working age population and more than three times as high as those for the adult population aged 25 years or older.
- In 2019, unemployment among women was particularly pervasive in countries in Northern Africa (21.5%) and Western Asia (15.1%).
- Disability status is an exacerbating factor in unemployment both for women and men: in 68% of countries with comparable data, the unemployment rate was higher for persons with disabilities, and in 54% of countries the rate was higher for women.

The unemployment rate is higher for women than men in most countries

In 2019, in 85 countries and territories among 129 with available data (66%), the unemployment rate for women was higher than that for men. This pattern was particularly evident in Northern Africa, where the gender gap in the unemployment rate amounted to 12 percentage points (see figure I).

Figure I: Unemployment rate among persons aged 15 years and older by sex: 2015–2019 (latest available)



Source: Global SDG Indicators Database (<https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/database/>); ILO modelled estimates (last accessed on 10 August 2020).

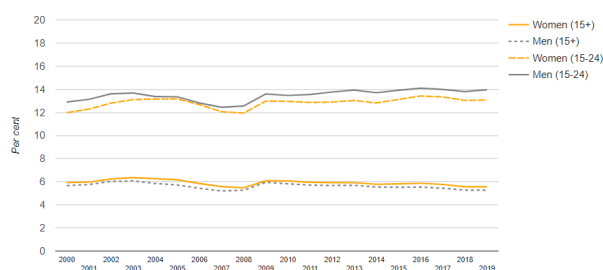
Note: Individual countries have been highlighted.

During the period 2000–2019, unemployment among youth has been persistently higher than among the overall working-age population

In 2019, the unemployment rate for women aged 15 years and older was 5.6% worldwide, slightly higher than that for men in the same age group (5.3%). The proportion of unemployed among working-age women and men in the labour force has remained steady since 2000, with a slight increase observed between 2008 and 2009.

With regard to youth unemployment, since 2000, on average, young men aged 15–24 have been slightly more likely (14%) to be unemployed than young women (13%), although young women have faced a significantly higher incidence of not being engaged in education, employment or training (NEET),¹ which may indicate a level of discouragement about entering into the labour market and thus their exclusion from the count of unemployed persons. Overall, the age gap in unemployment appears more significant than the gender gap (see figure II). In 2019, unemployment rates for young women and young men were more than twice as high as those for the overall working-age population and more than three times as high as those for adult population aged 25 years or older. The difference between the unemployment rates for youth and total unemployment rates has been relatively stable since 2000.

Figure II: Unemployment rate among persons aged 15 years and older and youth aged 15–24 by sex: 2000–2019

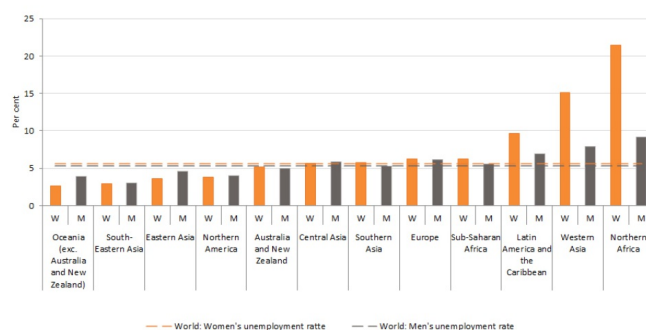


Source: Global SDG Indicators Database (last accessed on 17 July 2020).

Unemployment rates are higher for women than men in many regions

In 2019, women were more likely to be unemployed than men in 7 out of 12 regions, and unemployment among women was particularly pervasive in Northern Africa (21.5%), Western Asia (15.1%) and Latin America and the Caribbean (9.6%) (see figure III). The gender gap was the highest in countries in Northern Africa (12 percentage points), where historically women's participation rate in the labour force has been considerably lower than men's over time.

Figure III: Unemployment rate among persons aged 15 years and older by sex and region: 2019

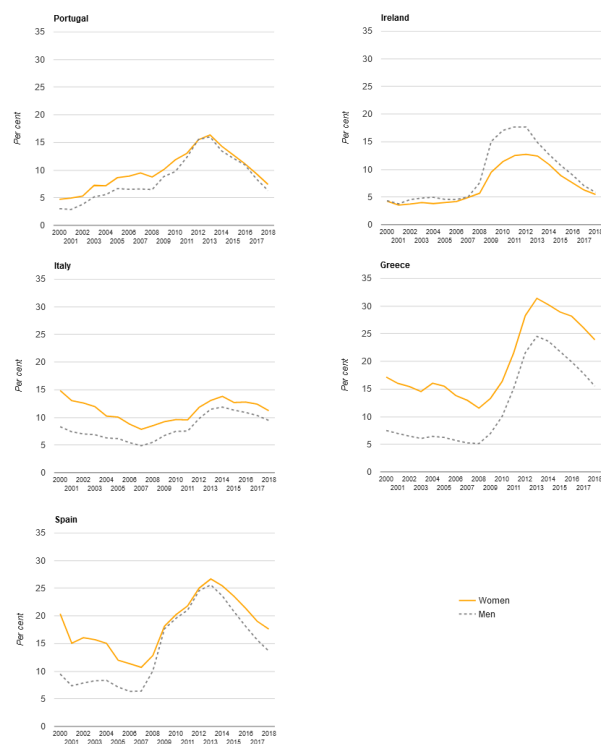


Source: Global SDG Indicators Database (last accessed on 17 July 2020).

Sharper increases in unemployment among men was significant during and after the global economic crisis in 2008 in selected advanced economies in the Eurozone

Following the global economic crisis in 2008, unemployment rates among women and men experienced an immediate increase, including long-lasting negative effects that have levelled out over subsequent years. The increase in unemployment rates were generally higher for men, who dominated employment in severely impacted subsectors, such as construction, in particular in selected advanced economies in Europe, namely in Greece, Ireland, Italy, Portugal and Spain. In those countries, while unemployment rates among men increased at a faster pace than among women during and immediately after 2008, they also fell at higher rates in subsequent years (see figure IV).

Figure IV: Unemployment rates in selected countries in the Eurozone among persons aged 15 years and older by sex: 2000–2018



Source: ILO estimates, Global SDG Indicators Database (last accessed on 4 October 2019).

Disability is an exacerbating factor in unemployment among women and men

In 40 out of 59 countries with latest available data (68%), the unemployment rate as of 2018 was higher for persons with disabilities.² Furthermore, in 24 countries with available sex-disaggregated data since 2016, the unemployment rate was higher among women with disabilities than among those without disabilities in 58% of countries and among men with disabilities than those without disabilities in 71% of countries. In the Russian Federation in 2018, women with disabilities were three times more likely (15.3%) to be unemployed than women without disabilities (4.6%). The corresponding unemployment rate for men with disabilities was four times higher (19.4%) than for men without disabilities (4.8%).³ Overall, among persons with disabilities, unemployment rates were higher for women than for men in 13 out of 24 countries with available sex-disaggregated data since 2016.

Social protection

In 10 out of 17 countries with available sex-disaggregated data since 2016, the proportion of the population receiving unemployment cash benefits was higher among unemployed women than among unemployed men. In 2017, in the Islamic Republic of Iran, however, only 1% of unemployed women received unemployment cash benefits, compared with 12% of unemployed men.⁴

Covid-19

During the recovery from the global economic crisis of 2008, unemployment rates went down worldwide, despite large disparities across regions. In 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic has caused abrupt and adverse changes in the labour markets, and "in fact, we can expect the biggest increase in global unemployment since World War II".⁵

"The pandemic is expected to have a devastating impact on global unemployment, which may reach an historic high in 2020, depending on the policies adopted. The eventual increase in global unemployment over 2020 will depend on how effectively policy measures preserve existing jobs and boost labour demand once the recovery phase begins."⁶

Preliminary estimates by the International Labour Organization indicate a significant rise in unemployment by approximately 13 million, or possibly by almost 25 million in a "high" scenario. For comparison, during the global economic crisis in 2008, the number of unemployed worldwide increased by 22 million.^{7 8}

Covid-19 and Northern America

The pandemic and the lockdown measures to prevent its contagion paralysed economies in developed regions, including countries in Northern America. Employed persons with the least "teleworkable" jobs were the hardest hit in the United States of America, where new claims for unemployment benefits increased by more than 10 million in just two weeks. In the United States, the unemployment rates among adult women and men aged 20 years and over were the same in July 2019 (3.3%): as of July 2020, the unemployment rate for women was 10.5% and 9.4% for men. The young are also likely to bear the brunt of the pandemic in Canada: in June 2020, the unemployment rate among young women was 27% (an increase from 11% in June 2019) and the unemployment rate among young men was 28% (an increase from 13% in June 2019).⁹

About the data

Definitions

- **Unemployment rate by sex, age and persons with disabilities:** This indicator provides information on the proportion of unemployed persons in the labour force and is one of the key measures of labour underutilization. Unemployed persons include working-age individuals who were not in employment, actively seeking and available for work during the reference period. The working-age population is usually defined as persons aged 15 years and older to facilitate international comparability.

Unemployment rate (%) = (unemployed persons) / (employed persons + unemployed persons) x 100. ¹⁰

Coverage

Working-age women and men in 129 United Nations Member States and territories (with latest available data between 2015 and 2019).

Limitations

The unemployment rate is not a robust measure of the performance of the labour market, especially in developing regions where women and men, due to economic pressures to find work, may take up jobs that have vulnerable employment conditions.

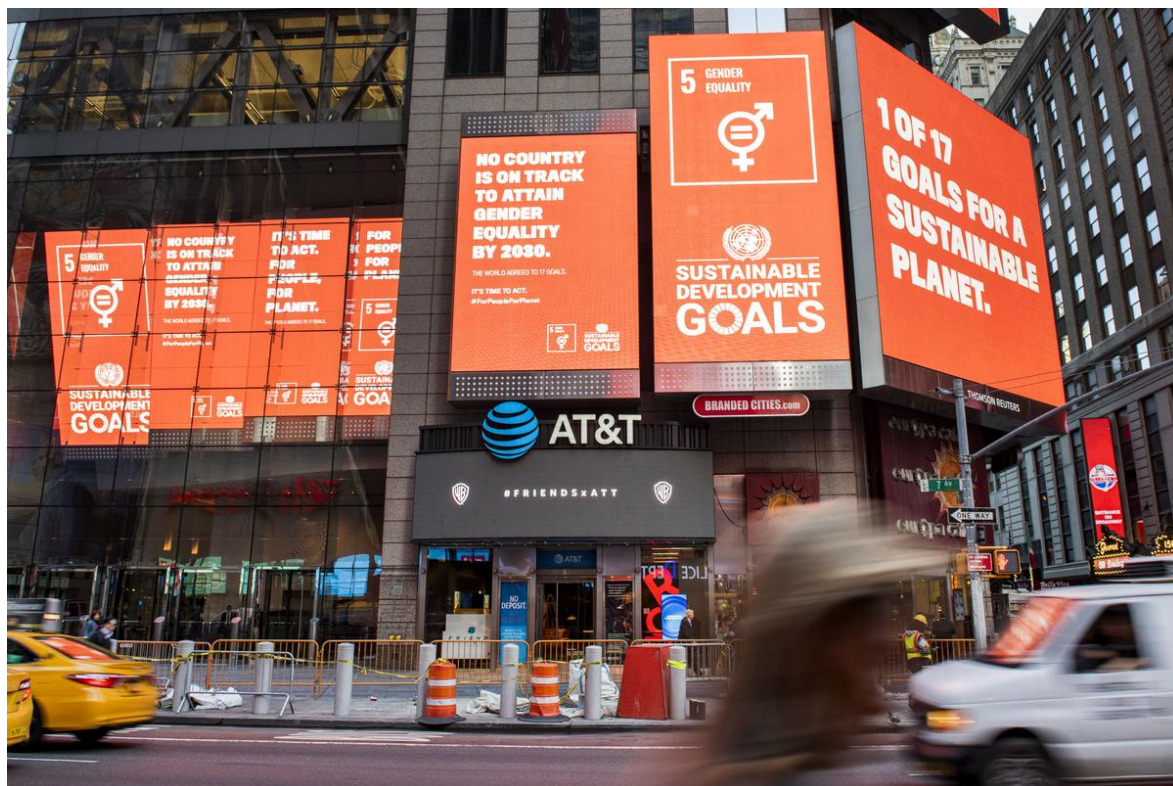
Looking at the unemployment rate in isolation does not capture the situation of people outside the labour force who may still have some connection to the labour force.

Since 2013, the international statistical standards (19th ICLS) recommend reporting the unemployment rate as part of a wider set of measures of labour underutilization, to support more informed monitoring of labour markets and to shed light on differences in access to employment opportunities among women and men, youth and older age groups, and persons living in urban and rural areas.

Footnotes

1. The [youth NEET rate](#) provides information about the proportion of youth (aged 15–24) not in education, employment or training as part of the total youth population.
2. UNDESA, Statistics Division, The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2020, New York, 2020.
3. Global SDG Indicators Database; ILO modelled estimates (last accessed on 10 August 2020).
4. Source: Global SDG Indicators Database; ILO modelled estimates (last accessed on 10 August 2020).
5. [Global SDG Indicators Database, Sustainable Development Goal 8](#).
6. [ILO, "Covid-19 and the world of work: updated estimates and analysis", 2nd edition, 7 April 2020](#).
7. [ILO, "Covid-19 and the world of work: Impact and policy responses", ILO Monitor, 1st edition, 18 March 2020](#).
8. Source: UNDESA, Statistics Division, The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2020, New York, 2020.
9. Sources: [UNDESA, Responding to Covid-19 and Recovering Better, Policy Brief Series, Spring/Summer 2020](#); [United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, "The Employment Situation – July 2020"](#); [United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, "The Employment Situation – July 2020"](#) (seasonally adjusted labour force characteristics data); [Statistics Canada](#) (last accessed on 10 August 2020).
10. [International Labour Organization \(ILO\), Key Indicators of the Labour Market, ninth edition, Geneva, 2016](#).

Protection of equal economic rights for women and men under the law in developing regions



Key points

- Globally, as of 2020, 180 out of 188 (96%) Member States and territories have at least one legal barrier restricting women's opportunities in economic structures, participation in productive activities and access to resources.
- In only eight countries in Europe and Northern America are women and men on an equal legal footing with respect to the full set of key topics assessed, which are structured around women's and men's interactions with formal laws and regulations during their economic life cycle.
- In countries in developed regions, legal gender gaps impeding women's rights are not significant, but in some countries in developing regions women have a fraction of the economic rights of men as a result of discriminatory laws and regulations that obstruct their economic empowerment.
- While countries in Latin America and the Caribbean have made tremendous progress in terms of women's legal rights over the last 25 years, women's legal rights are still far from being fully guaranteed in countries in Western Asia and Northern Africa.
- Although far from universality, significant gains (almost 30 percentage points) have been achieved in the adoption of protective legislation ensuring equal pay for work of equal value: in 1995, eight (6%) countries in developing regions legally required employers to pay women and men the same remuneration, by 2020, 48 (34%) countries had adopted such protective laws.
- Paid parental leave, available to both mothers and fathers, while unknown in national legislation in 1995, had been mandated by law in only seven countries (5%) by 2020.

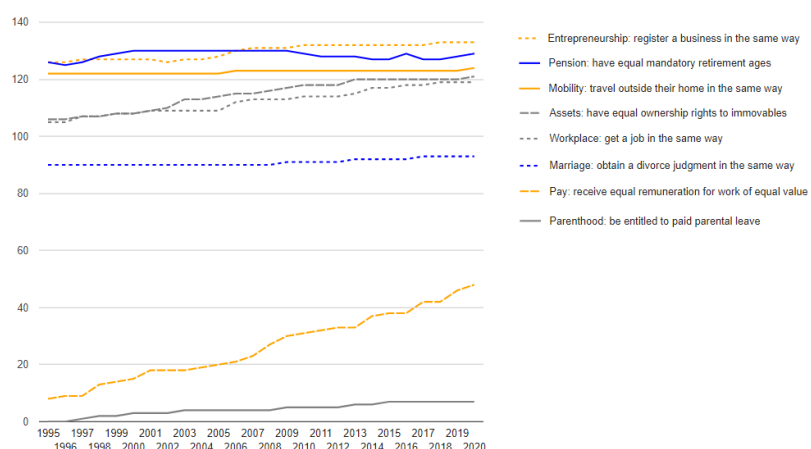
Current situation

As of 2020, 180 out of 188 (96%) Member States and territories with available data have at least one legal barrier restricting women's opportunities in economic structures, participation in productive activities and access to resources.¹ In only eight countries in Europe and Northern America, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Iceland, Latvia, Luxembourg and Sweden, are women and men on an equal legal footing with respect to the full set of key topics² assessed, which are structured around women's and men's interactions with formal laws and regulations during their economic life cycle. Research shows that while international conventions such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women³ and women's political representation at the national level have played a role in closing legal gaps in women's economic rights, legal barriers have remained in a number of countries owing to conflict situations and weak rule of law.⁴

Gender equality in national laws and regulations remains uneven among countries in developed and developing regions

While legal gender gaps are relatively small in developed regions, women in developing regions have a fraction of the economic rights of men due to discriminatory laws and regulations that impede their economic empowerment. However, in some Member States and territories in developing regions there have been positive changes in women's legal rights over the past 25 years, signifying an improved regulatory environment for women's economic independence (see figure).

Figure: Number of United Nations Member States and territories in developing regions with equal legal rights for women and men on selected issues: 1995–2020



Source: Compiled by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), Statistics Division, using data retrieved from the World Bank's Women, Business and the Law time series, 2020 (last accessed on 17 April 2020) (<https://datacatalog.worldbank.org/dataset/women-business-and-law>).

Note: Assessment based on 140 Member States and territories in developing regions with available data.

It appears that the number of Member States and territories in developing regions with equal legal rights for women and men on selected key issues has reached a plateau, at around 130 States, over the past 25 years. In countries in Western Asia and Northern Africa, the achievement of equal legal rights for women is significantly behind what has been realized in other regions. Countries in Latin America and the Caribbean have made tremendous progress, catching up with developed regions in terms of women's legal rights.⁵

Though still far from reaching universality, significant gains have been achieved in terms of legislation to address the **gender pay gap**: by 2020, employers were legally required to pay equal remuneration for women and men who performed work of equal value in 48 (34%) Member States and territories in developing regions, compared with just eight (6%) in 1995. However, as of 2020, **paid parental leave**, available to both mothers and fathers, which, along with **maternity and paternity leave**, contributes to women's ability to return to work, has been mandated by law in only seven (5%) countries, Azerbaijan, Chile, Kazakhstan, the Republic of Korea, Singapore, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. In light of the fact that in 1995 not one country in the world provided paid parental leave for both mothers and fathers, this increase shows minimal progress towards ensuring women's right to work.

About the data

Definitions

These indicators provide information on the number of United Nations Member States and territories with equal legal rights for women and men on selected issues and on the number of Member States and territories with legal barriers restricting women's opportunities in economic structures, participation in productive activities and access to resources. Only formal laws and regulations are taken into account; religious and customary laws are not considered unless they are codified. The implementation of laws is not measured by these indicators.

Coverage

188 United Nations Member States and territories (140 in developing regions).⁶

Availability

Data have been provided through the dataset of the Women, Business and the Law project of the World Bank.⁷

Footnotes

1. The World Bank, Women, Business and the Law project, Data Catalog, Washington, D.C., 2020 .
2. The eight indicators covered by the Women, Business and the Law project are Mobility, Workplace, Pay, Marriage, Parenthood, Entrepreneurship, Assets and Pension. ([back to text](#))
3. United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 1249, No. 20378 .
4. Hallward-Driemeier, M., Tazeen, H., and Bogdana Rusu, A., "Women's legal rights over 50 years: Progress, stagnation or regression?", World Bank, Policy Research Working Paper 6616, Washington, D.C., September 2013 .
5. Ibid.
6. Member States and territories have been organized by regional groupings under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) indicator framework .
7. The World Bank, Women, Business and the Law project, Data Catalog, Washington, D.C., 2020 .

Economic empowerment

Time spent in unpaid work; total work burden; and work-life balance



Key points

- On an average day, women spend about three times as many hours on unpaid domestic work and care work as men.
- Preliminary data from five developed countries on the activities of working parents during the Coronavirus-19 (COVID-19) pandemic show that while both women and men spent twice as much time on unpaid domestic work and care work during the pandemic, women still spent about two more hours per day than men on these activities.
- Gender inequality in the amount of time spent on unpaid domestic and care work is lowest in developed regions (where women spend twice as much time on domestic work as men) and the greatest in Northern Africa and Western Asia (where women spend more than seven times as much as men on unpaid domestic and care work).
- Compared to domestic work, there is less variance in the proportion of time spent on unpaid care work between the regions (around 50 minutes per day for women and 20 minutes per day for men, on average).
- In 65% of countries with comparable trend data disaggregated by sex and age category over the period 2001–2018, a small decrease has been observed in the time spent by women on unpaid domestic and care work relative to that spent by men.
- The value of unpaid work represents a substantial portion of gross domestic product (GDP) (20% to 60%) in selected countries producing estimates of the (economic) value of unpaid domestic and care work and volunteer work.
- On average, women spend about 38 more minutes per day on total work or the sum of paid and unpaid work than men, with far less variability across the regions than what is observed in terms of unpaid domestic work and care work.
- The highest proportion of countries that have ratified the ILO conventions on the reconciliation of work and family life are in developed regions, followed by a proportion of countries in the Latin America and the Caribbean region.

Unpaid domestic work and care work

Women continue to bear more responsibilities at home and perform most unpaid work, including taking care of children and other adult household members, cooking, cleaning and other housework.

Based on data from 89 countries for the period 2001–2018, using the latest available data and the broadest age category (people aged 15 and older) for each country, on an average day, women spend about three times as many hours in unpaid domestic work and care work as men — 4.2 hours per day for women compared to 1.7 hours per day for men.

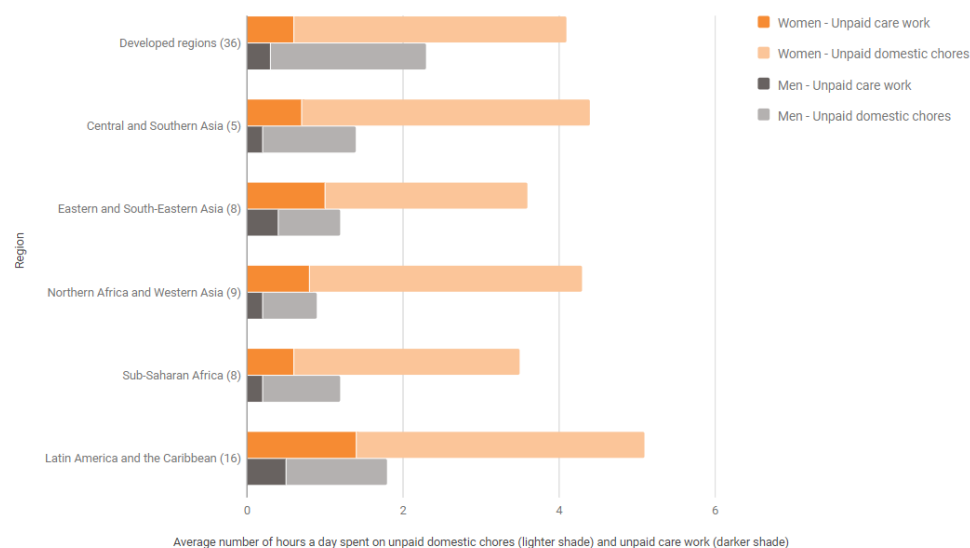
At the regional level (see figure I), countries in developed regions have the most equal distribution of unpaid domestic work and care work: women spend about 4 hours per day versus 2 hours per day for men, or twice as much time, on such activities. Countries in Northern Africa and Western Asia have the greatest level of gender

inequality in unpaid domestic work and care work: women in the region spend about 4 hours per day versus 54 minutes per day for men, or more than seven times as much.

In terms of gender differences between the amount of time spent on unpaid domestic work and care work across countries, the most egalitarian situation for women is in Sweden, where women do almost an hour more work per day than men (four hours per day for women versus three hours per day for men), and the least egalitarian situation is in Pakistan, where women spend 11 times more time on domestic work than men (almost five hours per day for women and less than half an hour per day for men).

In 24 out of the 37 countries (65%) with comparable trend data disaggregated by sex and age category over the period 2001–2018, a small decrease in the amount of time spent by women on unpaid domestic and care work relative to that spent by men has been observed in recent years.

Figure I: Amount of time spent by women and men on unpaid domestic work and unpaid care work in hours per day, averaged by region: 2001-2018 (latest available)



Source: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), Statistics Division, Global SDG Indicators Database (accessed in June 2020) (<https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/database/>).

Domestic work takes up the majority of time spent on unpaid work

Women in all regions worldwide spend a significantly higher portion of their day on domestic work, such as cleaning or cooking, totaling approximately 3.4 hours per day, while men spend, on average, 1.4 hours per day. In contrast, there is less variability between regions and by sex in unpaid care work devoted to caring for children or parents, although, on average, women still devote a higher percentage of their day to these activities than men (roughly 50 minutes per day for women compared to 20 minutes per day for men). These data suggest that, in general, women and men divide their time more equally in caring activities than they do in domestic ones, although this is not the case in all regions (see figure I). It should also be noted that caring activities are difficult to measure accurately as they often overlap with other activities.

At the regional level (see figure I), Developed Regions has the most equal distribution of unpaid care work (women spend about 38 minutes per day on unpaid care, men about 18), and Northern Africa and Western Asia

has the greatest gender inequality, with women spending more than six times as much time on unpaid care work than men (48 minutes per day for women and 12 minutes per day for men, on average).

At the country level, Honduras, where women spend about 26 minutes per day on unpaid care and men 20 minutes, presents the most egalitarian situation. The least egalitarian situation is in Qatar, where women spend 14 times more time on unpaid care work than men (approximately half an hour per day for women and two minutes per day for men, on average). Stories on the [income of the employed population and unpaid work time, time spent on unpaid work of young people](#) and [income poverty and time poverty](#) provide in-depth analysis of the amount of time spent on unpaid work in Latin America.

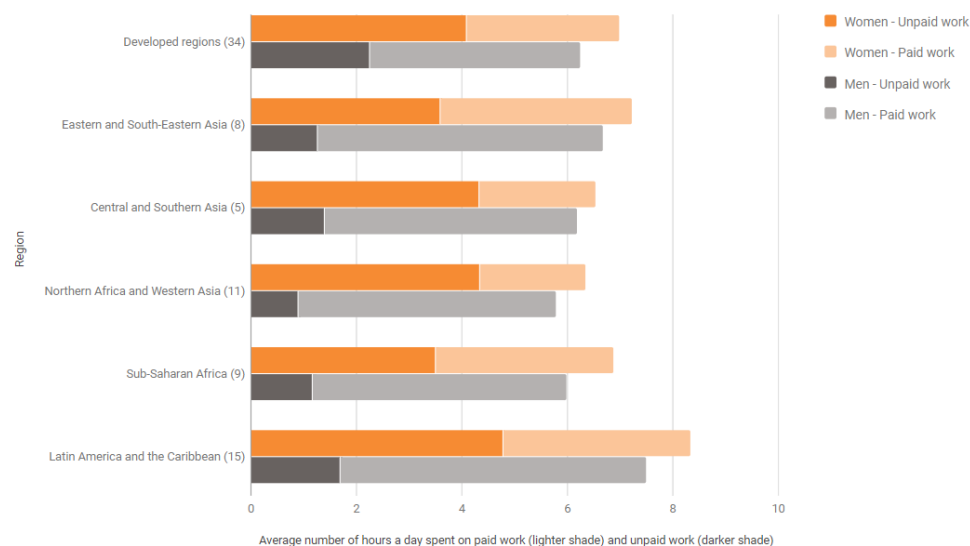
Total work burden on women and men: similar hours, different tasks

The total work burden is the average number of hours spent per day doing both paid and unpaid work. Unpaid work refers to unpaid domestic work, care work as well as community or volunteer work, while [paid work](#) refers to work activities for which a person earns a payment or makes a profit. Based on data from 82 countries for the period 2001–2018, on average, women spend slightly under 7 hours per day and men about 6 hours and 20 minutes per day doing paid and unpaid work, resulting in women working 38 extra minutes each day.

At the regional level (see figure II), gender differences in terms of the total work burden are not large. The smallest gender differences were in Central and Southern Asia (where both men and women work about 6.5 hours, on average, with women working 21 extra minutes per day) and in Eastern and South-Eastern Asia (where both men and women work about 7 hours, on average, with women working 33 extra minutes per day). The largest gender differences were observed in Sub-Saharan Africa, where women work almost 7 hours per day and men 6 hours per day, with women working extra 53 minutes per day. The composition of the total work burden differed by gender, however, with women in all regions spending more time on unpaid work and men spending more time on paid work.

Thus, although the gender gap in total work is minor, it is not a real indication of gender equality: as discussed above, despite indications of improvement over time, women still spend, on average, 3 times as many hours per day as men, and sometimes as much as 11 times more (in Pakistan), on unpaid work. These data indicate that men continue to spend more time than women in paid jobs, while women continue to spend more time at home performing unpaid care work and unpaid domestic work (see figure II). While the gender difference in the average amount of time spent on total work is not as dramatic as for unpaid work, it should not be ignored. Consistently working an hour more every day than one's partner can affect women's physical and mental health and well-being. [Colombia's story](#) on unpaid and paid work provides a country-level analysis of the situation.

Figure II: Total work burden in hours per day spent on paid and unpaid work by region and sex: 2001-2018 (latest available)



Source: UNDESA, Statistics Division, United Nations Portal on Minimum Set of Gender Indicators (accessed in June 2020)
<https://www.un.org/development/desa/capacity-development/tools/tool/portal-on-minimum-set-of-gender-indicators/>

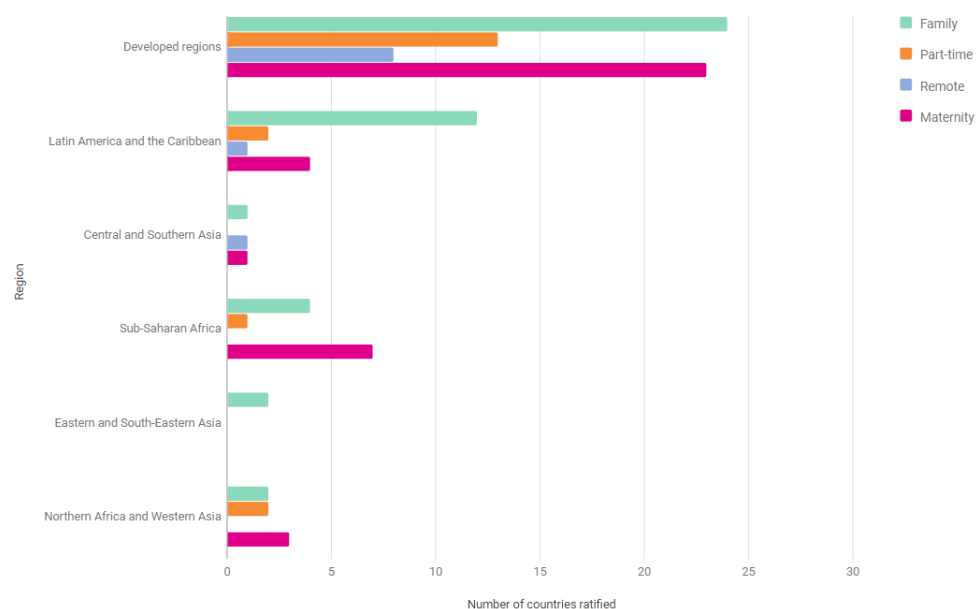
ILO conventions on the reconciliation of work and family life

Giving women and men the opportunity to make a conscious decision about how much time to spend on caring for family members, domestic work and career development is important for gender equality. In the absence of provisions in the workplace that grant employees the flexibility to effectively combine paid work and unavoidable unpaid work, women and men may end up stuck in traditional gender roles. In this regard, there are four conventions adopted by ILO that address the reconciliation of work and family life: ILO Convention No. 156 (adopted in 1981) (Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention), which prohibits discrimination of workers based on their family status and calls upon employers to take the needs of such workers into account, including by providing childcare; ILO Convention No. 175 (adopted in 1994) (Part-Time Work Convention), which calls upon employers to provide the equivalent conditions to their part-time employees that are enjoyed by their full-time employees, such as social security, equal hourly wages and the bargaining rights; ILO Convention No. 177 (adopted in 1996) (Home Work Convention), created to improve the employment situation of homeworkers, or as more commonly called, remote workers, by advocating for their equal treatment with onsite employees, including remuneration and access to social security; and ILO Convention No. 183 (adopted in 2000) (Maternity Protection Convention), which advocates for the provision of maternity leave for pregnant and nursing women. Collectively, the ratification of these four conventions promotes gender equality as it allows people to continue to participate in the workforce to the degree that they desire regardless of their family obligations.

Overall, more countries in Developed Regions have ratified¹ the ILO conventions on the reconciliation of work and family life (see figure III), followed by a number of countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. Among countries in Central and Southern Asia and Eastern and South-Eastern Asia, very few have ratified the ILO conventions, while among countries in Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand) not one single ILO convention has been ratified. In terms of specific conventions, ILO Convention No. 156 (Workers with Family

Responsibilities Convention) has been ratified by 45 countries and ILO Convention No. 183 (Maternity Protection Convention) has been ratified by 38 countries. In contrast, ILO Convention No. 175 (Part-Time Work Convention) has been ratified by only 18 countries and ILO Convention No. 177 (Home-Work Convention) by only 10 countries. These data indicate that countries are more supportive of maternity leave and the equal treatment of employees, regardless of their family status, than the equality of part-time workers or remote workers with regular full-time onsite employees. These conventions should not be overlooked by countries since working part time or from home enables women to participate in the workforce when conventional full-time employment is incompatible with their family situation.

Figure III: Ratification of ILO conventions on the reconciliation of work and family life by region and convention: April 2020



Source: International Labour Organization (ILO), NORMLEX Information System on International Labour Standards (<https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/?n=NORMI.FXPU:1:0>) (accessed in April 2020).

Impact of COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic is radically changing how people, particularly women, spend their time — sometimes with a negative impact on their well-being. The national statistical offices of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and Italy have collected data on time use during the COVID-19 lockdown. In the United Kingdom² it was found that, although there is still a gender gap in unpaid work, with women continuing to do more unpaid household work and childcare than men, there was an observed increase in the proportion of men performing these tasks compared to the period before the pandemic. Thus, the gender gap in the average time spent on unpaid domestic and care work has been reduced during the pandemic (pre-COVID-19, just over two hours per day for men and almost four hours per day for women; during COVID-19, almost 2.5 hours per day for men and about 3.5 hours per day for women). Similarly, although men report spending more time on paid work than women, the gender gap has been reduced during COVID-19 (pre-COVID-19, about 3 hours and twenty minutes per day for men and over 2 hours per day for women, with men working an hour and six minutes more per day; during COVID-19, just under 3 hours per day for men and just over two hours per day for women, with men working 47 minutes more per day, on average). Both men and women reported having more free time for

entertainment and socializing during the pandemic, and the gender gap with regard to those activities was also reduced (with men still reporting spending more time on entertainment and socializing than women). The questions in the survey undertaken by Italy's National Institute of Statistics³ were mainly qualitative (asking people if they spent the same/more/less time on certain activities compared to pre-COVID-19). Overall, 67.2% of respondents reported devoting more time to unpaid care work (both mothers and fathers) than prior to COVID-19. The story on the [lockdown and gender in Italy](#) provides more specific details at the country level.

While data from national statistical offices on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the use of time are still scarce, a recent survey done by the Boston Consulting Group in France, Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom and the United States of America found that since the advent of COVID-19 the amount of time spent on unpaid work has doubled for both working women and men who have children. Nevertheless, on average, women spent 15 hours more per week, or just over two hours more per day, on unpaid domestic and care work compared to men, a marked increase over the 10 hours or more per week (about 1.5 hours more per day) prior to the pandemic.⁴ In early May 2020, a poll of 18 countries conducted by Ipsos,⁵ revealed that women have taken on a lot more responsibility for household domestic work and care of children and family during the pandemic. Across the 18 countries, on average, women were 4% more likely than men to say that they strongly agreed that their care load had increased during the pandemic. Mexico had the largest gender gap in responses, with 53% of women strongly agreeing with the statement, compared to only 41% of men.⁶ Additional data collected by the United Nations Entity on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) for six countries in Asia tells a similar story: unpaid domestic and care work has intensified during the pandemic, and women continue to take on the majority of it. In addition, women are also more likely than men to report that they are in charge of unpaid childcare, unpaid adult care and unpaid domestic work, while men tend to focus on tasks like shopping for the household, making repairs and playing with children, which, overall, are less time consuming.⁷

The value of unpaid work represents up to 60% of gross domestic product (GDP) in selected countries

In addition to measuring time spent on unpaid domestic work, there is a strong argument for measuring its monetary value. Conventional statistics grossly understate the total contribution of women to the economy using traditional macroeconomic indicators, such as the gross domestic product (GDP), and do not account for unpaid work or unpaid household service work, about two-thirds of which are performed by women.⁸ At the international level, it has been widely acknowledged⁹ that proper recognition and valuation of unpaid household service work would help to uncover hidden aspects of the economy and raise vital policy issues that have long remained invisible.

While not many countries estimate the economic value of unpaid work, the results from the ones that do demonstrate the significant value of domestic work and care work. For example, the value of unpaid household service work conducted in Australia relative to GDP ranks second highest among all other economic activities in the country, and in 2006, the value of unpaid household service work ranged from \$416 billion to \$586 billion, representing 41.6% to 58.7% of national GDP for that year.¹⁰ In the Republic of Moldova, it was found that, on average, the monthly value of unpaid household service work in 2014 was 4.1 billion Moldovan leu. For the whole year, the estimated value of unpaid household service work was 48.9 billion Moldovan leu or about \$3.5 billion, representing 43.6% of the national GDP in 2014.¹¹ In Switzerland, the monetary value of all unpaid household service work in 2013 was estimated at 401 billion Swiss francs (SwF), or 63% of the country's GDP for that year (estimated at about 635 billion SwF). Unpaid domestic work alone amounted to approximately 267 billion SwF (67% of the total value of unpaid work). Unpaid care work carried out at home were estimated at 93 billion SwF (23% of the total value of unpaid work) and formal and informal voluntary work at 41 billion SwF (10% of the total

value). Work done by women in Switzerland accounted for 60% of the total value of unpaid work overall: this percentage varied depending on the field of activity, amounting to 61% for unpaid domestic work, approximately 62% for unpaid care work and 52% for voluntary work.¹² In Latin America, it is estimated that the value of unpaid work is between 15.2% of GDP in Ecuador and 25.3% of GDP in Costa Rica.¹³ The story about the situation of women and men in [Mexico](#) provides an in-depth analysis of the economic value of unpaid work.

About the data

Definitions

- **Unpaid domestic work:** Refers to unpaid activities related to the maintenance of the household, including food preparation, dishwashing, cleaning, upkeep of the home, laundry, ironing, gardening, caring for pets, shopping, installation servicing and repair of personal and household goods
- **Unpaid care work:** Refers to unpaid activities for the purpose of taking care of others, which includes childcare and care of the sick, older persons or disabled household members.
- **Total work burden of women and men:** Combines both paid and unpaid work
 - **Paid work:** Refers to work-related activities in formal or informal employment for pay or profit
 - **Unpaid work:** Includes both unpaid domestic work and unpaid care work (described above), as well as community or volunteer work related to domestic work or care.
- **ILO Convention No. 156 (adopted in 1981) (Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention):** Aims to promote equality of opportunity and treatment in the labour market for women and men with family responsibilities. The Convention applies to women and men workers with responsibilities for their dependent children or other members of their immediate family who need their care or support.¹⁴
- **ILO Convention No. 175 (adopted in 1994) (Part-Time Work Convention):** Recognizes the importance of productive and freely chosen employment for all workers, as well as the economic importance of part-time work.¹⁵
- **ILO Convention No. 177 (adopted in 1996) (Home Work Convention):** Aims to improve the employment situation of homeworkers (presently called remote workers).¹⁶
- **ILO Convention No. 183 (adopted in 2000) (Maternity Protection Convention):** Aims to improve the employment situation of mothers or expectant mothers.¹⁷

Coverage

- **Unpaid care work:** Data are available for 89 countries¹⁸ for the period 2001–2018 (the latest available year for each country was used): data presented for this indicator are expressed as a percentage of time spent per day on unpaid domestic work and care work (for a portion of the narrative, data were converted into hours spent per day).¹⁹
- **Total work burden:** Data are available for 82 countries for the period 2001–2018 (using the

latest available year for each country).²⁰ Data presented for this indicator are expressed as an average number of hours per day. Countries are organized by **regional groupings** under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) indicators framework.

- **ILO Conventions:** ILO compiles a list of countries that adopt each convention and updates it regularly, including the dates of adoption and the dates they go into effect. The list is available on the website of the NORMLEX Information System on International Labour Standards.²¹

Footnotes

1. For the purpose of the present review, countries that have ratified the ILO Convention without it yet being in force are also included in the list of ratified countries.
2. Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Office for National Statistics, "Coronavirus and how people spent their time under lockdown: 28 March to 26 April 2020".
3. Government of Italy, National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT), "Day-diary and activities during Coronavirus-19" (Italian original).
4. Krentz, M., Kos, E., Green, A. and Garcia-Alonso, J., "Easing the COVID-19 Burden on Working Parents", Boston Consulting Group, 21 May 2020.
5. Ipsos is a multinational market research company based in Paris.
6. Azcona, G., Bhatt, A. and Love, K., "Ipsos survey confirms that COVID-19 is increasing women's workload at home", United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), 9 July 2020.
7. United Nations Entity on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), Surveys show that COVID-19 has gendered effects in Asia and the Pacific, April 2020 (section on unpaid care and domestic work).
8. Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), Guide on Valuing Unpaid Household Service Work, New York and Geneva, 2017.
9. UNDESA, Statistics Division, SDG Indicators, metadata repository.
10. Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), Guide on Valuing Unpaid Household Service Work, New York and Geneva, 2017.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid.
13. Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Repository of information on time use in Latin America and the Caribbean, Santiago, 2019.
14. International Labour Organization (ILO) Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention.
15. ILO Part-Time Work Convention.
16. ILO Home-Work Convention.
17. ILO Maternity Protection Convention.
18. Countries collecting time-use statistics around the world use different methods, which may affect the comparability of data across countries. Ongoing methodological developments will improve data harmonization and international comparability: see United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), Statistics Division, Demographic and Social Statistics: United Nations Expert Group on Innovative and Expert Ways to Collect Time-Use Statistics.
19. See also UNDESA, Statistics Division, Global SDGs Indicators Database, which presents metadata on the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
20. Data for latest available year for each country for the period 2001–2018; some countries had data for earlier periods.
21. ILO, Normalex Information System on International Labour Standards.

Republic of Moldova: social protections and old age pensions



Key points

- In the Republic of Moldova, women live longer than men (8.8 years more in 2018), oftentimes alone in financial deprivation and insecurity.
- In 2018, the proportion of women among the total population receiving any pension and receiving an old-age pension accounted for 64.5% and 70.6%, respectively.
- In 2018, old-age pension replacement rates for women (26.2%) and men (28.6%) were less than the minimum level required by the International Labour Organization (ILO) Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention (Convention No. 102) (at least 40%). The gender gap in the old-age pension replacement rate was more prominent among women and men aged 60–64 (2.6 percentage points) and the largest in districts in the southern part of the country.
- Seniors aged 75 and over rely significantly more on pensions as a main income source (96.6% for women and 97.6% for men) than the “younger” old, aged 60–65 (79.8% for women and 46.9% for men).
- The proportion of women receiving the “minimum amount” of old age pension decreased from 72.1% in 2017 to 52.4% in 2018 after a Government decision to adjust the minimum amount of the pension to the same level as the minimum income level guaranteed by the State.
- In 2018, women represented around half (50.3%) of pensioners with disabilities receiving disability pensions and slightly more than half (52.7%) of those receiving the minimum amount of disability pensions. Men represented 73% of those receiving the minimum amount of severe disability pensions.
- The rapid aging of Moldova's population and the high migration rates among its working-age population have put pressure on the pension system. In 2017, emigration rates reached a peak of 121 per 1,000 for men aged 25–29 and 87 per 1,000 for women aged 20–24.

Background

The main purpose of State social protection systems is to offer social guarantees to the national population, both individuals and groups. Social protections provide non-discriminatory treatment and equal opportunities for all members of society, reducing the risk of poverty and social exclusion.¹ From the human rights perspective, social protection systems help to ensure an adequate standard of living, as well as necessary services and goods, providing dignity, autonomy, equality and non-discrimination, including gender equality.² For most older people, not all of whom are able to supplement their income through paid work, social protections are often the main means of ensuring economic security, helping them to meet essential needs.³

Women live longer and are more exposed to the risks of poverty and social exclusion than men at older ages

Women in the Republic of Moldova live 8.8 years longer than men,⁴ on average (2018). From both economic and social dimensions, women aged 60 and over are recognized as one of the most vulnerable groups because of their exposure, over a longer time span than men, to the risk of poverty and social exclusion.⁵ The larger share of women among the elderly population, owing to their higher life expectancy, means that they are likely to live more years in financial deprivation and insecurity.

The gender gap in the standard retirement age in the Republic of Moldova was about 5 years until 1 July 2017 (age 57 for women and age 62 for men). Retirement ages are being raised annually and the age gap will be closed by 2028, after which time the retirement age will be 63 for both women and men.⁶

More women than men are beneficiaries of old-age social benefits

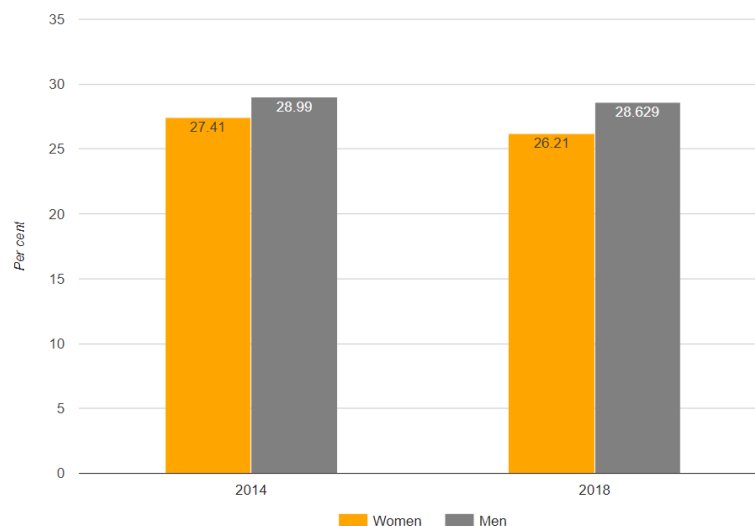
In 2018, the share of women receiving "any" pension⁷ among total pensioners was 64.5% and their share among those receiving "old-age" pensions⁸ was 70.6% (see figure VII b). While women were less likely than men to fulfil the eligibility requirements to obtain a State social assurance pension, they represented 65.1% of those benefiting from an elderly social allowance⁹ in 2018.

Women have a lower gross old-age pension replacement rate than men

The public pension system does not fully substitute for lost salary as people get older, and the low level of pensions exposes them to a higher risk of poverty; furthermore, there is a weak link between the level of income from the active period of individuals' lives with that in their post-retirement period.

The gross old-age pension replacement rate¹⁰ (26.2% for women and 28.6% for men) is less than the minimum level required under the ILO Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention (Convention No. 102) (at least 40% for both men and women).¹¹ Older women often have shorter careers and lower wages than men, resulting in lower benefit entitlements. The difference in old-age pension replacement rates of men and women increased in the last 5 years, from 1.6 percentage points in 2014 to 2.4 percentage points in 2018, in favour of men, and this gap is more evident among men and women aged 60–64 (see figure I).

Figure I: Old-age pension replacement rate by sex: 2014 and 2018

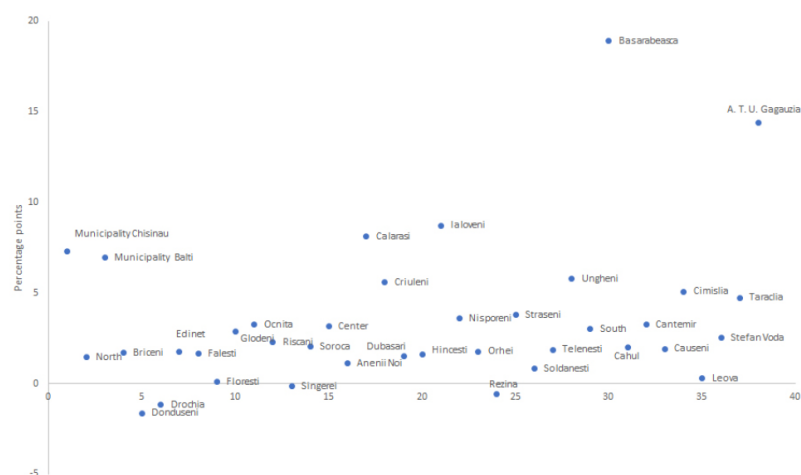


Source: National Insurance House, 2020 (correspondence with National Bureau of Statistics on 30 May 2020).

Note: The old-age pension replacement rate refers to the percentage of an individual's monthly salary earnings that is replaced by retirement income when they retire.

Across regions in the country, the biggest gender gap in the old-age pension replacement rate is registered in the southern part of the country (Basarabeasca, Autonomous Territorial Unit Gagauzia), as well as in the two most developed municipalities of the country (Bălți and Chișinău) and districts in the central region (Ialoveni and Călărași) (see figure II).

Figure II: Gender gap in old-age pension replacement rate by region and district: 2018 (Percentage point)



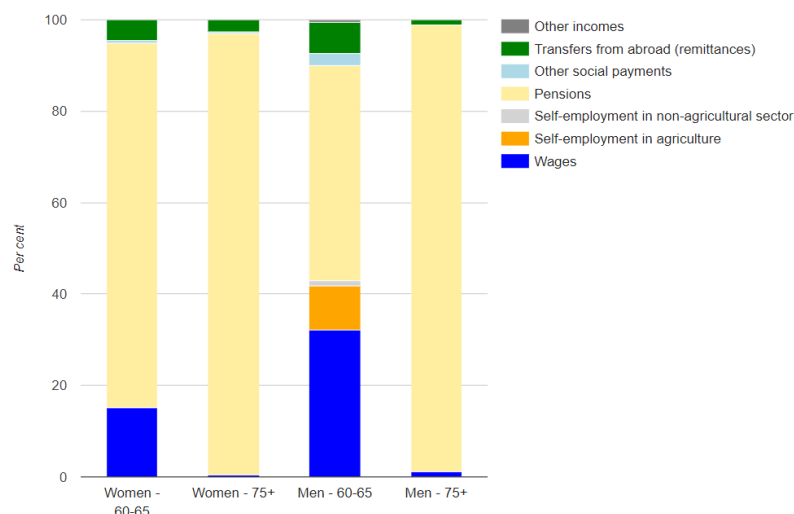
Source: National Social Insurance House, 2020 (correspondence with National Bureau of Statistics on 30 May 2020).

Note: The old-age pension replacement rate refers to the percentage of an individual's monthly salary earnings that is replaced by retirement income when they retire. The gender gap is calculated as the difference between the replacement rates of men and women. X-axis represents the districts and regions of development in the country (see <https://moldova.md/en/content/administrative-territorial-organization-moldova>). Y-axis represents the gender gap in old age pension replacement rate.

People aged 75 and over have a significantly lower income than the "younger" old, ages 60–65

Level of income represents an important factor that determines, inter alia, quality of life, including the ability of individuals to pursue or take part in a range of activities. Income inequality is pronounced among older persons, correlated with age, sex, health conditions, living conditions and area of residence (whether urban or rural).¹²

Pensions are the main income source for people aged 60 and over, representing 89.1% of the total income of women and 72.4% of men, which resulted, in 2018, in a gender difference of 16.7 percentage points. However, further disaggregation by age shows that pensions represent a lower share of main income for the "younger" old population, ages 60–65: 79.8% for women and 46.9% for men. Furthermore, in this age group, 15.1% of women have salary earnings compared to 32.2% of men. The most disadvantaged group in terms of income are people over the age of 75 who are solely reliant on a pension as their main source of income (96.6% of women compared to 97.6% of men) (see figure III). In the "younger" old age group, men generally have a larger number of income sources than women, who have fewer options in terms of income streams (pensions, wages or remittances), while "senior" old people, both women and men, mostly rely on their own resources and State support.

Figure III: Distribution of old population by main income sources, sex and age group: 2018 (Percentage)

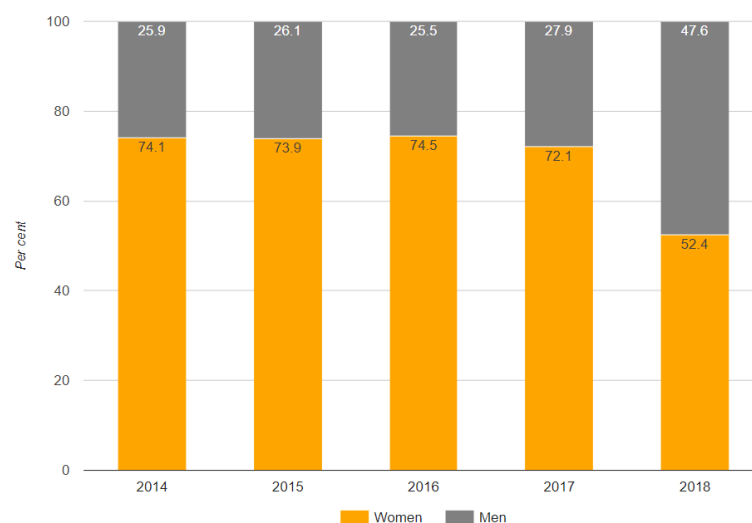
Source: National Bureau of Statistics, 2020 (correspondence with National Bureau of Statistics on 30 May 2020).

Women's old-age pensions do not cover their minimum subsistence levels

The ability of older persons to live self-sufficient lives on their own resources can be measured by the ratio of the average monthly old-age pension to the minimum subsistence level¹³ for pensioners (which is the same for women and men). While the amount of the old age pension has doubled for both women and men since 2008, the average amount of the old age pension for women is still not sufficient (96.6%) to cover basic needs relative to the minimum subsistence level for old-age pensioners; the average amount of the old-age pension for men exceeds the minimum subsistence level by 23.2%.

The most vulnerable pensioners are those receiving the "minimum" amount¹⁴ of old-age pension, which covers 65% of the minimum subsistence level. During the period 2014–2017, women were more likely to receive the minimum amount of old-age pension than men (they represented over 70% of beneficiaries). Nevertheless, in 2018, in line with a Government decision, the minimum amount of the pension was adjusted to the same level as the minimum subsistence level guaranteed by the State, and the proportion of women among those receiving the minimum amount of old age pension decreased to 52.4%, compared to 47.6% for men (see figure IV).

Figure IV: Percentage of women among pensioners receiving the minimum amount of old-age pension: 2014–2018

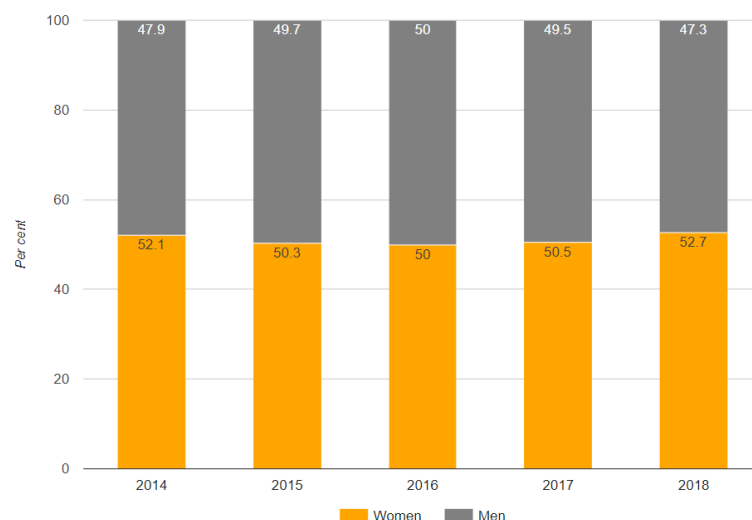


Source: National Social Insurance House, 2020 (correspondence with National Bureau of Statistics on 30 May 2020).

Women with disabilities receive lower pensions and are more exposed to risks

Women represented around half (50.3%) of pensioners receiving disability pensions in 2018, and 52.7% of all those receiving the minimum amount of disability pension (see figure V). The average amount of women's disability pension covered 77.9% of the minimum subsistence level for old-age pensioners in 2018; for men, that percentage was 84.7%.

Figure V: Percentage of women among pensioners receiving the minimum amount of disability pension: 2014–2018

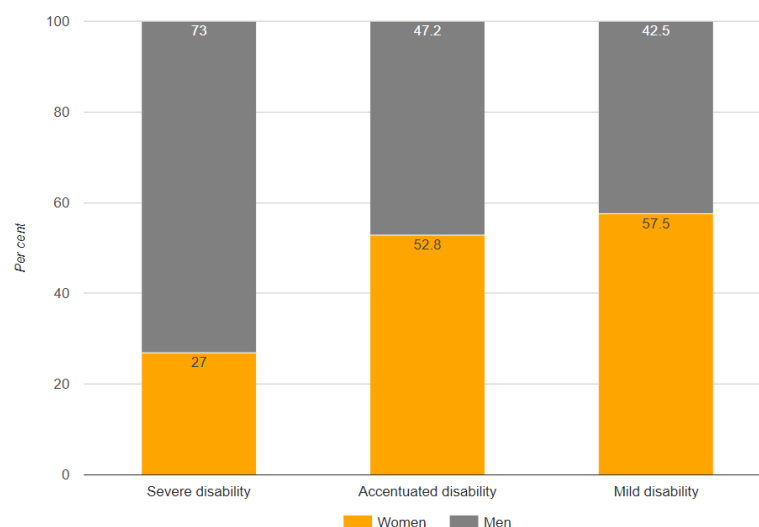


Source: National Social Insurance House, 2020 (correspondence with National Bureau of Statistics on 30 May 2020).

Women were more likely than men to receive the minimum amount of accentuated (52.8%) and mild disability (57.5%) pensions, while men were more likely (73%) than women (27%) to receive the minimum amount of the severe disability

pension (see figure VI).

Figure VI: Percentage of women among beneficiaries of the minimum amount of disability pension by type of disability: 2018



Source: National Social Insurance House, 2020 (correspondence with National Bureau of Statistics on 30 May 2020).

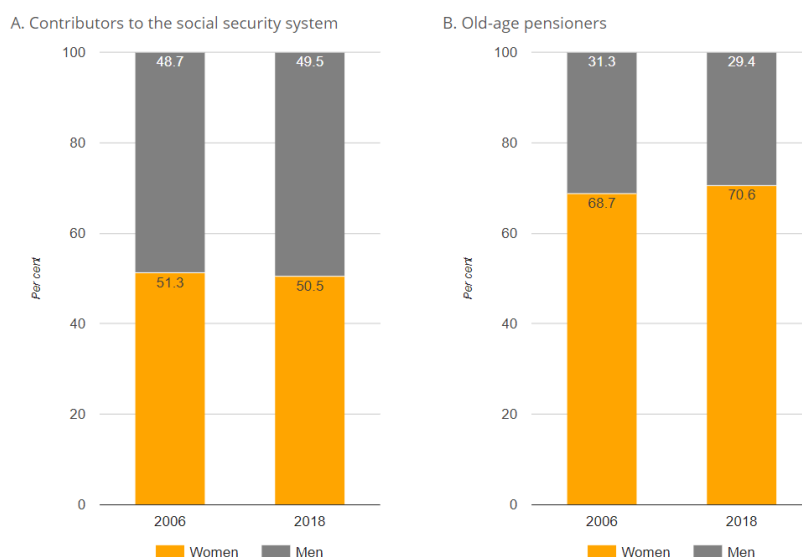
The livelihoods of older persons is insecure because of the low efficiency of the pension system

In 2019, social protection expenditures accounted for 11.1% of gross domestic product (GDP) and 33.6% of national public budget expenditures. Around 64% of social protection expenditures were spent on social protections for older people.

The Republic of Moldova is facing a weakness in terms of the sustainability of the social protection system, as evidenced in the continuous increase in the number of beneficiaries of pensions (an increase of 8.8% from 2010 to 2018), with a slight parallel increase in the number of contributors to the system (an increase of 5.4% from 2010 to 2018). Overall, the reduced financial capacity of the national social protection system has become more serious with the lowering of the ratio of its contributors to the number of pensioners (any type) benefitting from it (dropping from 1.34 in 2010 to 1.29 in 2018). The minimum required ratio, according to international practices, is 4 contributors per 1 pensioner.

Since 2006, women have become more dependent than men on the sustainability of the social protection system. While their contributions represent just over half of total contributions (50.5% for women and 49.5% for men), women comprise the majority of beneficiaries of old-age pensions (70.6% of women compared to 29.4% of men) (see figure VII).

Figure VII: Percentage of women among contributors to the social security system and among old age pensioners: 2006 and 2018



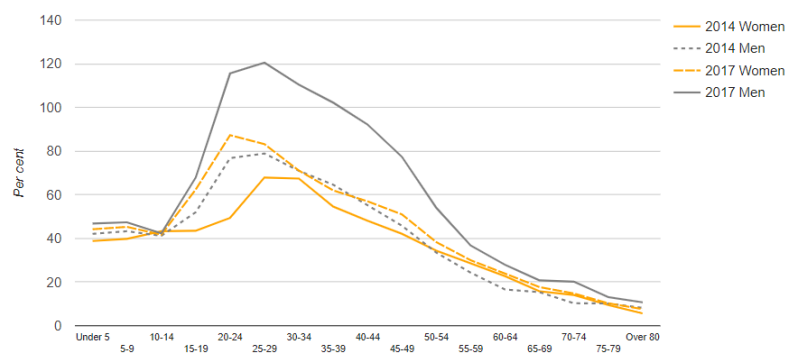
High levels of migration weaken the actual and potential capacity of the social protection system

The high migration rate among the working-age population is an additional factor having a negative impact on the actual and potential capacity of the national social protection system, affecting people left behind and making it more difficult for migrants to access social security protections when returning home.

In the Republic of Moldova, migration, in general, and international migration in particular, have a distinctive age pattern. There are high migration rates among young-adults along with young children. During the period 2014–2017, migration rates (in both directions, immigration and emigration) increased: from 43 to 58 per 1,000, while there was a lower rate of increase in immigration, from 35 to 40 per 1,000, resulting in a yearly net negative migration balance, which increased from minus 9 per 1,000 in 2014 to minus 18 per 1,000 in 2017. In 2017, emigration rates reached a peak of 121 per 1,000 for men aged 25–29 and 87 per 1,000 for women aged 20–24.¹⁵

These high migration rates were also significant among young adults: in 2017, men aged 20–24 showed a negative migratory balance of minus 60 per 1,000 and women minus 45 per 1,000, meaning that the country lost about 6% of the male and 4.5% of the female population aged 20–24 in a single year (see figure VIII).

As a consequence, the financial stability of the public pension system has continued to erode, affecting confidence in the system.

Figure VIII: Emigration rates for women and men: 2014—2017

Source: Republic of Moldova, National Bureau of Statistics, 2020 (correspondence with National Bureau of Statistics on 30 May 2020).

About the data

Definitions

- **Gross old-age pension replacement rate**, calculated as the gross pension entitlement divided by gross salary earnings, measures how effectively a pension system provides a retirement income to replace earnings, the main source of income before retirement. The rate refers to the percentage of an individual's monthly salary that is replaced by retirement income when they retire.¹⁶

Coverage and availability

Women and men, in particular older persons and people with disabilities, living in the Republic of Moldova (excluding districts from the east side of the Nistru river and Bender municipality).¹⁷

Footnotes

1. United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova, *Approaches to social exclusion in the Republic of Moldova: Methodological and analytical aspects*, Chişinău, 2010.
2. Dávalos, M.E. et al., *A human-rights based approach to the economic security of older people in Moldova*, World Bank Group, Chişinău, 2017.
3. International Committee of the Red Cross, « What is economic security ? », June 2015.
4. The trend of women outliving men is often referred to as the feminization of aging.
5. United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova *Profile of elderly women*, Chişinău, 2016.
6. Republic of Moldova, national law on the public pension system (No.156, 1998), chap. V, Pension ages and contributions.
7. Ibid.: in the national public pension system the following categories of pensions are granted: (a) old-age (retirement) pension; (b) disability pension; (c) survivor's pension; (d) special pension (public pension established and paid according to the provisions of other laws); and (e) early retirement pension.
8. The right to an old-age (retirement) pension is granted if the conditions provided in national law No. 156 regarding standard retirement ages and the minimum contribution period of 15 years are met.
9. The right to an elderly allowance is granted by national law No. 499, 1999: a person who, upon reaching the standard retirement age, does not have the minimum contribution period required for an old-age (retirement) pension has the right to an elderly allowance.
10. Old-age pension replacement rate refers to the percentage of an individual's monthly salary earnings that is replaced by retirement income when they retire.
11. United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova, *Approaches to social exclusion in the Republic of Moldova: Methodological and analytical aspects*, Chişinău, 2010. This indicator is calculated based on ILO Convention No. 102 on the minimum social security norms, which specifies that the minimum level of replacement of salary income by pension should not be less than 40%, for both women and men. For the economically developed countries, through ILO Convention No. 128, this replacement rate was raised to 45%, and subsequently, by ILO Recommendation 131, to 55%.
12. United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova *Profile of elderly women*, Chişinău, 2016.
13. Minimum subsistence level represents the minimum cost of material goods and services necessary to satisfy basic needs, that is, those required to support health and maintain life. It is calculated by adding up the value of the food basket, expenditures for industrial goods and services, as well as mandatory medical and social contributions. The subsistence level is calculated for the main sociodemographic groups: children, working women and men and old-age pensioners, by place of residence (Law No. 152, 2012).
14. The minimum amount of pensions is established by the Government through the annual indexation of pensions for the following categories of pensions: old-age pension, severe disability pension, accentuated disability pension and mild disability pension (without differences by sex).
15. National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova, *informational note on revised population of the Republic of Moldova, including international migration*, Chişinău, 2019. Emigration rates: emigrants departing the country of origin per 1,000 population in a given year.
16. Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), *OECD Data, Gross pension replacement rates, 2020* (last accessed on 15 September 2020).
17. Indicators herein are calculated using the proportion of the population with usual residence: usual residence refers to the place where a person has lived continuously for the majority of the last 12 months, not including temporary absences (inter alia, for purposes of recreation, holidays, visits to friends and relatives, business or medical treatments).

Status in employment



Key points

- Over the past 20 years, the percentage of employed as wage and salaried workers worldwide has increased more rapidly among women than men (standing, in 2019, at 53% for both women and men). This change has not been matched, however, by a significant decline in the gender pay gap, and women have continued to make up the majority of workers engaged in part-time employment.
- In 2019, women continued to be more engaged as contributing family workers (18%) than men (7%) both globally and regionally, and particularly in Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand), where data show that 44% of employed women were contributing to family businesses. Worldwide, however, the proportion of women employed in this category has decreased by more than a third since 2000.
- In contrast, in 2019, a higher proportion of men (38%) were engaged in own-account activities than women (28%) both globally and regionally, in particular in countries in sub-Saharan Africa (54%).
- Larger gender differences between the proportions of women and men classified as own-account workers and contributing family workers, who often lack basic social protections and are subject to low income and difficult working conditions, were observed in developing regions than in developed ones. In particular, a significant gender gap (17 percentage points) in these types of employment was reported in Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand).

Background

To understand the employment conditions and the position of women and men in the labour market, it is imperative to identify their status in employment, which entails classifying jobs with respect to the type of authority a worker exercises and the type of economic risk to which the worker is exposed.¹ This provides the statistical basis for analysing employment conditions in terms of level of security, protection and rights at work. Furthermore, the extent to which women are engaged in paid employment reflects their level of access to and integration into the monetary economy as well as their level of access to regular income and better working conditions.² This, in turn, could have a positive impact on their autonomy and financial independence within the household and enhance their personal development and [intra-household decision-making power](#).

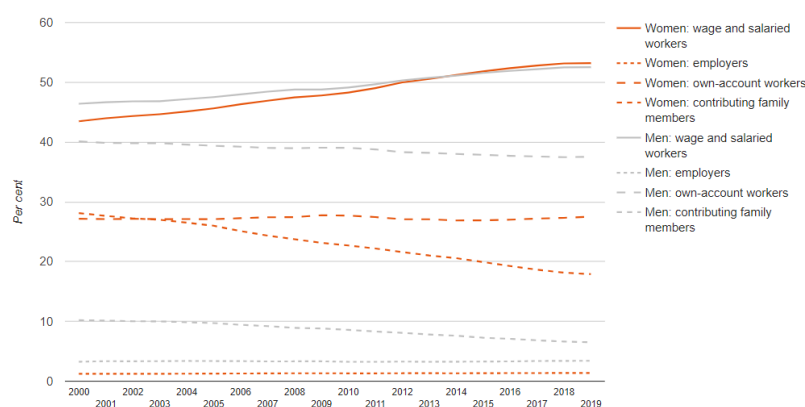
Globally, around half of employed women and men are wage and salaried workers

Globally in 2019, wage and salaried workers constituted slightly more than half of all employed women and men (53%). Since 2000, the proportion of wage and salaried workers has increased at a higher rate among employed women, slightly surpassing the proportion observed among employed men in 2014 (see figure I). This faster growth has not been accompanied, however, by a significant decline in the [gender pay gap](#) and in 2019 the proportion of women engaged in [part-time employment](#) was higher than that of men.

During the period 2000–2019, the percentage of female and male employers remained very small and relatively constant, at around 3% for men and 1% for women, showing an increase of less than half a percentage point (0.5%). Data show that women remained more likely to be contributing family workers (18%) than men (7%), despite the downward trend by more than a third since 2000, while men remained consistently more engaged in own-account activities (38%) than women (28%) during the same time period (see figure I).

Data on status in employment and gender reveal different patterns in urban and rural areas. Globally in 2019, 71% of employed women and 70% of employed men were classified as wage and salaried workers in urban areas, compared with 31% of employed women and 33% of employed men in rural areas. Own-account workers accounted for the largest group in both women's and men's employment in rural areas, representing 38% of employed women and 53% of employed men in 2019.

Figure I: Distribution of employment by status in employment by sex: 2000-2019



Source: ILO, Department of Statistics (ILOSTAT), ILO modelled estimates, 2019 (correspondence with ILO on 5 May 2020)

Across regions, large variations are found in terms of status in employment and gender

In developed regions, including Australia and New Zealand, Europe and Northern America, the vast majority of women and men were engaged in wage and salaried employment in 2019 (above 80%), with women more likely than men to be involved in this type of employment. In contrast, in sub-Saharan Africa, Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand) and Southern Asia, a smaller portion of both employed women and men (below 40%) were engaged in wage or salaried employment, with women less likely than men to be employed in this type of work, resulting in a gender gap of 16 percentage points in Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand), 11 percentage points in sub-Saharan Africa and 4 percentage points in Southern Asia. The percentages of women and men classified as employers were far from being at parity across all regions; for example, in Northern Africa, men were 4.5 times more likely than women to be employers (see figure II).

Women were more likely than men to work as contributing family workers in all regions. In 2019, the proportion of employed women who worked as contributing family workers was the lowest in Australia and New Zealand and Northern America (less than 1%) and the highest in Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand) (44%). Own-account workers made up a higher proportion of total men's employment than of total women's employment in all regions, with men most likely to be in this type of employment in sub-Saharan Africa (54%), where they were predominantly employed in the large **agriculture sector**, and least likely in Northern America (5%). Overall larger gender differences among individuals classified as own-account workers and contributing family workers, who often lack basic social protections and are subject to low income and difficult working conditions, were observed in developing regions than in developed ones, with these types of employment being more common among women than men by 17 percentage points in Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand), although, in a reverse trend, more common among men by 4 percentage points in Australia and New Zealand (see figure II).

The type of work done by individuals classified as employers and own-account workers is closely associated with that of entrepreneurs, who create employment for themselves and employment opportunities for others. Furthermore, the promotion of micro- and small-sized enterprises has also been identified as a strategy for advancing the economic empowerment of women, while reducing poverty and targeting gender equality. With these goals in mind, a methodology for measuring entrepreneurship from a gender perspective has been developed by the Evidence and Data for Gender Equality project.³

Figure II: Distribution of employment by status in employment by sex and region: 2019 (Percentage)

Source: ILOSTAT, ILO modelled estimates, 2019 (correspondence with ILO on 5 May 2020).

Country in focus: Cambodia

In Cambodia, the percentages of wage and salaried workers have increased remarkably since 2000, reaching 42% among employed women (a 33 percentage point increase) and 57% among employed men (a 38 percentage point increase). While this has been offset by a decline in the proportion of own-account workers among employed men (down from 54% in 2000 to 38% in 2019), the proportion of own-account workers among employed women increased from 40% in 2000 to 53% in 2019, diverging from the global trend.

About the data

Definitions

Status in employment provides information about the type of work relationship an individual has in their (main) job, taking into account the kind of the economic risk and authority experienced in that job.⁴ In this narrative, the distribution of employment by categories of status in employment is based on the 1993 International Classification of Status in Employment (ICSE-93),⁵ under which: (a) wage and salaried workers are defined as all workers who hold paid employment jobs and whose remuneration does not directly depend on the revenue of the unit for which they work; (b) employers and own-account workers are defined as all workers who hold self-employment jobs and whose remuneration directly depends on the profits derived from the goods and services produced (i.e., while employers engage, on a continuous basis, one or multiple persons to work for them as employees, own-account workers do not engage any employees on a continuous basis to work for them); and (c) contributing family workers are defined as all workers holding self-employment jobs in market-oriented establishments operated by related persons living in the same household.⁶ (United Nations Minimum Set of Gender Indicators 4, 5 and 6).

Coverage

Employed women and men aged 15 and above.

Availability

187 United Nations Member States and territories.

Limitations

Classification by status in employment does not encompass more granular distinctions in working status, including those between casual or regular contracts, as well as contractual protections against dismissal.

In addition, results may be skewed owing to the fact that data on status in employment are usually derived from household surveys, which cannot possibly preclude respondents' bias, including the interpretation of the questions asked and the different perceptions of women and men, for example with regard to their role in a family business (i.e., as an own-account worker as opposed to a contributing family worker).

International Classification of Status in Employment

While available data reported for status in employment are still categorized using the 1993 International Classification of Status in Employment (ICSE-93), in 2018, at the twentieth International Conference of Labour Statisticians, the **2018 International Classification of Status in Employment (ICSE-18)** was adopted.

The new international standard, shown below, classifies jobs in employment for pay or for profit into 10 detailed categories aggregated according to two alternative classification hierarchies: type of authority (ICSE-18-A) and type of economic risk (ICSE-18-R). The hierarchy of type of authority provides a dichotomy between independent workers and dependent workers, given the nature of control workers can exercise over the economic unit for which they work. The hierarchy of type of economic risk provides a dichotomy between employment for pay and employment for profit, analogous to the traditional distinction between paid employment and self-employment used in the System of National Accounts.

2018 International Classification of Status in Employment (ICSE-18)

- Independent workers
 - A. Employers
 - B. Independent workers without employees
- Dependent workers
 - C. Dependent contractors
 - D. Employees
 - E. Contributing family workers

International Classification of Status in Employment according to type of economic risk (ICSE-18-R)

- Workers in employment for profit
 - F. Independent workers in household market enterprises
 - C. Dependent contractors
 - E. Contributing family workers
- Workers in employment for pay
 - G. Owner-operators of corporations
 - D. Employees

Footnotes

1. ILO, [Resolution concerning the International Classification of Status in Employment \(ICSE\)](#), Geneva, 1993.
2. ILO, [A quantum leap for gender equality: For a better future of work for all](#), Geneva, 2019.
3. The [Evidence and Data for Gender Equality \(EDGE\) project](#) is a joint initiative of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), Statistics Division, and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women).
4. International Labour Organization (ILO), [Quick Guide on Measuring Economic Characteristics in the Population Census](#), Geneva, 2019.
5. ILO, [Resolution concerning the International Classification of Status in Employment \(ICSE\)](#), Geneva, 1993.
6. International Labour Organization (ILO), [Key Indicators of the Labour Market](#), ninth edition, Geneva, 2016.

Women and men in part-time employment



Key points

- In 2019, women were more likely than men to work in part-time employment in 95% of countries with available data, with the highest proportions of women working part-time recorded in Liberia (94%), the Netherlands (75%) and Rwanda (62%).
- The largest gender gaps in part-time employment were recorded in the Netherlands (36 percentage points), Pakistan (33 percentage points) and Austria (32 percentage points).
- As of 2019, overall, part-time employment was more common in developed regions than in developing ones, and particularly for women in Western Europe (57%), Australia and New Zealand (56%) and Northern Europe (46%).
- Among the 20 countries with available data since 1995, all of which are located in developed regions, trends for part-time employment have been mixed both for employed women and men.
- Young women and men aged 15–24 were twice as likely than adult women and men to indicate that they would like to work more hours. In Northern Africa, the rate of women's time-related underemployment stood at 26%, compared with 14% for men.

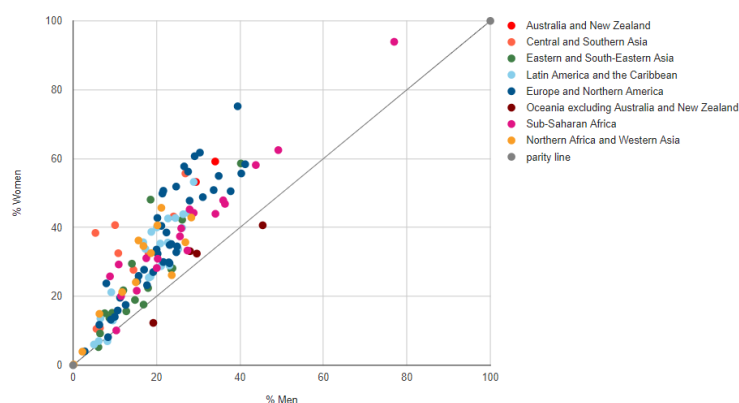
Part-time employment may offer an effective way to balance time spent on paid work, household responsibilities and childrearing, and being able to work for fewer hours is also seen as a means to increase employment levels, particularly among women.¹ In addition, part-time work facilitates the gradual entry into, participation in and exit from the labor market.²

Part-time employment comes at a cost for workers, however, as they oftentimes face difficult working conditions, including lower hourly wages and little job security, and receive less training and promotion opportunities than their full-time counterparts. They are also at a higher risk of falling into poverty and are less likely to have access to social protections, including **unemployment benefits**.³ In developed countries, some forms of part-time work are defined as non-standard work, with employment conditions similar to those described under **informal employment**.⁴ The proportion of part-time employment in informal wage employment was almost twice as high among women than among men, resulting in their greater exposure to the compounded vulnerabilities of part-time and informal employment.

Globally, as of 2019, women are much more likely to be engaged in part-time employment

Among the 127 countries with latest available data for 2015–2019, the highest proportions of women working part-time were recorded in Liberia (94%), the Netherlands (75%) and Rwanda (62%). Part-time employment was common among men in Liberia (77%), Rwanda (49%) and Tuvalu (45%). There was a higher proportion of women than men working part-time in 121 countries (95%), with the largest gender gaps reported in the Netherlands (36 percentage points), Pakistan (33 percentage points) and Austria (32 percentage points) (see figure I).

Figure I: Proportion of employed persons in part-time employment by sex and region: 2015-2019 (latest available) (Percentage)



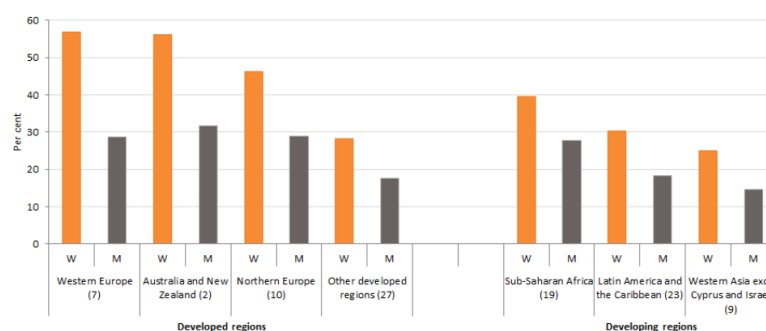
Source: International Labour Organization (ILO), Department of Statistics (ILOSTAT), ILO microdata repository (last accessed on 18 August 2020) (<https://ilostat.ilo.org/data/>).

Note: Data points represent country values and are colour-coded according to each country's respective regional grouping under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) indicators framework (<https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2019/regional-groups/>).

Part-time employment is more prevalent in developed regions

As of 2019, in all regions with available data, part-time employment was more prevalent among women than among men, with prevalence rates for women almost double those of men. Part-time employment was more common in developed regions than in developing ones, particularly for women in Western Europe (57%), Australia and New Zealand (56%) and Northern Europe (46%). Sub-Saharan Africa also recorded high proportions of women (39%) and men (28%) in part-time employment (see figure II). Among countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, where the proportion of women in part-time employment was prevalent, at 30%, Argentina had the highest proportion (53%) and also the largest gender gap (24 percentage points).

Figure II: Proportion of employed persons in part-time employment, by region and sex: 2019 (Percentage)



Source: Calculated by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), Statistics Division, using data retrieved from the ILO microdata repository (last accessed on 18 August 2020) (<https://ilostat.ilo.org/data/>).

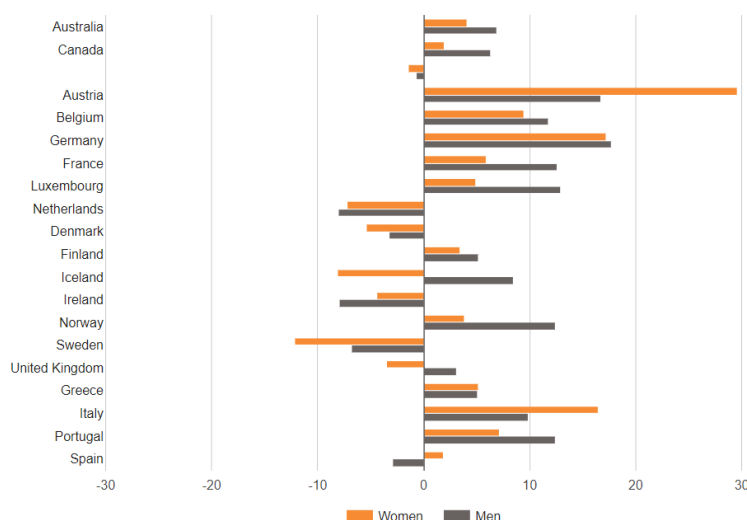
Note: Unweighted averages: data for the highlighted regions represent at least 50% of the regional population. The numbers in brackets indicate the number of countries with latest available data for the period 2015-2019. Data for other regions are not shown due to limited data availability. Other developed regions include countries in Northern America, Eastern Europe and Southern Europe, as well as Cyprus, Israel and Japan.

Part-time employment shows a mixed picture since 1995

Among the 20 countries with available data since 1995, all of which are located in developed regions, trends for part-time

employment have been mixed both for employed women and men. In the majority of those countries, there has been an increase in the proportion of part-time employment in women's and men's total employment, notably by 30 percentage points for women in Austria and by 18 percentage points for men in Germany (see figure III). In general, the incidence of part-time work among employed women has decreased in Northern Europe, the Netherlands and the United States of America. As a point of reference, the proportion of part-time employment in women's total employment was 82% in the Netherlands in 1995.

Figure III: Percentage point change in the proportion of employed persons in part-time employment by sex: 1995-2019 (latest available)



Source: International Labour Organization (ILO), Department of Statistics (ILOSTAT), 2020 (data last accessed on 18 August 2020) (<https://ilostat.ilo.org/data/>).

Time-related underemployment is higher among young women and men

Part-time employment is not necessarily a choice, and a significant number of people in part-time employment would prefer to work full-time. This is measured by the time-related underemployment rate,⁵ which in 2019 was slightly higher at the global level among women (11%) than among men (10%). Young women and men aged 15–24 were twice as likely to want to work more hours (20%). In Northern Africa, where women's unemployment rate was the highest among all regions, women's time-related underemployment rate stood at 26%, compared with 14% for men.⁶

Featured country: Switzerland

Similar to other countries in Western Europe, part-time employment is common for women in [Switzerland](#), and further analysis into couple households with or without children reveals differences in employment between female and male partners working full-time and/or part-time.

COVID-19

Prior to the onset of COVID-19, labour underutilization, in particular the combined rates of unemployment and time-related underemployment, was much higher, at 20%, among young women and young men than among adult women (9%) and adult men (8%), leaving youth more vulnerable to the shocks of the pandemic.⁷

About the data

Definition

- **Proportion of employed women and men working part-time:** This indicator provides information on the proportion of employed women and men whose working hours are fewer than those of comparable full-time workers. While the definition between part-time and full-time employment is decided by individual countries, for purposes of international comparability, throughout this narrative part-time employment refers to work involving less than 35 working hours per week.

Coverage

Employed women and men.

Availability

Data is presented for 127 United Nations Member States and territories with the latest available sex-disaggregated data for the period 2015–2019 and by regional groupings under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) indicators framework.⁸

Limitations

Countries have different definitions for full-time and part-time work, which may result in difficulties for purposes of international comparability. These definitions may use different age limits (lower and upper age limits and/or no upper age limit) or varying cut-offs based on the number of hours worked per week.⁹

Footnotes

1. Hakim, C., Key Issues in Women's Work: Female Diversity and the Polarization of Women's Employment, second edition, Contemporary Issues in Public Policy, The Glass House Press, London, 2004; Thévenon, O., "Drivers of Labour Force Participation in the OECD", Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Social Employment and Migration Working Papers, No. 145, OECD Publishing, Paris, 2013.
2. ILO, Key Indicators of the Labour Market 2015, chapter 6 (Part-time workers), Geneva, 2016.
3. Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Employment Outlook 2010: Moving Beyond the Jobs Crisis, OECD Publishing, Paris, 2010.
4. Vanek, J. and others, Statistics on the Informal Economy: Definitions, Regional Estimates & Challenges, Women in Informal Employment Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO) Working Paper (Statistics) No. 2, April 2014.
5. Three criteria are used to define time-related underemployment: the term refers to employed persons who, in a short reference period, (a) wanted to work additional hours, (b) worked less than a certain hourly threshold set at the national level and (c) in a subsequent reference period, were available to work additional hours.
6. ILOSTAT, ILO modelled estimates (last accessed on 18 August 2020).
7. Source: International Labour Organization (ILO), ILO Monitor: Covid-19 and the world of work, fourth edition, May 2020 (last accessed on 18 August 2020).
8. Regional groupings under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) indicators framework.
9. International Labour Organization (ILO), Key Indicators of the Labour Market, ninth edition, Geneva, 2016.

Employment of women and men by economic sector



Key points

- In 2020, employment in the agriculture sector continued to decline for both women and men, while their employment in the services sector kept on growing, engaging 59% of employed women and 45% of employed men, and resulting in a gender gap of 14 percentage points, a significant increase since 1995.
- During the period 1995–2020, women's employment in the industry sector has decreased slightly, to 16%, and increased to 28% for men, widening the gender gap in this sector to 12 percentage points.
- In 2019, the majority of women and men worked in the services sector. In four regions, Northern America, Australia and New Zealand, Europe and Latin America and the Caribbean, more than 80% of employed women worked in the services sector in 2019.
- In three regions, agriculture remained the largest sector for women's employment (over 50%) in 2019: Southern Asia, sub-Saharan Africa and Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand).
- With the movement of more women into jobs in the services sector, their share in that sector (45%) has surpassed their share in total employment (39%). Women's employment is concentrated in four services subsectors: human health and social work; education; private households¹ (usually referred to as paid domestic workers); and accommodation and food service activities.
- Globally in 2019, 79% of paid domestic workers were women, a slight reduction from 83% in 2015.
- Even before the onset of the Coronavirus-19 (COVID-19) pandemic in the first quarter of 2020, women made up over 70% of workers in the health sector and are now on the front lines in the battle against the pandemic, facing a higher risk of infection than men in the workplace.

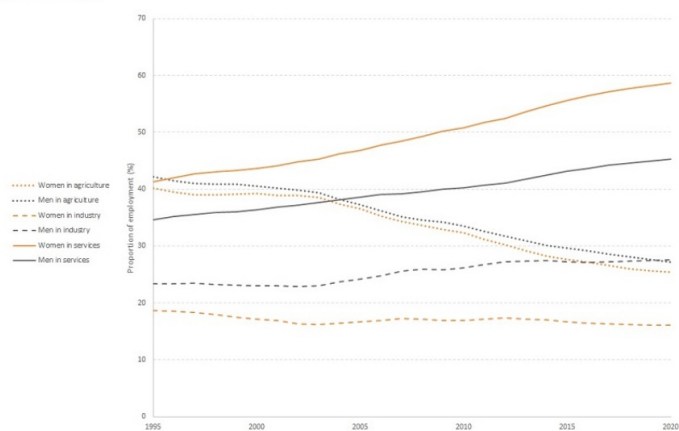
Current situation

In 2020, worldwide, while the distribution of women and men employed across the three sectors of economic activity, agriculture, industry, and services, was not equal, the services sector was the largest source of employment for both, particularly for women: 59% of women and 45% of men were employed in the services sector, resulting in a gender gap of 14 percentage points, a significant increase since 1995.

Over the past 25 years, the agriculture sector has declined in prominence as source of employment. In 1995, 40% of women and 42% of men worked in the sector; by 2020, it employed only 25% of women and 27% of men. Despite the decline in terms of overall employment, the gender gap in the agriculture sector has remained unchanged at around two percentage points over the past 25 years. In the industry sector, in contrast, over the period 1995–2020, women's employment has slightly decreased to 16% and men's employment has increased to 28%, resulting in a widened gender gap of 12 percentage points (see figure I).

For both women and men, employment in agriculture continues to decline while employment in the services sector keeps growing

Figure I: Distribution of employed persons by economic sector of employment by sex: 1995–2020 (Percentage)



Source: International Labour Organization (ILO), Department of Statistics (ILOSTAT), ILO modelled estimates, 2020 (data accessed on 2 April 2020) (<https://ilostat.ilo.org/data/>).

Note: 2019 and 2020 figures are projections.

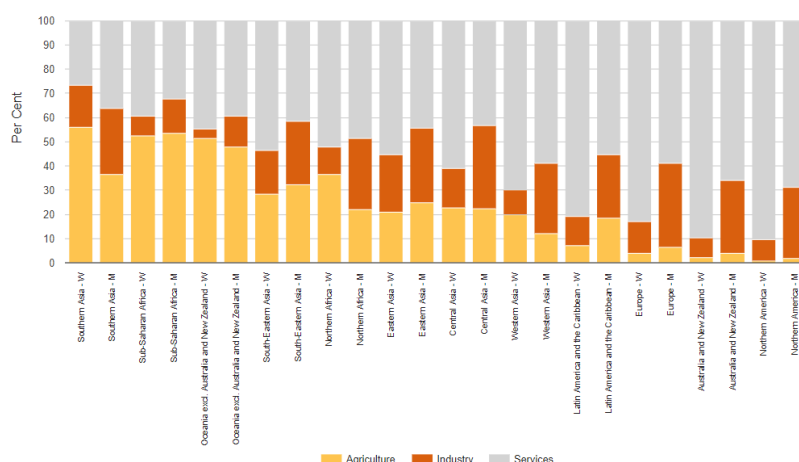
As of 2019, women worked predominantly in the services sector, while increasingly men were employed in the industry sector

In four regions, Northern America, Australia and New Zealand, Europe and Latin America and the Caribbean, more than 80% of women were employed in the services sector in 2019. In those regions, the proportion of men employed in the services sector, while relatively high compared to the proportion of men working in agriculture and industry, was at least 20 percentage points lower than that of women (see figure II).

In 2019, agriculture remained the largest sector for women's employment (over 50%) in three regions, Southern Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa and Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand). In the following two regions, women were also more likely than men to be working in agriculture: there was a gender gap of 15 percentage points in Northern Africa and 8 percentage points in Western Asia.²

In 2019, in all regions, men were more likely to work in the industry sector than women, with a gender difference ranging from six percentage points in sub-Saharan Africa to 22 percentage points in Australia and New Zealand and Europe. The industry sector absorbed between 25% and 35% of men's employment in all regions except sub-Saharan Africa (14%) and Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand) (13%). The proportion of women employed in the industry sector was below 20% in all regions except Eastern Asia (24%).

Figure II: Distribution of employed persons by economic sector of employment by sex and region: 2019 (Percentage)



Source: Calculated by UNDESA, Statistics Division, based on data received from ILOSTAT, ILO modelled estimates, 2020 (data accessed on 5 May 2020) (<https://ilostat.ilo.org/data/>) (correspondence with ILO on 5 May 2020).

Women's work was concentrated in four services subsectors: human health and social work; education; private households; and accommodation and food service activities

Over the past 25 years, more women have moved into jobs in the services sector, and by 2020 the proportion of women in that sector had surpassed their proportion in total employment. In 2020, the proportion of women among the total of people employed was 39% globally and 45% among those employed in the services sector, a minor increase from 42% in 1995.³ Within the sector, women's work was concentrated in specific subcategories. Globally, women represented more than 50% of the work force in the following four services subsectors in 2020, in order of importance: human health and social work (70%), education (62%), private households⁴ (57%) and accommodation and food service activities (54%).

In all countries, men tended to dominate work in other services subsectors, including: (a) 86% in transport, storage and communications; (b) 69% in public administration and defence; compulsory social security; and (c) 62% in real estate; and business and administrative activities.

Women were more likely than men to work in the most vulnerable jobs, with low pay, long hours and no social protections.⁵ These unfavourable employment conditions are particularly prevalent for the women working in the private households subsector, who are most often paid domestic workers in **informal employment**. In 2019, worldwide, 4% of women and 1% of men were employed in this subsector, with the highest proportion of women reported at 18% in Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand). Globally, 79% of employed persons in this subsector in 2019 were women,⁶ slightly down from 83% in 2015.⁷

Discrimination, namely through legal frameworks, social norms and/or institutional structures, can restrict women's access to paid work in specific sectors, leading to gender segregation in employment. As of 2020, in 74 countries and territories with available data, aside from limitations imposed on pregnant, nursing and postpartum women, women were also broadly restricted from working in industry subsectors such as mining and quarrying; manufacturing; and construction.⁸

COVID-19

Even before the onslaught of the COVID-19 pandemic, women were employed in subsectors that are on the front lines in the

battle against the pandemic: women make up over 70% of workers in the health sector, facing higher infection risks than men in the workplace.

Moreover, women aged 15 and above accounted for more than their overall share in employment in two out of the four subsectors hardest hit by the pandemic: wholesale and retail trade (44%); and accommodation and food service activities (54%).⁹

About the data

Definitions

- **Percentage distribution of employed population by economic sector of employment by sex:** Provides information on women's and men's employment distributed across three broad sectors of economic activity: agriculture; industry; and services. Economic activities classified by the International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities (ISIC –Rev.4)¹⁰ denote the characteristics of the economic unit in which a person works not the specific duties or functions of the person's job.¹¹

Coverage

Employed women and men aged 15 and above.

Availability

188 United Nations Member States and territories.

Footnotes

1. Includes activities of households as employers, activities of extraterritorial organizations and bodies, arts entertainment and recreation and other service activities, with activities of households as employers taking up the largest share. ([back to text](#))
2. .
3. [United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs \(UNDESA\), The World's Women 2015: Trends and Statistics, New York, 2015 \(United Nations publication, Sales No.E.15.XVII.8\).](#)
4. Includes activities of households as employers, activities of extraterritorial organizations and bodies, arts entertainment and recreation and other service activities, with activities of households as employers taking up the largest share.
5. [ILO, Women and men in the informal economy: A statistical picture, third edition, Geneva, 2018.](#)
6. Calculated by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), Statistics Division, using data on employment distribution by economic activity and sex (correspondence with ILO on 18 June 2020) and data from ILOSTAT on employment by sex and economic activity (accessed on 18 August 2020).
7. [United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs \(UNDESA\), The World's Women 2015: Trends and Statistics, New York, 2015 \(United Nations publication, Sales No.E.15.XVII.8\).](#)
8. [World Bank, Women, Business and the Law 2020, Washington, D.C., 2020.](#)
9. [ILO, COVID-19 and the World of Work](#) (last accessed on 18 August 2020). The proportions are calculated by UNDESA, Statistics Division, based on data retrieved from ILOSTAT, [ILO modelled estimates](#) (last accessed on 3 August 2020).
10. [International Standard Classification of All Economic Activities \(ISIC\), Revision 4 \(ISIC-Rev.4\).](#)
11. [International Labour Organization \(ILO\), Key Indicators of the Labour Market, ninth edition, Geneva 2016.](#)

Women and men in the labour force



Key points

- In 2020, worldwide, more men (74%) than women (47%) participated in the labour force. The global gender gap in labour force participation, which has narrowed only marginally over the past 25 years, is reported at 27 percentage points as of 2020.
- Across regions in 2019, the gender gap in labour force participation was the largest in Southern Asia (54 percentage points), Northern Africa (47 percentage points) and Western Asia (47 percentage points), where women's labour participation rates were below 30%.
- The gender gap in labour force participation was relatively narrow in sub-Saharan Africa and in developed regions, although for different reasons: in sub-Saharan Africa, economic necessity, brought about by poverty, pressures many women into seeking employment, whereas women in the labour force in developed countries enjoy educational levels equal to those of men and social norms that encourage their participation in paid work.
- Across all stages of the life cycle, men's labour force participation rates were higher than women's in all working-age groups, including youth and older persons. The largest gender gap in labour force participation is observed in the prime working age (25–54). That gap, which has remained relatively stable since 1995, is reported at 32 percentage points as of 2020.
- Depending on household type, the proportion of women actively engaged in the labour market varied greatly while that of men remained unchanged: 82% of women in prime working age in one-person households participated in the labour force, compared to 64% of women in couple-only households and 48% of women in couple households with children.

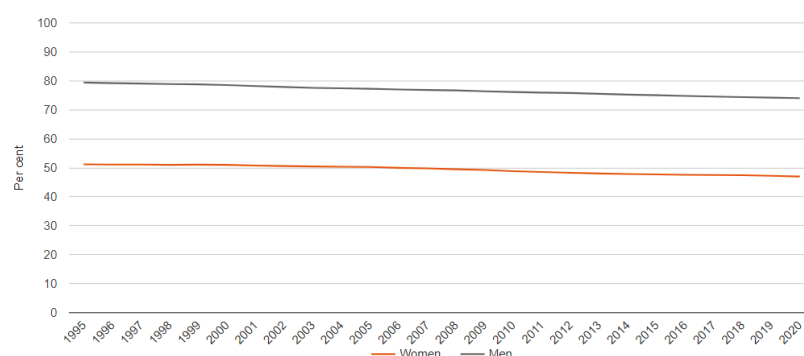
Globally, the gender gap in labour force participation remains very large

Women and men in the labour force furnish, or are available to furnish, the supply of labour for the production of goods and services in exchange for pay or profit, thus achieving economic empowerment and earning an independent source of income. However, labour market behaviours relative to women and men continue to vary due to legal, systemic and/or attitudinal restrictions.

In 2020, men were much more likely (74%) than women (47%) to participate in the labour force in countries worldwide. Between 1995 and 2005, the labour force participation rate for women remained slightly over 50% and declined gradually to 47% in 2018, where it is projected to remain in 2020. Men's labour force participation rate declined from 79% in 1995 to 74% in 2018 and is projected to remain at that level in 2020 (see figure I).

The gender gap in labour force participation has narrowed only marginally, to 27 percentage points, over the past 25 years due to a slightly larger decline in the labour force participation rate of men compared with that of women.

Figure I: Labour force participation rate among people aged 15 years and older by sex: 1995-2020 (Percentage)



Source: : International Labour Organization (ILO), Department of Statistics (ILOSTAT), ILO modelled estimates and projections, 2020 (<https://ilostat ilo.org/resources/methods/ilo-modelled-estimates/>) (last accessed on 17 July 2020).

Note: 2019 and 2020 figures are projections.

Women's participation in the labour force varies greatly across regions

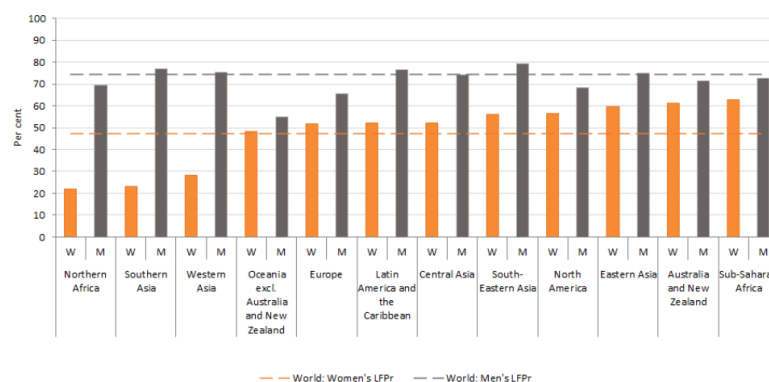
Large variations are found in women's access to the labour market, as well as in the gender gap, across regions at various stages of economic development (see figure II). In 2019, the gender gap in labour force participation was the largest in Southern Asia (54 percentage points), Northern Africa (47 percentage points) and Western Asia (47 percentage points), where women's labour force participation rates were below 30% (see figure II).

Nine out of ten countries where **discriminatory social norms** towards women in paid employment were reported to be the most prevalent were located in those three regions. Limits on **equal rights** for women and men and their freedom to work, namely legal frameworks requiring permission or additional documentation for women to work, existed in 8 out of 18 countries in Western Asia with available data.¹ Moreover, only 14% of countries in Southern Asia with available data made a 14-weeks minimum statutory **paid leave** period available to expecting mothers.

The gender gap in labour force participation may be relatively narrow in countries in both developing and developed regions, although for different reasons. In countries in developing regions, such as sub-Saharan Africa,² women's relatively high labour force participation rate compared with men's may be attributed to elevated levels of poverty and thus the economic necessity to work; in developed regions, such as Australia or New Zealand, women's high participation rate in the labour force compared with men's is a result of their near equal levels of **educational participation** and less restrictive social norms regarding the right of women to take part in paid work.³

Between 2000 and 2019, across all regions, the steepest decline in women's labour force participation was in Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand), where the rate fell by 17 percentage points, to 48%, and the highest increase was in Australia and New Zealand, where the rate rose by six percentage points, to 61%. During the same period, the Eastern Asia region, which had the largest regional share of the global labour force in 2019, registered an 8 percentage point decline, to 60% in the rate of women's labour force participation. An increase in women's labour force participation rates was also recorded in Latin America and the Caribbean (52%) and in Europe (52%).

Figure II: Labour force participation rate among people aged 15 years and older by sex and region: 2019 (Percentage)



Source: ILOSTAT, ILO modelled estimates and projections, 2020 (<https://ilostat ilo.org/resources/methods/ilo-modelled-estimates/>) (correspondence in May 2020).

Labour force participation is lower for women than for men across all working-age groups

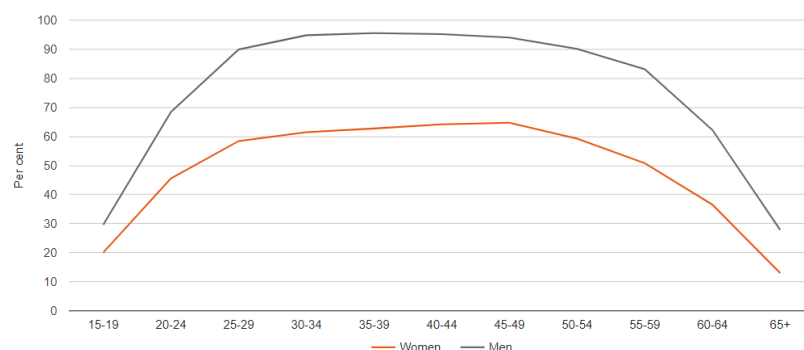
Across all stages in the life cycle, men's rates of participation in the labour force are higher than those of women, including among youth and older persons.

In 2020, worldwide, labour force participation among young women and men aged 15–24 was generally low, reflecting increased access to education and the lack of capacity of the labour market to absorb new cohorts of graduates. Labour force participation among older women and men aged 55–64 and above 65 was relatively low as well, reflecting retirement choices, access to social safety nets in later years, as well as retirement policies (see figure III).

While both women and men reached their peak levels of participation in the labour force during their prime working ages (25–54), data reveal that the largest gender gap in labour force participation is in this age group. The gender gap for this cohort has remained relatively stable, at 32 percentage points in 2020, compared with 31 percentage points in 1995.

Between ages 25–54, women's access to the labour market may be restricted owing to changes in household composition and the unequal distribution of **unpaid care work** in the household between women and men; women's participation rate shows a gradual recovery as mothers enter or re-enter the labour force as their children grow older and family responsibilities are reduced.⁴

Figure III: Labour force participation rate among people aged 15 and older by sex and age groups: 2020 (Percentage)



Source: : International Labour Organization (ILO), Department of Statistics (ILOSTAT), ILO modelled estimates and projections, 2020 (<https://ilostat ilo.org/resources/methods/ilo-modelled-estimates/>) (last accessed on 17 July 2020).

Note: 2020 figures are projections.

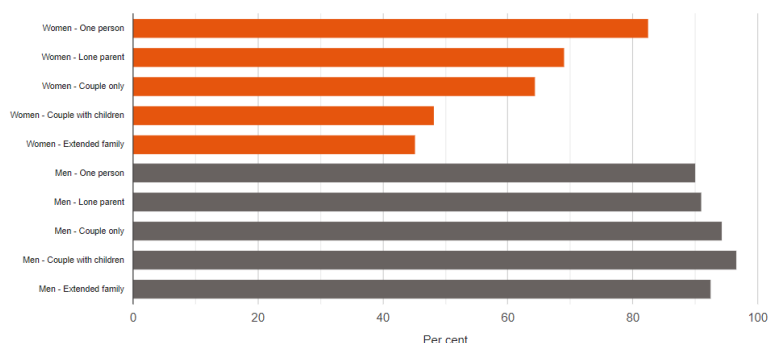
The rate of women's participation in the labour force during prime working ages varies greatly across household types while men's remains unchanged

Depending on the household type, the proportion of women actively engaged in the labour market varies greatly. In 2020, worldwide, women aged 25–54 in one person households had the highest labour force participation rate (82%) compared with women in other household types. When they marry and have children, however, women are more likely than men to exit the labour market (see figure IV).

Lone mothers with children under the age of six are more likely than women in couple or extended family households to participate in the labour force, possibly due to greater financial responsibilities. In couple-only households⁵ and couple households with children,⁶ women were considerably less economically active, participating in the labour force at rates of 64% and 48%, respectively, due to the different roles and responsibilities of women and men in unpaid domestic and care work, including domestic chores, as well as childbearing, child-rearing and childcare. In households with extended families,⁷ the presence of additional adults might contribute to the burden of women's unpaid domestic and care work, further decreasing their rates of participation in the labour force.

For men, on the other hand, labour force participation rates remain high irrespective of household types. In 2020, worldwide, men aged 25–54 in one-person households had a lower labour force participation rate (90%) than men living in other household types. However, men who marry and have children are more likely to be in the labour force. In couple households with children, men's labour force participation rate was the highest (97%), denoting a supply of labour almost at full capacity.

Figure IV: Labour force participation rate among people aged 25-54 by sex and household type: 2020 (Percentage)



Source: ILOSTAT, ILO modelled estimates and projections, 2020 (<https://ilostat ilo.org/resources/methods/ilo-modelled-estimates/>) (correspondence in June 2020).

The likelihood of women being in the labour force during prime working ages tends to decrease in most regions with each additional child aged under six while the rate of men's participation remains unchanged

The presence of children under age six contributes greatly to the gender gap in labour force participation in prime working ages. In 2020, across regions, the participation in the labour force of women aged 25–54 was more likely to decrease with each additional child under the age of six in both extended family and couple households (see table).

Across all regions, men aged 25–54, in contrast to women in the same age group, were almost equally or more likely to participate in the labour force given the presence of additional children aged under six.

In South-Eastern Asia, women in couple households left the labour force at dramatic rates with the birth of each additional child under the age of six: the labour force participation rate of women with three or more children aged under six in this household type stood at 32%, 40 percentage points lower than that of women living with no children aged under six.

However, in extended family households, the impact of the presence of additional children on the rate of women's labour force participation was less drastic, probably indicating the availability of help with childcare from other adults in the household. A similar pattern was observed in Latin America and the Caribbean, where the presence of additional children reduced women's labour force participation to a lesser extent in extended family households compared with couple households.

In Europe and Northern America, on the other hand, women in extended family households were less likely to participate in the labour force than women in couple households. It is possible that, in extended households, the presence of additional adults may represent an increase in the share of women's unpaid care work.

Table
Labour force participation rate among people aged 25–54 years by sex, region and number of children under age six in couple and extended family households: 2020
(Percentage)

Regions	Women and men aged 25–54 years	Household (HH) type	Presence of children under age six			
			None	1 child	2 children	3+ children
Central and Southern Asia	Women	Couple HH	29	26	22	22
		Extended family HH	31	25	22	20
	Men	Couple HH	98	99	99	99
		Extended family HH	95	96	95	96
Northern Africa and Western Asia	Women	Couple HH	29	27	22	21
		Extended family HH	38	31	24	20
	Men	Couple HH	91	97	97	97
		Extended family HH	88	91	92	92
Oceania (excl. Australia and New Zealand)	Women	Couple HH	58	52	53	54
		Extended family HH	54	57	55	51
	Men	Couple HH	64	57	59	59
		Extended family HH	56	58	54	56
Latin America and the Caribbean	Women	Couple HH	61	56	47	36
		Extended family HH	69	62	57	54
	Men	Couple HH	95	97	98	97
		Extended family HH	89	93	93	93
South-Eastern Asia	Women	Couple HH	72	63	48	32
		Extended family HH	76	71	65	60
	Men	Couple HH	96	97	97	97
		Extended family HH	91	93	93	93
Europe and Northern America	Women	Couple HH	78	70	63	46
		Extended family HH	75	68	60	42
	Men	Couple HH	95	96	96	94
		Extended family HH	85	89	90	84
Sub-Saharan Africa	Women	Couple HH	82	81	80	76
		Extended family HH	74	76	75	66
	Men	Couple HH	95	96	96	96
		Extended family HH	78	84	87	83

Source: ILOSTAT, ILO modelled estimates and projections, 2020 (<https://ilostat ilo.org/resources/methods/ilo-modelled-estimates/>) (correspondence in June 2020).

Country in focus: Iraq

In Iraq, where no regular labour force surveys are being held, the rate of women's participation in the labour force was 11% in 2017 according to national estimates, the lowest rate in the world after Yemen. The Government of Iraq has set an ambitious target of increasing women's participation in the labour force by five percentage points by 2025. If this target is met and continued for an additional decade, annual economic growth in Iraq is estimated to be boosted by 1.6 percentage points through 2035.⁸

COVID-19

The gender gap in the labour force participation rate, which had narrowed slightly in the past 25 years, was still considerable and persistent prior to the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic. The pandemic may exacerbate gender disparities in labour market outcomes, as well as the unequal distribution of **unpaid domestic and care work** among women and men.

The youth labour force participation rate fell significantly in countries around the world from February to April 2020 owing to the lockdown resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic: by 7.5 percentage points in the United States of America and 7.1 percentage points in Australia. The decline in the rate was less marked among adults aged 25 and above.⁹

In Canada, the rate of women's participation in the labour force fell to 59% in June 2020 (from 61.2% in June 2019). Men's labour force participation rate also fell, to 68.8% in June 2020 (from 70.2% in June 2019). During the same period, the decline in labour force participation was much higher among young women aged 15–24 (5.3 percentage points) than among young men in the same age group (0.2 percentage points).¹⁰

About the data

Definitions

- **Labour force participation rate by sex:** This indicator provides information on the proportion of the working-age population that is actively engaged in the labour market either as employed or unemployed persons. Employed persons include working-age individuals who were engaged in any activity to produce goods or provide services for pay or profit during a specific period of time. Unemployed persons include working-age individuals who were not in employment, available for work and actively seeking work during the reference period. The working-age population covers persons aged 15 years and older in order to facilitate international reporting and cross-country comparability.

Labour force participation (LFP) rate (%) = (employed persons + unemployed persons) / working - age population x 100 ¹¹

Coverage

Working-age women and men in 188 United Nations Member States and territories.

Limitations

Women's participation in the labour force does not necessarily mean that they have access to income through decent work: outcomes for women participating in the labour force may include unemployment, underemployment, informal employment, part-time employment and unpaid employment (for example, contributing family workers), as well as fewer hours, lower wages, vulnerable employment conditions and limited access to leadership positions.

Women in the labour force are more likely than men to go uncounted unless specific probing questions, capturing the number of women who work irregularly, for a few hours, at home and/or in unpaid employment, are integrated into surveys to measure their participation.

Footnotes

1. World Bank, Women, Business and the Law 2020, Washington, D.C., 2020.
2. ILO, World Employment and Social Outlook: Trends for Women 2018, Geneva, 2018.
3. ILO, World Employment and Social Outlook: Trends for Women 2017, Geneva, 2017.
4. ILO and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), The Impact of Marriage and Children on Labour Market Participation, Geneva 2020.
5. Couple-only households consist of a household head and spouse (or partner).
6. Couple households with children consist of a household head, a spouse (or partner) and children.
7. Extended family household consist of a household head, spouse (or partner), children and other familial relative(s).
8. Source: World Bank, open data, (last accessed on 17 July 2020); World Bank, Women's Economic Participation in Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon, Washington, D.C., 2020.
9. Sources: United Nations, Secretary-General's Policy Brief: The Impact of Covid-19 on Women, 9 April 2020; ILO, Covid-19 and the world of work, 2020; ILO, ILO Monitor: Covid-19 and the world of work; updated estimates and analysis, 4th edition, 27 May 2020
10. Source: Statistics Canada, Labour force characteristics: monthly, seasonally adjusted and trend-cycle (last accessed on 10 August 2020).
11. International Labour Organization (ILO), Key Indicators of the Labour Market, ninth edition, Geneva, 2016.

Economic empowerment

Equal rights of women to the ownership and control of land [FAO]



Key points

- National legal frameworks from 15 countries show that women's land rights were often less protected than those of men. Only Colombia, Nicaragua, Portugal, Serbia and Sweden had high or very high levels of legal guarantees of gender equality in land ownership and/or control.
- Moreover, in countries where legal pluralism prevails, meaning that formal law coexists with personal or customary laws, women's land rights were even less protected.
- In 9 out of 10 countries with available data, relatively fewer women than men had ownership and/or secure tenure rights over agricultural land, with the largest gender gap observed in India (34 percentage points). Malawi was the only country with a higher proportion of women (47.1%) than men (41.3%) who held secure tenure rights over the agricultural land.
- The share of women among owners or rights-bearers of agricultural land ranged from 11% in Niger to 58% in Malawi.

Background

Although data availability is still limited, there is evidence suggesting that greater gender equality in the distribution of land (ownership and/or control) has positive multiplier effects for the achievement of a range of key development outcomes, including food security and the welfare of households.¹ Furthermore, secure control and ownership of land have a strong empowering effect on women: it reduces their reliance on male partners and relatives; increases their bargaining power within the household; and improves their chances of accessing a wide variety of productive resources and services, including information, technical assistance, access to markets and credit. The confidence gained from increased tenure security can further encourage women to undertake or expand their entrepreneurial activities, including by joining producer organizations and/or cooperatives.²

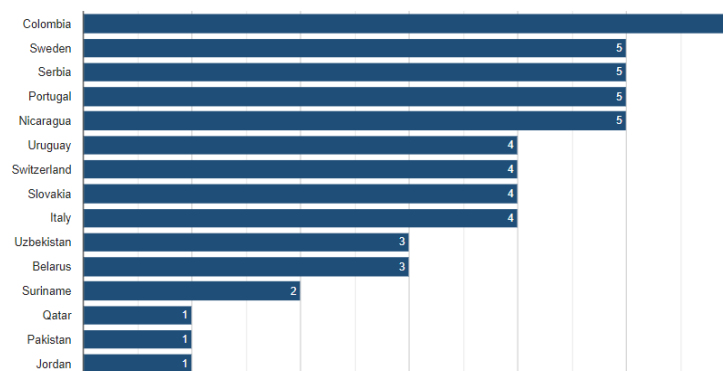
Current situation

Women's land rights in national legal frameworks

Legal provisions included in national legal frameworks from 15 countries representing various regions, as well as different religious and cultural traditions, show that women's land rights are often less protected than those of men. Only one third of reporting countries, namely Colombia, Nicaragua, Portugal, Serbia and Sweden, have provisions in their legal frameworks that demonstrate high or very high levels of guarantees of gender equality in land ownership and/or control (see figure I).

One third of reporting countries have provisions guaranteeing gender equality in land ownership and/or control in their national legal frameworks

Figure I: Level of guarantees in national legal frameworks of women's equal rights to land ownership and/or control in selected countries: 2020 (1=lowest: 6=highest)



Source: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), Statistics Division, Global SDG Indicators Database (last accessed on 12 May 2020) (<https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/database/>).

In countries with multiple legal systems, that is, where formal law coexists with personal or customary laws, women's land rights are less protected

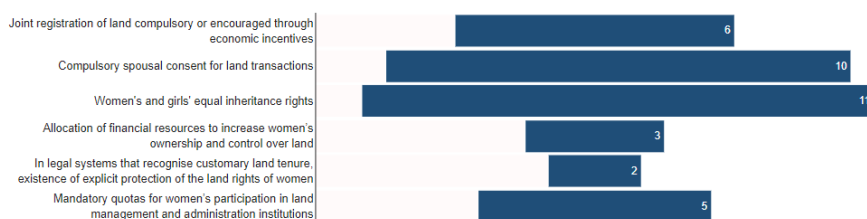
Moreover, in countries where legal pluralism prevails, that is, countries in which formal law coexists with personal or customary laws, women's land rights are less protected. For instance, in countries where some aspects of personal laws prevail over constitutional provisions, women's land rights are less safeguarded, particularly their inheritance or matrimonial rights. Formal laws in 60% of the countries reporting data on gender equality in land rights do not acknowledge customary land tenure systems, but in those that recognize customary laws, less than half protect women's land rights.

One key way to support the implementation of policies and laws and accelerate gender equality in land ownership and control is the adoption of temporary special measures, such as legal provisions that allocate financial resources for facilitating women's purchase of land or adopt mandates to foster women's participation in land governance institutions. Nevertheless, there is little evidence of the existence of such positive measures in national legal frameworks, and among the reporting countries, the existence of such positive measures is more the exception than the rule. Of the 15 countries reporting data, only Colombia has provisions that allocate financial resources with the purpose of increasing women's ownership and/or control of land (Proxy D). The situation is slightly better regarding the adoption of mandates in legal and policy frameworks to ensure women's participation in land management and administration institutions (Proxy F); one third of reporting countries have introduced this measure in law.

While, in general, women's and girls' inheritance rights tend to be protected in law, evidence shows that social and cultural norms constitute an important obstacle to their ability to claim to those rights.³ About 80% of countries reporting data have legal provisions that guarantee equal inheritance rights for women and men, as well as girls and boys. However, in 77% of reporting countries, the consent of both spouses is required for land/property transactions (see figure II).

Although many countries have introduced legal provisions to promote gender equality since the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action in 1995, substantial progress is still needed to realize women's land rights in law and in practice.

Figure II: Number of countries fulfilling alternative variables to monitor Sustainable Development Goal indicator 5.a.2: 2020



Source: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) Statistical Database (FAOSTAT) 2020 (correspondence with FAO on 12 May 2020) (<http://www.fao.org/faostat/en/#home>).

Note: FAO Information note, "Realizing Women's Rights to Land in the Law", on SDG indicator 5.a.2 elaborates on these alternative variables (last accessed on 4 September 2020) (<http://www.fao.org/3/i8788en/i8788en.pdf>).

Gender gaps in ownership/tenure rights over agricultural land

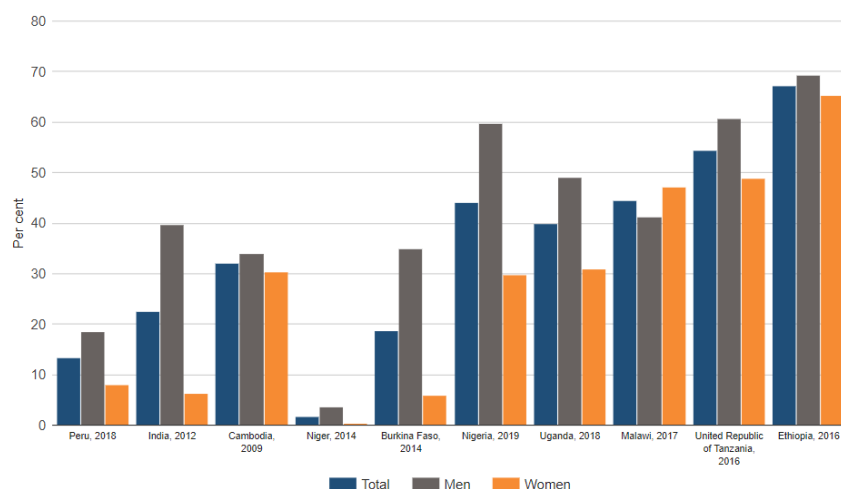
Relatively fewer women than men have ownership and/or secure tenure rights over agricultural land

Available data on the extent of ownership/tenure rights over agricultural land remain scarce at the global level. Despite the limited data availability,⁴ a recent study of 10 countries undertaken by FAO to analyse gender disparities in land ownership and/or secure tenure rights revealed that, in 9 out of the 10 countries, relatively fewer women than men had ownership and/or secure tenure rights over agricultural land (see figure III). Women in this situation are in a disadvantaged position compared to men, as land ownership is a key means of personal empowerment.⁵

Data on land rights in Nigeria and Uganda released in 2019 show that less than one third of women had ownership or secure tenure rights over agricultural land, whereas almost 50% of men in Uganda and 60% of men in Nigeria had those rights. In India, only 6% of women engaged in crop production had land registered under their name in 2012; for men, this share was close to 40%, revealing a gender gap of 34 percentage points in land registration. In Peru, 8% of the female agricultural holders had documents for land they owned or used in 2018, compared to 19% of male agricultural holders — a gender gap of 11 percentage points. In the Niger, data show a gender gap of three percentage points, with 0.3% of women having title to land they own solely or jointly, compared with 3.6% of men.

In 2014, only 6% of women in Burkina Faso owned or held use rights over agricultural land owned by their household, compared to 35% of men. In Ethiopia, however, the disparity was much smaller: in 2016, 65% of women had their name on certificates issued for household parcels, either exclusively or jointly, including the rights to sell it or use it as a collateral (compared to 69% of men). Among the countries assessed, Malawi was the only country with a higher proportion of women (47.1%) than men (41.3%) holding secure tenure rights over the agricultural land. While men in Malawi were more likely to have their names on legal documents, women were more likely to have the right to sell and/or bequeath their land.

Figure III: Percentage of women and men aged 18 and older in the agricultural population with ownership or secure rights over agricultural land, by country: 2009-2019 (latest available)



Source: UNDESA, Statistics Division, Global SDG Indicators Database (last accessed on 12 May 2020)

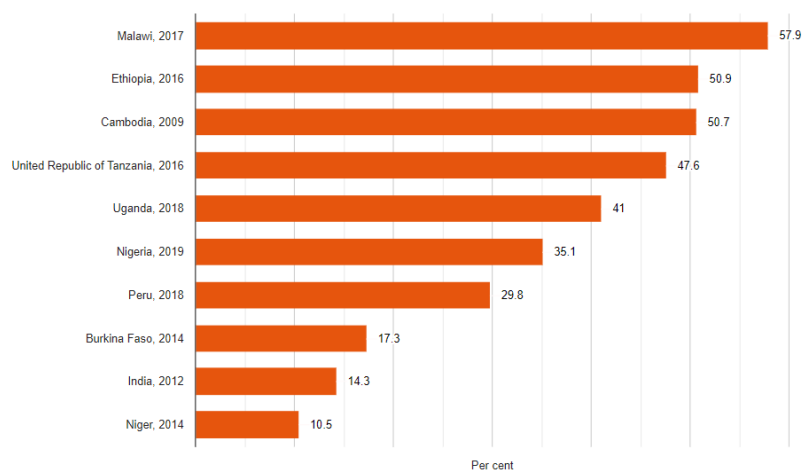
(<https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/database/>).

Note: Variations may be observed in the set of questions in each survey analysed.

Many fewer women than men have their names on legally recognized documents

Moreover, from available data it is observed that the proportion of women among owners or rights-bearers of agricultural land ranges from 11% in the Niger to 58% in Malawi (see figure IV). It is expected that ongoing efforts to collect data related to individual land tenure rights will provide further insight into the situation of women's rights to own land in all countries worldwide.

Figure IV: Proportion of women among owners or rights-bearers of agricultural land, by country (Percentage)



Source: UNDESA, Statistics Division, Global SDG Indicators Database (last accessed on 12 May 2020) (<https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/database/>).

Note: Variations may be observed in the set of questions in each survey analysed.

About the data

Definition

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5, indicator 5.a, directs countries to undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws. SDG indicator 5.a.2 looks at the extent to which the legal framework (including customary law) guarantees women's equal rights to land ownership and/or control. SDG indicator 5.a.1 measures the extent to which women are disadvantaged in ownership/tenure rights over agricultural land. SDG indicator 5.a.1 is divided in two sub-indicators: (a) proportion of total agricultural population with ownership or secure rights over agricultural land, by sex; and (b) share of women among owners or rights-bearers of agricultural land, by type of tenure.

Methodology

Measurement of Sustainable Development Goal indicator 5.a.2

Indicator 5.a.2 measures the extent to which a country's legal framework supports women's land rights by testing that framework against six proxies drawn from international law and internationally accepted good practices, in particular the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women,⁶ which has been ratified by 189 countries, and the Voluntary Guidelines for the Responsible Governance of the Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests,⁷ endorsed unanimously by the Committee of World Food Security of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in 2012.

The six proxies through which indicator 5.a.2 is monitored are as follows:

- A: Joint registration of land compulsory or encouraged through economic incentives.
- B: Compulsory spousal consent for land transactions.
- C: Women's and girls' equal inheritance rights.

- D: Allocation of financial resources to increase women's ownership and control over land.
- E: In legal systems that recognize customary land tenure, existence of explicit protection of the land rights of women.
- F: Mandate for women's participation in land management and administration institutions.

In the context of the reporting on the SDGs, in the case of SDG indicator 5.a.2, countries are classified according to the total number of proxies found in primary legislation or in primary and secondary legislation. Given that customary land tenure rules do not exist in all countries nor is customary law recognized (related to proxy E), for the purpose of computation, a two-scale (or dual) approach has been developed.⁸

Measurement of Sustainable Development Goal indicator 5.a.1

Based on the recommendations from seven field tests carried out under the Evidence and Data for Gender Equality (EDGE) initiative,⁹ three proxies have been identified to measure ownership or tenure rights over agricultural land:

- 1. Presence of a legally recognized document in the name of an individual.
- 2. Right to sell.
- 3. Right to bequeath.

Coverage

Data on the extent of the legal framework for 15 countries. All available data were collected and validated by the reporting countries. As custodian agency, FAO carried out the quality assessment and aggregation of results. Data on the extent of ownership/tenure rights over agricultural land focused on adults living in agricultural households, defined as households that had operated land for agricultural purposes and/or raised livestock over the past 12 months, regardless of the final purpose of production.

Footnotes

1. Dugarova, E., "Gender equality as an accelerator for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals", Discussion paper, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and UN-Women, expert consultation, New York, 2017 and Meinzen-Dick, R., Quisumbing, A., Doss, C. and Thies, S., "Women's land rights as a pathway to poverty reduction: A framework and review of available evidence", *Agricultural Systems*, vol.172, June 2019 .
2. Ibid.
3. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) Gender and Land Rights Database ; OECD Gender, Institutions and Development Database (GID-DB) 2019 ; and OECD, Development Centre's Social Institutions & Gender Index (SIGI) .
4. Recognizing the importance of the matter, key survey tools, such as Living Standards Measurement Studies and the 50 x 2030 Initiative for data-smart agriculture, include questions on SDG indicator 5.a.1 to fully capture the gender dimension in securing tenure rights in line with the internationally agreed methodology.
5. Evidence for this was found in rural China: see Wenjing Han, Xiaoling Zhang and Zhengfeng Zhang, "The role of land tenure security in promoting rural women's empowerment: Empirical evidence from rural China", *Land Use Policy*, vol. 86, July 2019 and Allendorf, K., "Do Women's Land Rights Promote Empowerment and Child Health in Nepal?", *World Development*, vol. 35(11), November 2007 .
6. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1979 (resolution 34/180).
7. Voluntary Guidelines for the Responsible Governance of the Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forest.
8. For countries where customary land tenure is not recognized in the legal framework (either through a statute or the constitution), regardless of whether it exists de facto or not, Proxy E is marked non-applicable and the country is assessed using the five remaining proxies.
9. The key principles of the methodology of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) indicator 5.a.1 were developed, tested and validated in the context of the Evidence and Data for Gender Equality (EDGE) initiative, jointly executed by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Development (UNDESA), Statistics Division, and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), in collaboration with national statistical offices, the Asian Development Bank, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the World Bank.

Multidimensional child poverty [UNICEF]



Key points

- Until the present time, very few differences between girls and boys have been recorded in the measurement of child poverty.
- The way to address gender differences in child poverty between girls and boys is to measure specific material shortcomings that are important for girls (for example, in menstrual hygiene management).
- In all six countries with latest available data for the period 2017–2019, estimated poverty among adolescent girls was higher than that among adolescent boys.

Background

Children, in particular girls, are invisible and missing in household poverty estimates

While it is well known that gender disparities go well beyond quantifiable issues,¹ it might be expected that estimates of child poverty would show a difference between girls and boys. However, during the last two decades of research and analysis of child poverty, no significant differences have been found. One explanation may be that some of the indicators traditionally used (for example, access to water and sanitation or overcrowding) apply to all children in a household, while individual-level material deprivation indicators may be selected without attention to which ones best capture gender disparities.² Finding appropriate indicators to differentiate the experience of poverty between girls and boys that both reflect the rights constitutive of poverty (material shortcomings) and are widely available across household surveys is challenging. Nevertheless, collecting this information is a priority, given its importance for policy design and focused interventions within households.

Current situation

Few differences between girls and boys have been recorded in child poverty measurement

Traditionally,³ child poverty is measured at the level of the individual child (that is, it is not simply a disaggregation of a household-level estimate of poverty).⁴ While the dimensions of poverty are matched to child rights, not all rights violations constitute child poverty.⁵ Moreover, since all rights are equally important, all dimensions ought to be weighted equally. According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF),⁶ the child rights constitutive of poverty (that is, requiring directly and predominantly material resources to be fulfilled) are:⁷ clothes, education, health, housing, information, nutrition, play, sanitation and water.

However, because clothes, information and play are usually not captured in household surveys and/or there are no internationally agreed criteria to establish thresholds of moderate and severe deprivation, they are not included in these estimates (nor in global reporting).

Some indicators, such as housing and water, are captured at the household level and then assigned to the individual child or children in the household. For these indicators, there is no gender difference as the number of girls and boys are fairly equal across all types of households.

It is a challenge that even among individual-based indicators (for example, health and education) there is no pronounced gender difference.⁸

There are at least four ways to address this challenge. One is to measure girls and boys separately. However, this raises comparability and aggregation issues. Another approach is to assign different thresholds or ladders for girls and boys for some indicators under the rationale that girls are differentially affected. For example, for purposes of safety, dignity and privacy, lower thresholds for overcrowding and sanitation could be used for girls. However, there are no internationally agreed criteria to establish these differentiated thresholds. A third alternative is to include additional indicators that are "gender-informed", that is, indicators that apply to both girls and boys but that are more likely to capture differences between them.

One way to address gender differences in child poverty is to measure specific material shortcomings that are important for girls (for example, menstrual hygiene

management)

Including girl-specific indicators represents the fourth approach. If there are elements that girls (as girls) need to satisfy their rights, they should be measured — even if there are no equivalent (no “compensatory”) indicators to measure for boys. **Menstrual hygiene management**⁹ is such an indicator, as it is specific to girls and cannot be measured for boys because they do not need it – and therefore cannot be deprived of it. However, not measuring it for girls would underestimate their material deprivation (and a violation of their right to sanitation)¹⁰ for no good reason.

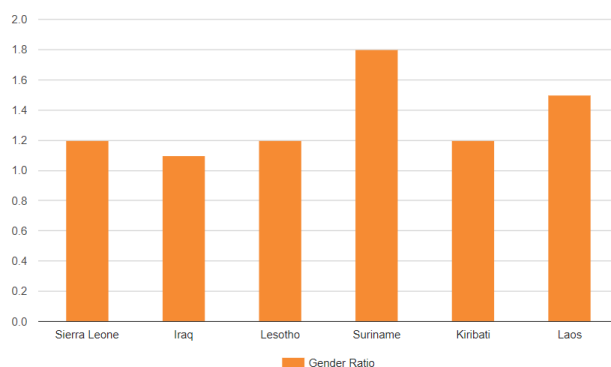
Estimated poverty is higher among adolescent girls than adolescent boys in six countries with available data

Using the latest household surveys from the sixth round of the Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys, an effort was made to implement the UNICEF recommendation that girl-specific indicators be included within the child poverty estimation. **Menstrual hygiene management** was measured, for the first time, and it has now been incorporated in UNICEF guidance on how to measure child poverty.¹¹

Menstrual hygiene management has been included by adding a separate indicator in the sanitation dimension. The indicator comprises two elements, one is the availability of menstrual hygiene products and the other one is the availability of a secure and clean place to change.¹²

Available data for six countries show that the ratio of poverty among girls relative to boys (for children age 15 and older) is higher in all countries analysed (see figure). For example, in Suriname, the prevalence of poverty is 80% higher among girls than among boys, while in both Kiribati and Sierra Leone, child poverty is 20% higher among girls than boys.

Figure : Poverty ratio among adolescent girls and boys (aged 15-17) in selected countries: 2017-2019 (latest available)



Source: United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), UNICEF estimates, based on Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys, sixth round (<https://mics.unicef.org/faq>).

Note: A ratio of greater than 1 indicates that girls' estimated poverty is higher than that of boys.

Sources

- Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), *Pobreza infantil en América Latina y el Caribe*, December 2010
- Fajth, G., Kurukulasuriya, S. and Engilbertsdóttir, S., "A multidimensional response to tackling child poverty and disparities: Reflections from the Global Study on Child Poverty and Disparities" in Minujin, A. and Nandy, S. (eds.), *Global Child Poverty and Well-Being: Measurement, Concepts, Policy and Action*, Policy Press, United Kingdom, 2012
- Gordon, D., Nandy, S., Pantazis, C., Pemberton, S. and Townsend P., "Child Poverty in the Developing World", *International Journal of Epidemiology*, vol. 33, Issue 2, April 2004
- Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), *Draft Guidelines: A Human Rights Approach to*

Poverty Reduction Strategies, Geneva, 2002

- OHCHR, Human Rights Indicators: A Guide to Measurement and Implementation, United Nations, Geneva, 2012

About the data

Definitions

The indicator measures child poverty, specifically material shortcomings across a range of dimensions (each dimension is a right constitutive of poverty).

Coverage

The indicator covers girls and boys under age 18.

Availability

Data are available for six United Nations Member States and territories with latest available data for the period 2017–2019.

Footnotes

1. For example, the net enrolment rate at school can be at gender parity, but gender stereotypes may still be reproduced in that setting.
2. For example, immunization and stunting, which do not present significant differences between girls and boys in most countries.
3. At least since the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) commissioned the first estimate of child poverty across developing countries.
4. Sustainable Development Goal 1, indicator 1.2.2: "Proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions"; conspicuously, the indicator is worded differently from other indicators in the SDG indicators framework. It does not call for disaggregation by "age and sex;" instead, it mentions specifically multidimensional poverty of "men, women, and children". Moreover, a household-level estimate may omit children suffering material deprivations in families that are not counted as poor due to indicators related to adults. In some countries, this omission could be as high as 20%–30% of all children (or about half of all poor children).
5. Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), Draft Guidelines: A Human Rights Approach to Poverty Reduction Strategies, Geneva, 2002 ; Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), Human Rights Indicators: A Guide to Measurement and Implementation, United Nations, Geneva, 2012 .
6. UNICEF, Measuring and monitoring child poverty, Position paper, March 2020 .
7. Monetary income/consumption is not included, although there is a right to a minimum standard of living because: (a) it would introduce an indirect metric of poverty while all the other indicators measure deprivations directly; (b) children are not supposed to earn a living; and (c) depending on how the household surpasses the monetary poverty line, it may be harmful for children (with implications for child labour).
8. For instance: immunization under health; or school attendance under education. In the case of education, the majority of countries in the world have reached gender parity in primary school attendance, and parity is also close in secondary school in many countries. Thus, the observed differences in the education dimension are not strong enough to drive a wedge between girls and boys for overall child poverty estimates.
9. Management of hygiene associated with the menstrual process, including menstrual hygiene materials such as pads, cloths, tampons or cups, as well as having access to safe and convenient places to change in privacy.
10. Menstrual hygiene management could also be measured under health. However, there should not be a separate dimension labelled "girls" or "gender" as it would not be comparable to the other dimensions, all of which match a right.
11. UNICEF, Measuring and monitoring child poverty, Position paper, March 2020 .
12. While these questions are asked of all adolescent girls and women aged 15–49, only the data for girls under age 18 are used for child poverty estimates. The two specific questions that are asked of respondents are: "Did you use any materials such as sanitary pads, tampons or cloth?" and "During your last menstrual period were you able to wash and change in privacy while at home?". Both are answered either yes or no. No deprivation occurs when both answers are "yes" while severe deprivations is established if both answers are "no". In the two intermediate situations there is moderate deprivation.

Women and men in informal employment by sector



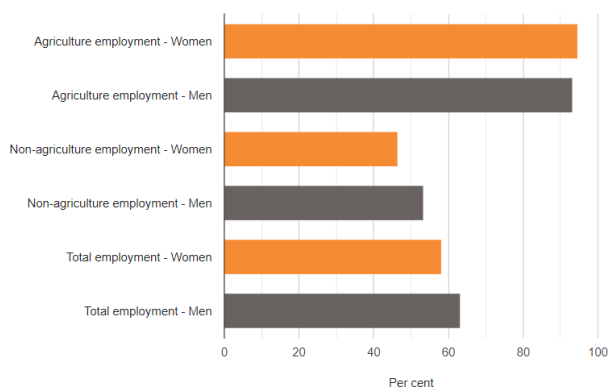
Key points

- In 2016, the proportion of informal employment as a percentage of women's total employment worldwide was 58%, compared with 63% for men, although informal employment was more prevalent among women in 66 out of 119 countries (56%) with available data.
- The agriculture sector had the highest level of informal work, and informal employment was a larger source of employment for women than for men in that sector.
- The share of informal employment was significantly lower in developed regions, at below 25% of women's and men's total employment.
- The proportion of individuals classified as own-account workers and contributing family workers, who often lack basic social protections and are subject to low income and difficult working conditions, was higher among informally employed women (64%) than informally employed men (59%).
- Informal employment is more prevalent among youth and people at older ages, with little gender differences: globally, around three out of four young and older women and men work in informal jobs.
- With the attainment of higher levels of education, women and men are at lower risk of working in informal jobs, and women, in particular, once they complete secondary or tertiary education.
- The proportion of women informally employed as wage and salaried workers who worked reduced hours was higher than that of men (20% versus 12% for men), although men were more likely (10 percentage points) to have longer informal working hours than women.

Informal employment is an important source of employment for both women and men

In 2016, employed women and men working informally represented 61.2% of global employment, which means that they lacked access to decent and productive work in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity.¹ The proportion of employed women with informal jobs was 58%, lower² than the corresponding proportion for men (63%). However, the level of women's participation in informal employment was higher than for men in 66 out of 119 (or 56%) countries with available data in the ILO microdata repository. Among the three broad **economic sectors**,³ agriculture had the highest level of informal jobs, affecting almost all employment, with a slightly higher rate for women (95%) than for men (93%). Informal employment outside the agriculture sector was lower for both women (46%) and men (53%) (see figure I).

Figure I: Share of informal employment in agriculture, non-agriculture and total employment, by sex: 2016 (Percentage)



Source: UNDESA, Statistical Division, Global SDG Indicators Database (<https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/database/>); ILO modelled estimates (last accessed on 12 August 2020) (<https://ilostat.ilo.org/resources/methods/ilo-modelled-estimates/>).

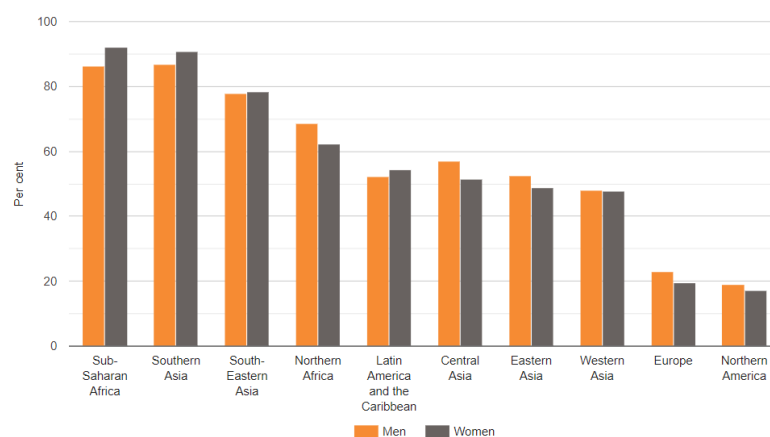
Note: Non-agriculture employment refers to employment in all sectors of economic activities except A. Agriculture, forestry and fishing, as classified by the International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities (ISIC - Rev.4) (<https://ilostat.ilo.org/resources/methods/classification-economic-activities/>).

The share of informal employment is higher in developing regions

In 2016, more than half of women and men were in informal employment in the following 6 out of 10 regions with data: sub-Saharan Africa (over 85%); Southern Asia (over 85%); South-Eastern Asia (over 75%); Northern Africa (over 60%); Latin America and the Caribbean (over 50%); and Central Asia (over 50%) (see figure II). Compared with other developing regions, informal employment was less prevalent among employed women in Western Asia, although women's overall **labour force participation** in the region was also much lower than the global average. The proportion of informal employment was significantly lower in developed regions, representing less than 25% of women's and men's employment, including in the non-agriculture sector, in Europe and Northern America.

In general, people do not work informally by choice, they are usually driven to take on such work as a result of insufficient social protection measures.⁴ For example, sub-Saharan Africa, where informal work was prevalent both for women (92%) and men (86%) in 2016, was also **the region with the lowest proportion of people (3%) receiving unemployment benefits**.⁵

Informal employment was higher for women than men in four regions, resulting in a gender gap in most regions, most notably in sub-Saharan Africa (6 percentage points and up to 11 percentage points when excluding agriculture) and Southern Asia (4 percentage points, with higher rates of informal employment among women in the agriculture sector). Informal employment was higher, however, for men than for women in Northern Africa (6 percentage points and up to 18 percentage points when excluding agriculture) and was almost at parity in Western Asia.

Figure II: Share of informal employment in total employment by region and sex: 2016 (Percentage)

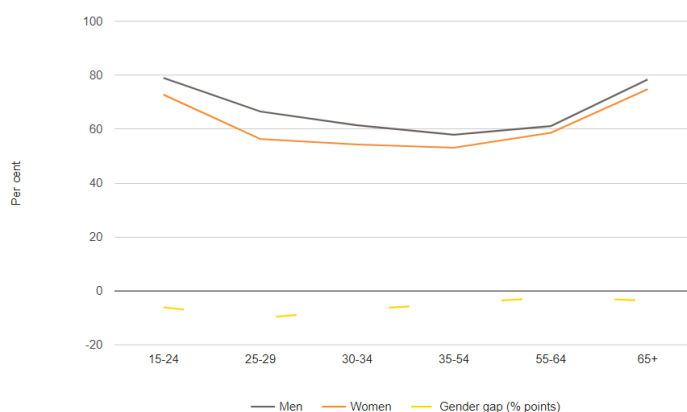
Source: UNDESA, Statistical Division, Global SDG Indicators Database (<https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/database/>); ILO modelled estimates (last accessed on 12 August 2020) (<https://lostat.ilo.org/resources/methods/ilo-modelled-estimates/>).

Among informal workers, a gender gap is visible among contributing family workers (more prevalent for women) and own-account workers (more prevalent for men)

Globally in 2016, women in informal employment worked in almost equal proportions as contributing family workers (28%), own-account workers (36%) and employees (34%), while men in informal employment worked chiefly as own-account workers (50%) and only marginally as contributing family workers (9%), resulting in a gender gap of almost 20 percentage points in this category of informal workers. Own-account and contributing family workers, who often lack basic social protections and are subject to low income and difficult working conditions, represented 64% of women's informal employment, compared to 59% of men's, indicating a greater shortage of decent work for women.

Informal employment is more prevalent among youth and at older ages, with little gender differences

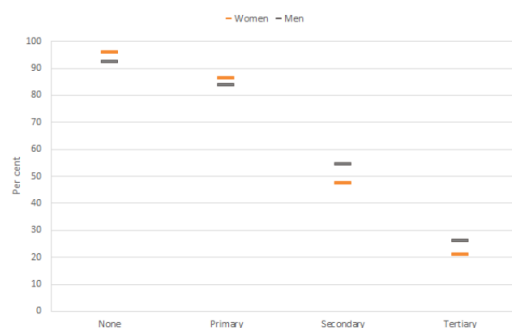
According to ILO data from 2016, globally, the proportion of men in informal employment was higher than women's at all ages, with some variation at different stages over the life cycle. Young women and men aged 15–24 (75% and 78%, respectively) and older women and men aged 65 and above (73% and 79%, respectively) were most likely to work in informal jobs. Informal employment was less prevalent (lower than 60%) for both women and men aged 35–54. The gender gap in informal employment ranged from 6 percentage points among youth to 4 percentage points among older persons and was the smallest, at 2 percentage points, among women and men aged 55–64 (see figure III).

Figure III: Share of informal employment in total employment by sex and age group: 2016 (Percentage)

Source: ILO, Women and Men in the Informal Economy: A Statistical Picture, third edition, Geneva, 2018 (https://www.ilo.org/global/publications/books/WCMS_626831/lang-en/index.htm).

Higher levels of education result in lower levels of informal employment

According to ILO data from 2016, both women and men without formal education were highly likely to end up working in informal jobs (96% of women without education were in informal employment, compared with 92% of men) (see figure IV). However, with increases in educational achievement, this risk was lower for both women and men, although there were certain gender differences. While informal employment was more prevalent among women than among men with no formal education, or only primary education, this trend was reversed for women with secondary or tertiary education, who were less likely than men with the same level of education to be working in informal jobs.

Figure IV: Share of informal employment in total employment by sex and highest level of education: 2016 (Percentage)

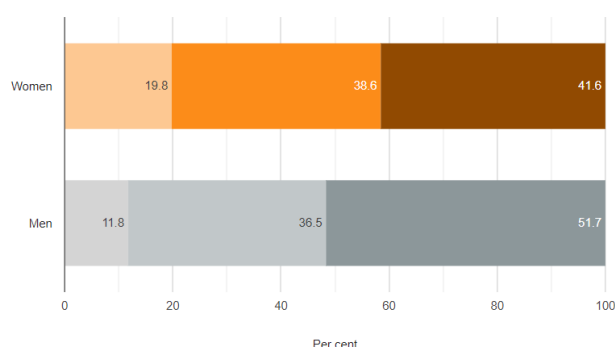
Source: ILO, Women and Men in the Informal Economy: A Statistical Picture, third edition, Geneva, 2018 (https://www.ilo.org/global/publications/books/WCMS_626831/lang-en/index.htm).

Women and men informally employed as wage and salaried workers tend to work non-standard working hours

Women and men in informal employment usually work outside the standard weekly working hours.⁶ In addition, in 2016, both women and men in informal wage employment worldwide working non-standard hours were more likely to work excessive hours,⁷ and men were more likely to have longer informal working hours than women (10 percentage points). In the case of

those working reduced hours, the proportion of **part time employment**⁸ among wage and salaried workers informally employed was higher, almost twice, among women than men (20% versus 12%, respectively) (see figure V). Informally employed women and men who work part time may face further ineligibility for social security benefits, compounding their vulnerability owing to lower wages and additional restrictions to their upward mobility in terms of careers and training opportunities.⁹

Figure V: Proportion of women and men in informal wage employment by number of hours worked per week: 2016 (Percentage)



Source: ILO, Women and Men in the Informal Economy: A Statistical Picture, third edition, Geneva, 2018 (https://www.ilo.org/global/publications/books/WCMS_626831/lang-en/index.htm).

The gender gap in informal employment is particularly significant among countries with the lowest gross national income per capita

Among 47 United Nations Member States and territories with available data since 2015 in the Global SDG Indicators Database (representing 11% of the global economy in 2019), the gender gap, that is, the difference between the proportion of women and men in informal employment, showed a higher proportion of informal employment among women than men in countries at earlier stages of economic development, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa.

Country in focus: India

In 2018, 89% of both employed women and men in India held informal jobs. Moreover, when the agriculture sector was excluded, informal employment still represented 76% of women's jobs and 81% of men's.¹⁰

In 2008, India enacted the Unorganised Workers' Social Security Act to address the high levels of informal employment, including among home-based workers. Despite the adoption of the act, national estimates produced by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation indicate a significant degree of informal employment in the country since 2010 (90% and 87% for employed women and men, respectively).¹¹ Despite the persistence of informal employment in India's labour market, conditions of work seem to have been improving, with the share of regular wage workers increasing from 14% during the period 2004–2015 to 23% during the biennium 2017–2018, at the expense of casual wage employment,¹² which is irregular and does not follow a continuous working cycle.

While women's employment in the informal sector is only slightly higher than men's in India, women were significantly more likely than men to be employed as informal workers in the formal sector.^{13 14}

Effects of coronavirus-19 (COVID-19)

During economic downturns, informal employment may act as a buffer for people who have lost their jobs in the formal sector, although an increase in the informal labour supply may also decrease wages and trigger additional lay-offs within informal employment.¹⁵ Recent ILO estimates suggest that workers in informal employment have been affected to a greater degree during COVID-19 than during past crises.¹⁶ Limited opportunities for teleworkable jobs in developing regions, coupled with lack of employment benefits in informal employment, have created new challenges for women and men working in informal jobs.

According to the ILO baseline employment estimates for 2020, prior to the onset of COVID-19, while young women aged 15–24 years made up less than 39% of global youth employment, they accounted for more than their overall share in three out of the four subsectors hardest hit by the pandemic, namely: accommodation and food services (51%); real estate; business and administrative activities (44%); and wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles (42%). Almost three quarters of young persons employed in these three hardest-hit subsectors were informally employed.¹⁷

About the data

Definitions

- **Proportion of informal employment in total employment, by sector and sex:** provides information on the proportion of employed persons who, in their main jobs, informally hold either: (a) paid employment jobs not covered by social security systems or without entitlement to employment benefits such as annual or sick leave, severance pay or advance notice of dismissal; or (b) self-employment jobs in informal sector enterprises operated by them or by a related person living in the same household.

Coverage

Women and men aged 15 and above in informal employment.

Availability

Global and regional estimates for 2016 are derived from the International Labour Organization (ILO) microdata repository for 119 countries, representing more than 90% of the world's employed women and men aged 15 and above.¹⁸ In addition, the Global SDG Indicators Database¹⁹ has the latest available data disaggregated by sex for the period 2015–2019 for 47 United Nations Member States and territories.

Footnotes

1. [International Labour Organization \(ILO\), Rules of the game: An introduction to the standards-related work of the International Labour Organization, Geneva, 2019.](#)
2. These global results were mainly influenced by the results from China, where the gender gap in the share of informal employment in total employment was minus five percentage points.
3. Namely: agriculture, industry, and the services sectors.
4. [Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing \(WIEGO\), Social Protection for Informal Workers \(last accessed on 25 August 2020\).](#)
5. [UNDESA, Statistical Division, Global SDG Indicators Database \(last accessed on 25 August 2020\).](#)
6. [ILO, Women and Men in the Informal Economy: A Statistical Picture, third edition, Geneva, 2018.](#)
7. More than 48 hours per week.
8. Part time employment is defined as employment constituting less than 35 hours per week.
9. [ILO, Women and Men in the Informal Economy: A Statistical Picture, third edition, Geneva, 2018.](#)
10. [United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs \(UNDESA\), Statistics Division, Global SDG Indicators Database. ILO harmonized estimates. \(last accessed on 12 August 2020.\)](#)
11. Ibid.
12. [International Labour Organization \(ILO\), Informal Employment Trends in the Indian Economy: Persistent informality, but growing positive development, Working Paper No. 254, Geneva, 2019.](#)
13. [ILO, Informal Economy in South Asia, Geneva, 2020 \(last accessed on 17 August 2020\).](#)
14. Figures for India's informal employment in 2010 and in 2018 originate from two different sources, the National Sample Survey (2010) and the Labour Force Survey (2018). ([back to text](#))
15. [Jütting, J. and De Laiglesia, J., Is Informal Normal?: Towards More and Better Jobs in Developing Countries, Development Centre Studies, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development \(OECD\) Publishing, Paris, 2009.](#)
16. [International Labour Organization \(ILO\), ILO Monitor: COVID-19 and the world of work, fifth edition, Geneva, 2020.](#)
17. [ILO, ILO Monitor: COVID-19 and the world of work, fourth edition, Geneva, 2020.](#)
18. [See also International Labour Organization \(ILO\), Key Indicators of the Labour Market, ninth edition, Geneva, 2016.](#)
19. [United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs \(UNDESA\), Statistics Division, Global SDG Indicators Database.](#)

Earnings of married women and men in employment by type of remuneration



Key points

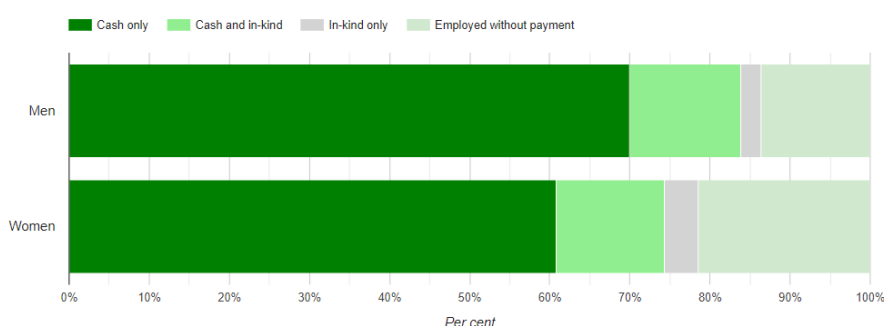
- Access to cash labor income was more limited for women (61%) than for men (70%) in developing regions, and even more limited for both women (57%) and men (64%) in sub-Saharan Africa.
- Access to cash labor income for women and men varied greatly across countries. The gender gap in cash-only labor income was higher than 10 percentage points in almost half (19) of countries with data.

Access to cash labor income is more limited for women than for men in developing regions

In developing regions, women are less likely to be employed than men, and when they are employed, they are more likely to be in vulnerable jobs, for example, as **contributing family workers**. Compared to other jobs, these types of jobs are more often associated with irregular low income or no income at all, resulting in lower proportions of women receiving cash labor income. For instance, among 39 countries with available data in developing regions, 61% of married women aged 15–49 employed in the past 12 months were paid only in cash. The proportion of those paid only in cash among married men aged 15–49 and employed in the past 12 months was 70%, resulting in a gender gap of nine percentage points. An additional 14% of women and of men were paid in cash and in-kind, resulting in a gender parity among those with this type of earnings (see figure I).

A gender gap of similar magnitude was observed in sub-Saharan Africa, where 57% of married women were paid only in cash and 15% were paid in cash and in kind (vs. 65% and 16% of men, respectively).

Figure I: Distribution of married women and men aged 15–49 by type of earnings from labour in the last 12 months, developing regions: 2013–2018 (latest available) (Percentage)



Source: Calculated by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), Statistics Division, from data provided by ICF International, 2015; and Demographic and Health Survey Programme (DHS) STATcompiler (last accessed on 7 May 2020) (<https://www.statcompiler.com/en/>).

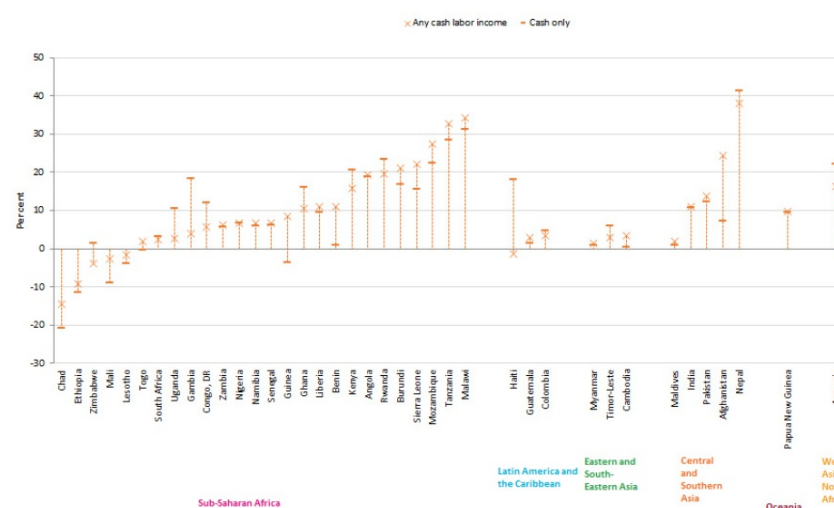
Note: Unweighted averages based on data from 39 countries in developing regions.

Across 39 countries in developing regions with available sex-disaggregated data for the period 2013–2018, the proportion of married women aged 15–49 who earned any cash labor income¹ in the past 12 months varied greatly, from 37% in Malawi to 99% in Haiti. For men, the proportion varied from 33% in Ethiopia to almost 100% in South Africa. In terms of cash-only labor income, Burundi had the lowest proportion among married women

aged 15–49 who were employed in the past 12 months (17%), and the Maldives the highest (97%). For men, the proportion varied from 23% in Ethiopia to 98% in South Africa. In particular, the gender gap in cash-only labor incomes reached a maximum of 41 percentage points in Nepal and was higher than 10 percentage points in almost half (19) of countries with data (see figure II).

The proportion of married women and married men aged 15–49 who earned any cash labor income in the past 12 months also varied by geographic location. Across 39 countries in developing regions with available sex-disaggregated data for the period 2013–2018, the proportion reached 87% for married women and 95% for married men in urban areas, resulting in a difference of 8 percentage points. The gender gap was larger (12 percentage points, on average) in rural areas, with 67% of married women and 79% of married men earning any cash labor income in the past 12 months.²

Figure II: Gender gap in any cash and cash-only labor incomes between married women and men aged 15–49 in selected countries in developing regions: 2013–2018 (latest available) (Percentage)



Source: Calculated by UNDESA, Statistics Division, from data provided by ICF International, 2015; and Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) Programme STATcompiler (last accessed on 7 May 2020) (<https://www.statcompiler.com/en/>).

Note: Any cash labor income includes the following types of income: (a) cash-only income and (b) cash and in-kind income.

Countries in focus: Nigeria and Zambia

Both Nigeria and Zambia conducted two Demographic and Health Surveys, in 2013 and 2018. In Nigeria, while the proportion of married women and men aged 15–49 who earned any cash labor income in the last 12 months were equal, at 93%, in 2013, by 2018, the proportion of women earning cash income had decreased to 85% and, to a lesser extent, to 91%, for men. During the same period, a trend in the opposite direction was observed in Zambia, where the proportion of married women aged 15–49 who earned any cash labor income in the last 12 months increased from 63% in 2013 to 81% in 2018. For men, gains were relatively modest, with the proportion increasing from 83% in 2013 to 87% in 2018.³

About the data

Definitions

- **Married women and men aged 15–49 living in developing regions by type of earnings from labour in the last 12 months:** This indicator provides information about the type of earnings of married women and men, including remuneration in cash and in kind, payable for time worked or work done, as well as for time not worked, such as annual vacation and other paid leave or holidays.

Coverage

Married women and men aged 15–49 in developing regions who were employed at any time in the last 12 months.

Availability

39 United Nations Member States in developing regions (with latest available sex-disaggregated data for the period 2013–2018).

Footnotes

1. Any cash labour income includes the following types of labour income: (a) cash only; and (b) cash and in-kind.
2. Calculated by UNDESA, Statistics Division, from data provided by ICF International, 2015 (correspondence with the Demographic and Health Survey Programme on 31 August 2020): unweighted averages are based on data from 39 countries in developing regions.
3. Source: Demographic and Health Survey Programme STATcompiler (last accessed on 7 May 2020).

Latvia: influence of the presence of children in the household on the employment of women and men



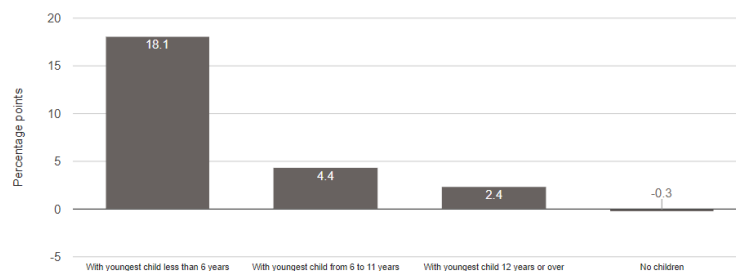
Key points

- The most significant gender gap in employment rates in Latvia is recorded in households with small children (under age 6): in 2019, women's employment rate was 75.3%, compared with 93.4% for men, resulting in a gender gap of 18.1 percentage points (versus 33.1 percentage points in 2005). Regionally, the smallest corresponding gender gaps were recorded in Riga and Vidzeme.
- In significant numbers, more women than men take parental leave in Latvia: in 2019, men made up only 19% of parental benefit recipients, and their share has increased only slightly since 2015.
- In 2019, the gender employment gap in households with small children was 24.1 percentage points among people of other ethnicities (versus 16.1 percentage points among ethnic Latvians). In households with older or no children among people of other ethnicities, however, women were employed at a higher rate than men (6.3 percentage points).
- In 2019, women in Latvia earned 14.1% less than men. The largest pay gap was recorded in the population aged 25–34 and 35–44 (16.5% and 16.9%, respectively). Employed women with small children had lower monthly net earnings than employed men with small children: one out of four (25.6%) employed women with small children had net monthly earnings amounting to less than 450 euros (€) compared with 4.9% of employed men.
- Among women with small children, 12.9% were working part-time, compared with only 1.8% of men. The gender employment gap was also evident in households with older or no children, indicating that women were more intensively engaged in part-time employment regardless of household structure.

Having small children in the household amplifies the gender gap in employment

In 2019, employment rates¹ of men and women aged 25–49² were 86.5% and 80.7%, respectively, revealing a gender employment gap of 5.8 percentage points in favour of men. The female employment rate in Latvia was 5.9 percentage points higher than the average among member States of the European Union and was the eighth highest among all member States. The largest gender gap in employment was observed in households with small children: the employment rate among women with children was only 75.3%,³ compared to 93.4% among men, a gap of 18.1 percentage points (see figure I). Women's involvement in full-time unpaid care of children in the household was greater than that of men, and as a result their opportunities for employment were reduced. Among women working part-time in Latvia, 20% reported that looking after children or older adults was the main reason for choosing a part-time job, and 23.1% of all economically inactive women reported the same reason for not being in paid employment.⁴ This pattern of employment among women with children is likely to lead to economic dependency upon family or friends, and can also result in income insufficiency in old age.⁵

Figure I: Gender gap in employment rates among persons aged 25-49, by age of youngest child in the household: 2019 (Percentage points)



Source: Eurostat, "Employment rate of adults by sex, age groups, educational achievement level, number of children and age of youngest child (%)", 20 April 2020 (last accessed on 9 September 2020) (http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=lfst_hheredch).

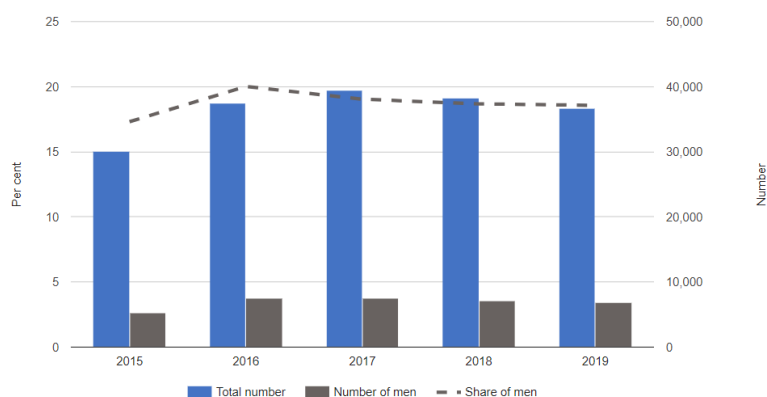
Note: The gender employment gap is calculated by deducting the employment rate of women from the employment rate of men.

Women constitute a significantly larger share of people taking parental leave

While both mothers and fathers in Latvia are eligible for **parental leave**,⁶ benefits can reach up to 60% of the recipients' wages and recipients are insured against **unemployment**, the majority of parental leave is taken by women. In 2019, the proportion of male parental leave recipients was only 19% (see figure II). Even though the share of men receiving parental benefits has slightly increased since 2015, there is still no available data about primary caregivers or the distribution of household tasks within couples.

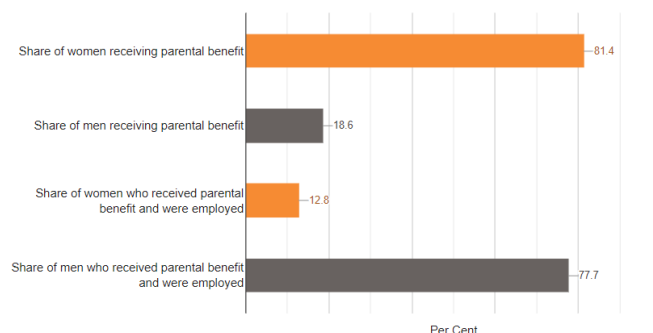
Parental leave, which can be for as long as 15 years (78 weeks), is paid from social insurance and can be taken by either parent. Latvian Government policy during the child's first year of life⁷ is one of the most supportive in the world.

Figure II: Number and proportion of parental benefit recipients by sex: 2015–2019



Sources: State Social Insurance Agency, 2020. (correspondence with Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia on 25 May 2020).

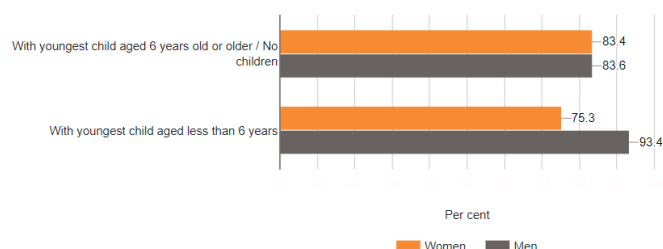
In light of the fact that 8 out of 10 men who receive parental leave benefits continue to work, it is possible that the share of families where women are the primary caregivers could be larger than shown from the data on parental benefit recipients (see figure III).

Figure III: Parental benefit recipients, by sex: 2019 (Percentage)

Source: State Social Insurance Agency, 2020 (correspondence with Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia on 25 May 2020).
Note: Persons continuing to work receive 30% of the parental benefit.

The gender gap in employment varies significantly depending on household structure

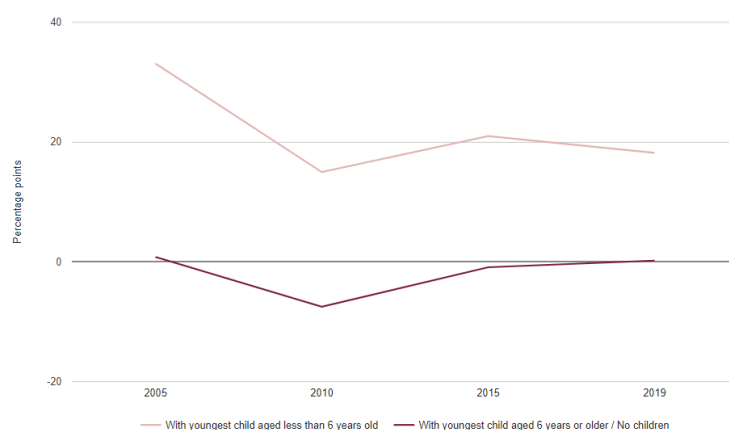
In 2019, employment rates of women and men in families with children aged 6 or older and in families without children were almost equal, 83.4% for women and 83.6% for men. However, in households with children under age 6, the employment rate of women (75.3%) was significantly lower and that of men (93.4%) significantly higher, resulting in a gender gap of 18.1 percentage points⁸ (see figure IV).

Figure IV: Employment rate of persons aged 25-49 years by sex and age of youngest child: 2019 (Percentage)

Source: Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia, national estimates 2020 (correspondence with Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia on 25 May 2020).

Analysis of the gender employment gap over time shows that it has not decreased since 2010 in households with children under age 6. In 2005, the gap was 33.1 percentage points and in 2010 it was more than halved, to 15 percentage points, and has remained mostly constant as of 2019. An opposite situation may be observed in households with children older than 6 or without children, where the gap has remained small, although during the economic crisis in 2010, it reached 7.5 percentage points, with an employment rate among women higher than among men (see figure V).

Figure V: Gender employment gap among persons aged 25-49 years, by age of youngest child: 2005, 2010, 2015 and 2019 (Percentage points)

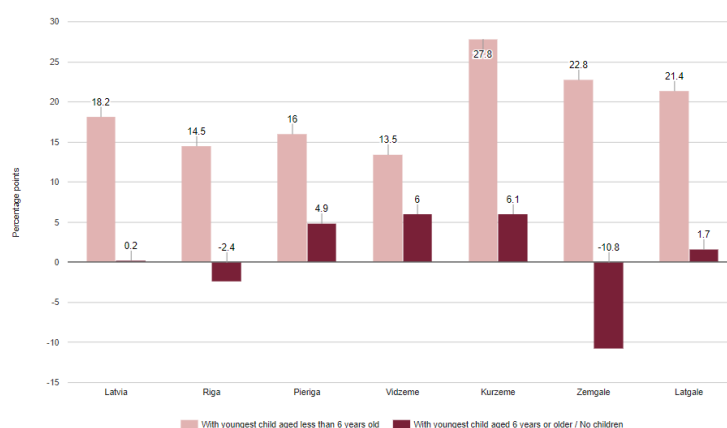


Source: Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia, national estimates 2020 (correspondence with Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia on 25 May 2020).
Note: Gender employment gap is calculated by deducting employment rate of women from the employment rate of men.

Gender employment gap in households with or without small children varies across Latvia's regions and by ethnicity

Latvia's gender employment gap in 2019 in all households with youngest children aged 6 or over or no children was only 0.2 percentage points, showing a decrease over recent years. However, some discrepancies emerge at the subnational level. The smallest gender gap in households with small children was recorded in Vidzeme and Riga, the capital of Latvia, while the largest gap was observed in Kurzeme (27.8 percentage points). The gap in households with older or no children remained small in Riga (the employment rate of women was higher than that of men), and the largest gap was registered in Zemgale (10.8 percentage points, with the employment rate of women higher than that of men). However, with respect to households with children under age 6, the Zemgale region showed the second largest gender employment gap in the country, with an employment rate of men 22.8 percentage points higher than women's (similar to the trend observed since 2010) (see figure VI).

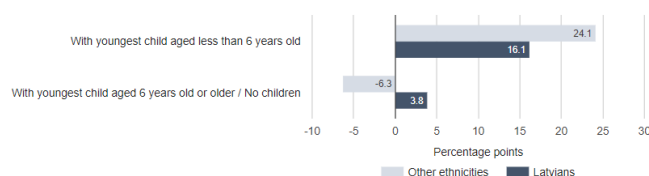
Figure VI: Gender employment gap among persons aged 25-49, by age of youngest child and region: 2019 (Percentage points)



Source: Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia, national estimates 2020 (correspondence with Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia on 25 May 2020).
Note: Gender employment gap is calculated by deducting employment rate of women from employment rate of men.

One third of the total population of Latvia aged 25–49 consists of people belonging to ethnicities other than Latvian. Analysis of the employment data by ethnicity shows that other ethnicities had lower employment rates both for women and men in comparison with Latvians, indicating possible inequalities in the labour market (for example, missing language skills; Latvian is a mother tongue only for 60.8% of the resident population of Latvia).⁹ In 2019, the gender employment gap among ethnic Latvians was 16.1 percentage points in households with youngest children under age 6, compared with a gap of 24.1 percentage points among other ethnicities. In households with youngest children above age 6 or no children, the employment rate among women of other ethnicities was higher than that of men by 6.3 percentage points (see figure VII).

Figure VII: Gender employment gap among persons aged 25–49 years, by age of youngest child and ethnicity: 2019 (Percentage points)



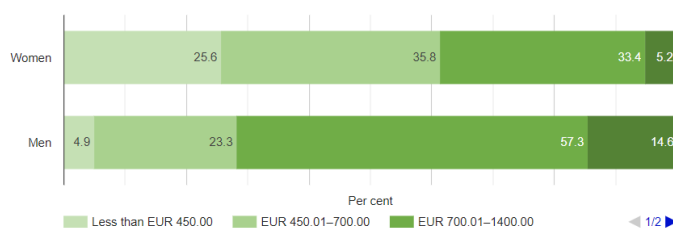
Source: Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia, national estimates 2020 (correspondence with Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia on 25 May 2020).
Note: The gender employment gap is calculated by deducting the employment rate of women from the employment rate of men.

Employed women with small children have lower monthly net earnings than men

In 2019, the **gender pay gap** in Latvia was smaller than the average gap within the European Union, with women earning 14.1% less than men in comparison with an average of 14.8% less in the European Union.¹⁰ The largest pay gap was recorded among the population aged 25–34 and 35–44 (16.5% and 16.9%, respectively).

A significant gender pay gap was also found in households with small children: 25.6% of employed women with youngest children aged under 6 had monthly net earnings amounting to less than €450, compared with 4.9% of employed men¹¹ (see figure VIII).

Figure VIII: Distribution of employed persons in households with children aged under age 6, by sex and monthly net earnings: 2019 (Percentage)



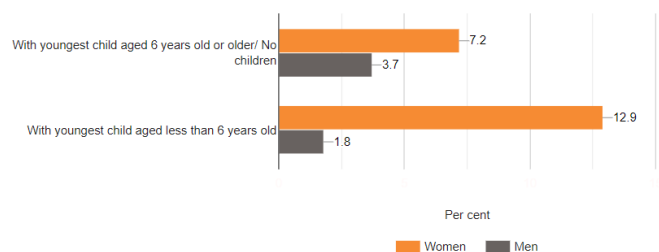
Source: Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia, national estimates 2020 (correspondence with Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia on 25 May 2020).
Note: In 2019, the minimum wage in Latvia amounted to €430; employed persons do not include those whose monthly wages or salaries were not calculated or specified.

The gender gap in part-time employment persists regardless of the household structure

Even though part-time jobs offer an opportunity to balance work and family life, a significant gender gap in **part-time employment** leads to unequal chances for equal pay. Among women with small children, 12.9% were working part-time,

compared with only 1.8% of men. The gap remained in households with older or no children, indicating that women were more engaged in part-time employment regardless of household structure (see figure IX).

Figure IX: Part-time employment as a share of total employment of persons aged 25-49 by sex and age of youngest child: 2019 (Percentage)



Source: Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia, national estimates 2020 (correspondence with Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia on 25 May 2020).

Note: Full-time employment in Latvia means a 40-hour working week.

About the data

Definitions

- **Employment rate of persons aged 25–49 with children under age 6, age 6 or older or no children, by sex in**

Latvia: Employed persons are all persons who did any work for cash payment or compensation in goods or services during the reporting period. Persons who are temporarily absent from work on prenatal or maternity leave or on childcare leave are classified as employed if, after the end of such leave, return to their previous employment is guaranteed. Employment rate is the proportion of employed persons to the total population of the same age group, sex and household structure.¹²

Coverage

Employed population in Latvia aged 25–49 by sex, household structure, ethnicity and region.

Availability

Data from Eurostat database¹³ and estimates from the Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia.¹⁴

Footnotes

1. Employment rates are calculated based on Eurostat household statistics methodology in the European Union Labour Force Survey .
2. Employment rate refers only to people aged 25–49.
3. Women who are in temporary absence from work on the prenatal or maternity leave as well as on childcare leave are classified as employed if after the end of such leave return to their previous work is guaranteed.
4. Eurostat: databses lfsa_igar and lfsa_epgar.
5. Dubois, H. and Leončikas, T., "Social insecurities and resilience", Policy Brief, European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound), October 2018 .(accessed 2020)
6. State Social Insurance Agency, Services for parents.
7. ILO, 2014, Maternity and paternity at work: Law and practice across the world, Geneva, 2014 .
8. The father's wage premium, which also exists in other countries, leads to a larger gender gap between parents than that among non-parents: to read more on the fatherhood premium, see xxGrimshaw, D.and Rubery, J., "The motherhood pay gap: A review of the issues, theory and international evidence", Working Paper No.1/2015, ILO, Gender, Equality and Diversity Branch, Geneva, 2015x.
9. Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia, "Indicators characterizing languages used by the population of Latvia.", 2017 .
10. Eurostat, Gender Pay Gap Statistics, 2020 .
11. In 2019, the minimum wage in Latvia was €430 (the net salary varies and is approximately €380).
12. International Labour Organization (ILO), Resolution concerning statistics of work, employment and labour underutilization, adopted at the Nineteenth International Conference of Labour Statisticians, 21 November 2013.
13. Eurostat database .
14. Government of Latvia, Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia .

Gender segregation in occupations



Key points

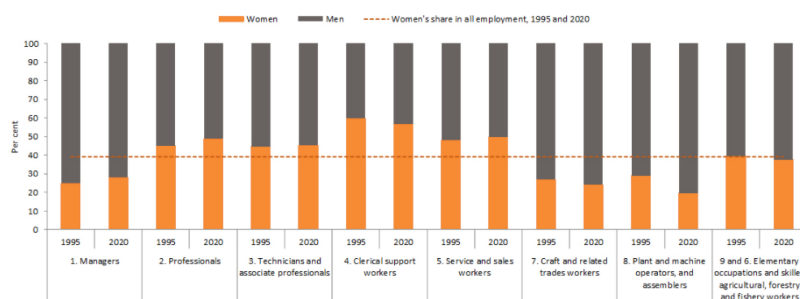
- Gender segregation in occupations persists both horizontally (across occupational groups) and vertically (within the same occupational group).
- Globally in 2020, women continue to constitute the majority of clerical support workers (57%) and men the majority of plant and machine operators and assemblers (80%).
- While the percentage of women among people employed has stayed constant at 39% since 1995, their representation in managerial level positions increased by only 3%, to 28%, as of 2020, and their representation in higher decision-making positions among managers was even lower.
- Gender roles and stereotypes contribute to the segregation of women and men in occupations: in general, more women work in occupations categorized as being home-based or caring, whereas men tend to work in areas such as information and communications technology (ICT), science and engineering.
- Since 2000, the transition from low-skilled to high-skilled jobs has taken place at a faster rate among women than men in all regions except sub-Saharan Africa and Oceania, excluding Australia and New Zealand.

Gender segregation persists in various occupations

Globally in 2020, women and men were largely employed in different occupations (horizontal segregation) and in different positions within the same occupation or occupational group (vertical segregation). Relative to their share in overall employment (39%), women had a higher representation among clerical support workers (57%), service and sales workers (50%), professionals (49%) and technicians and associate professionals (45%). Men were more commonly employed as plant and machine operators and assemblers (80%), craft and related trades workers (76 %) and managers (72%). In the last category, women constituted only 28% of the total number of **managerial personnel**.

Over the past 25 years, while their share in total employment has remained constant, the proportion of women employed as clerical support workers, the most common occupation for women in 1995, has fallen by 3 percentage points while the proportion of women employed as managers has risen by the same percentage point level (see figure I), revealing a minor but important increase in women's representation in managerial positions.

Figure I: Distribution of employed persons by occupation and sex: 1995 and 2020



Source: Calculated by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), Statistics Division, based on data retrieved from the International Labour Organization (ILO) Department of Statistics (ILOSTAT); ILO modelled estimates (last accessed 2 April 2020).

Note: 2020 figures are projections.

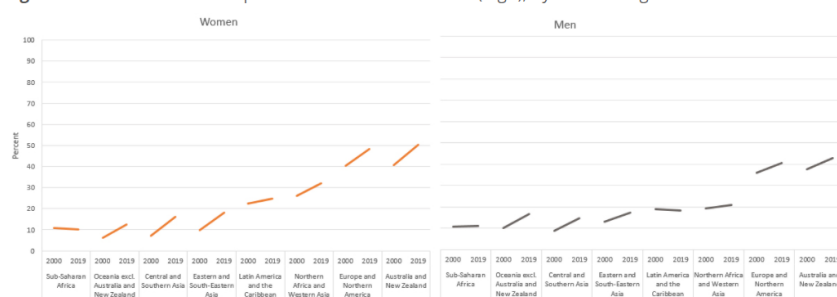
Transition to high-skilled jobs has taken place at a higher rate among women

than men in most regions

The nine major occupational groups classified by ISCO-08 are also associated with three broad skill levels: level 1 (low); level 2 (middle); and levels 3 and 4 (high). While occupations at skill level 1 include simple and routine physical or manual assignments, occupations at skill levels 3 and 4 typically require problem-solving, decision-making and creativity, including complex technical and practical assignments in a specialized field. As employment has transitioned over the past 25 years between economic sectors, mostly from the agriculture to the services sector, certain lower-skilled jobs have been replaced with high-skilled ones calling for the skills of managers, professionals and technicians.

In all regions except sub-Saharan Africa and Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand), the proportion of high-skilled women workers has increased at a higher rate since 2000, surpassing, in 2019, the proportion of high-skilled men workers (see figure II); in Europe and Northern America, 48% of women work in high-skilled jobs (in contrast to 41% for men); as well as 50% of women in Australia and New Zealand (as opposed to 43% for men).

Figure II: Distribution of occupations at skill levels 3 and 4 (high), by sex and region: 2000 and 2019



Source: Calculated by UNDESA, Statistics Division, based on data for regional groupings under the Sustainable Development Goals received from ILOSTAT: ILO modelled estimates (correspondence with ILO on 5 May 2020)

Note: Occupations at skill levels 3 and 4 (high) correspond to ISCO-08 categories 1 (managers), 2 (professionals) and 3 (technicians and associate professionals).

Gender segregation in occupations is closely linked to stereotypical gender roles

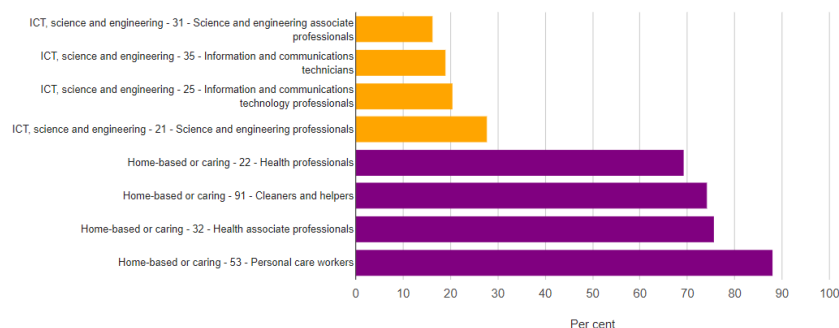
The segregation of women and men in different occupations is also associated with stereotypes about women, for example that they are more caring or more focused on activities based in the home. Across the 121 countries examined by ILO as of 2019 using the latest available data, the occupations most commonly held by women comprised personal care workers,¹ 88% of whom were women compared to 12% of men, and health professionals,² including general medical doctors and nurses, a broad category, within which women represented 69% of the total workers. In certain areas, gender-based occupational segregation reflects the difference between women and men in terms of their paths in education and vocational training, including in the fields of science, technology, engineering and math (STEM). High-skilled occupations in ICT, science and engineering were mostly occupied by men and women's representation remained minimal. As of 2019, only one in five ICT professionals were women and they represented only 28% of science and engineering professionals (see figure III).

Analysis of the data at detailed levels for different occupations reveals that there is vertical segregation, with women more concentrated in certain subcategories within the various occupations. Furthermore, in 2020, while women's representation in managerial positions only reached 28% globally, their level of access to higher decision-making positions in management remained at an even lower level. In 50 out of 78 countries with available data for the years from 2015 to 2019, the proportion of women holding senior and middle management positions, including as chief executive officers, senior officials and legislators, was lower than their overall share among managers.³ The highest representation by women in managerial positions was reported in the Seychelles in 2015, at a time when women made up nearly half of all senior and middle managers (49%) while also holding almost half of overall managerial positions (48%).

Differences in the average earnings of women and men are partially the result of explained factors that combine gender inequalities in many areas, including across and within occupational groups. Gender segregation in occupations contributes to the gender pay gap, especially when there is a difference in the employment of women and men between low- and high-

paying occupations.

Figure III: Women's share in employment by selected occupations (ISCO-08): 2019



Source: ILOSTAT Blog, "These occupations are dominated by women"; computed by ILO using weighted average for 121 countries using the most recent annual data available.

Note: Based on latest available data as of 2019 for 121 countries, representing 63% of global employment; data for China and India were not available and the ILO weighted average is not a global figure.

Covid-19

Women have been more negatively affected than men during the recession brought about by COVID-19 since many women work in economic sectors and occupations that have suffered severely from the pandemic. Specifically, the **unemployment rate** has been higher in occupations that could not be carried out remotely, through teleworking, and in the case of "social jobs" requiring human interaction, which have been rendered less secure because of pandemic-related restrictions.⁴

Most notably, women are on the front lines in the battle against the pandemic as they make up over 70% of workers in the health sector,⁵ who face higher infection risks than men in the workplace.⁶

About the data

Definitions

- **Proportion of women in occupational groups:** Provides information on employment across different occupations, with a breakdown by sex. Occupations are classified into nine major groups by the International Standard Classification of Occupations 2008 (ISCO-o8) based on skill levels and skill specialization requirements for specific jobs.

Coverage

Employed women and men aged 15 and above.

Availability

187 United Nations Member States and territories (2020).

Limitations

The armed forces constitute a separate, tenth, major group under ISCO-o8, although employed persons in this category are sometimes included in other ISCO-o8 major groups in national data.

Employment estimates may vary with frequency of data collection across countries. Given that data collection may be conducted annually or monthly, seasonality could have an impact on employment figures and international comparisons.

Footnotes

1. Categorized under ISCO-08 major category 5, Service and sales workers and defined as those who provide care, supervision and assistance for children, patients and elderly, convalescent or disabled persons in institutional and residential settings.
2. Categorized under ISCO-08 major category 2, Professionals.
3. Data on Sustainable Development Goal indicator 5.5.2 do not provide specific information on the proportion of women employed exclusively in senior positions (excluding junior and middle management).
4. Source: [International Monetary Fund \(IMF\) Blog, 23 July 2020, "Unemployment in Today's Recession Compared to the Global Financial Crisis"](#) (last accessed on 3 August 2020).
5. Corresponding to the category Q. Human health and social work activities by the International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities (ISIC rev. 4).
6. Source: UNDESA, 2020, World Economic Situation and Prospects: June 2020 Briefing, No. 138: proportion calculated by the United Nations Statistics Division based on data retrieved from ILOSTAT: ILO modelled estimates (last accessed on 3 August 2020).

Economic empowerment

Discriminatory attitudes towards women in paid employment



Key points

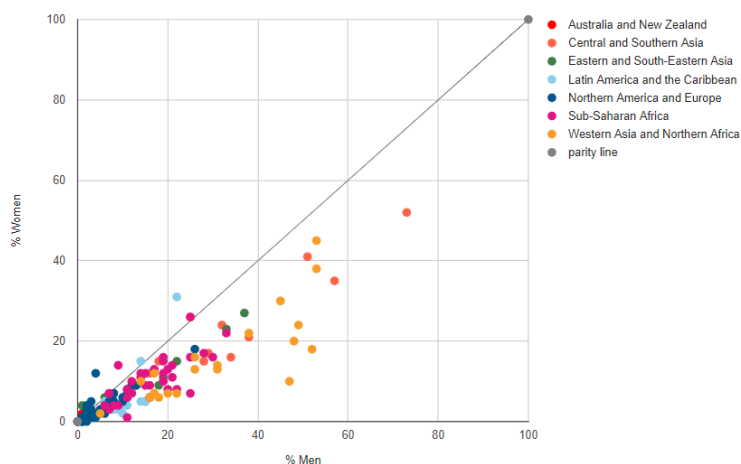
- Globally in 2016, men were more likely than women to disapprove of women's engagement in paid employment outside the home (20% versus 14%, respectively). Disapproval rates were higher among men than women in 111 out of 139 (80%) Member States and territories with available data.
- The gender gap increased when children were present in the household, swaying men's attitudes more negatively than women's: 25% versus 16%, respectively.
- Discriminatory attitudes towards women in paid employment outside the home were most prevalent both among women and men in Central and Southern Asia and Western Asia and Northern Africa. In developed regions, disagreement with women's paid employment outside the home was low both among men (5.5%) and women (3.8%).

Men are less in favour than women of women's engagement in paid employment outside the home

Harmful social norms and discriminatory attitudes, especially when combined with a shortage of **protective legislation**, can severely impede women's access to employment. In 2016, in 139 Member States, men were more likely than women to disagree that it was acceptable for women in their families to have a paid job outside the home if they wanted to do so (20% of men versus 14% of women, respectively). The gender gap increased when there were children in the household, swaying men's attitudes more negatively than women's: 25% of men versus 16% of women in households with children, respectively, disagreed with the above statement.¹ When asked, 29% of men and 27% of women stated that they preferred women in their families to stay at home rather than work at a paid job or to do both.

In 2016, disapproval of women in paid employment outside the home was more prevalent among men than women in 111 out of 139 (80%) Member States and territories with available data. Disapproval was five or more percentage points higher among women than men in only three countries: Haiti (nine percentage points), Slovenia (eight percentage points) and Togo (five percentage points) (see figure I).

Figure I: Attitudinal discrimination against women engaging in paid work outside the home by sex: 2016 (Percentage)

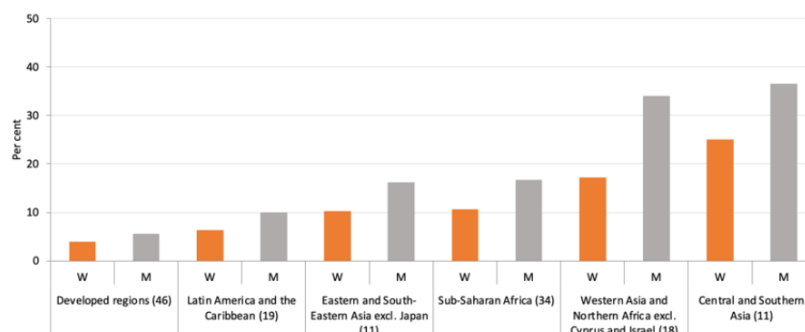


Source: Gallup World Poll, 2016 (last accessed on 9 April 2020) (<https://news.gallup.com/poll/201056/gallup-top-world-findings-2016.aspx>).

Women's engagement in paid employment outside the home is more acceptable in developed regions

Across regions, significant variations are found in terms of discriminatory attitudes towards women in paid employment outside the home. These attitudes were most prevalent both among women and men in Central and Southern Asia and Western Asia and Northern Africa (see figure II), where women's **labour force participation rate** was also considerably low. In 13 out of 15 countries in those two regions the overall rate of disagreement with the statement was the highest. In developed regions, disapproval of women's paid employment outside the home was low both among men (5.5%) and women (3.8%), although men disagreed with the statement at a higher rate than women by five percentage points or more in Greece, Malta and Slovakia.

Figure II: Attitudinal discrimination against women engaging in paid work outside the home, by sex and region: 2016 (Percentage)



Source: Calculated by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), Statistics Division, using data retrieved from the Gallup World Poll, 2016 (last accessed on 9 April 2020) (<https://news.gallup.com/poll/201056/gallup-top-world-findings-2016.aspx>).

Note: Unweighted averages; data for the highlighted regions represent at least 50% of the regional population; the numbers in brackets indicate the number of countries with available data; developed regions include countries in Europe and Northern America, as well as Australia, Cyprus, Israel, Japan and New Zealand.

About the data

Definitions

- **Proportion of women and men who disagree with the statement: "It's perfectly acceptable for any woman in your family to have a paid job outside the home if she wants one":** This indicator provides information about the prevalence of discriminatory attitudes among women and men towards women engaging in paid employment outside the home.

Coverage

Women and men aged 15 and older.

Availability

139 United Nations Member States and territories (2016).

Limitations

The sample size per country for the nationally representative Gallup World Poll (2016) was 1,000 individuals, except in large countries such as China and the Russian Federation, where the sample size amounted to at least 2,000 individuals. In some instances, the sample size was between 500 and 1,000. Administration of both face-to-face interviewing and telephone interviewing may have led to some mode effects.

Footnotes

1. International Labour Organization (ILO) - Gallup, Towards a better future for women and work: Voices of women and men, 2017 .

Measurement and status of young women and men in paid and unpaid work [ECLAC]



Key points

- In Latin America and the Caribbean, 25.7% of young people aged 15–29 do not benefit from the main pillars of social inclusion, the education system and the labour market, and the majority are women (67.9%).
- In the region, 57.8% of women aged 15–29 who are not in employment, education or training (categorized as NEET) are engaged in unpaid care and domestic work (as are 66.1% of women aged 25–29), while most men aged 15–29 in the NEET category are unemployed (61.8%). Less than 25% of people aged 15–29 are studying or in training.
- Most young people in the region work: in general men are engaged in paid work while women in unpaid work, revealing a trend of early and unequal division of work by sex.
- In households with children under age 15, 39.9% of young women are in the NEET category, while 61.83% of young men are classified as unemployed.
- Time-use data for the 15–29 age group in countries in Latin America and the Caribbean show that women who are out of school and not in the labour market spend, on average, at least 23 hours per week on unpaid domestic work. These data contradict the notion that young people are inactive or unproductive members of society: young people spend a significant amount of time providing services but receive no payment and do not benefit from any form of social coverage.

Young women not in employment, education or training are engaged in unpaid care and domestic work¹

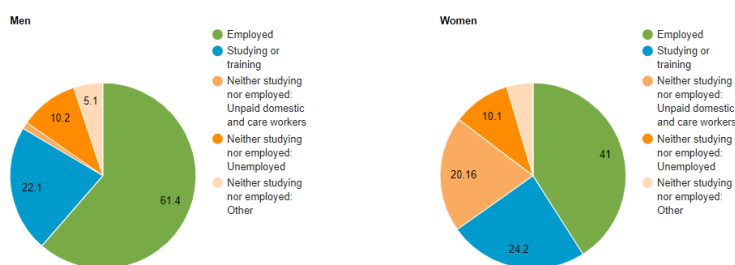
Young people aged 15–29 are in a critical period of transition from youth to the beginning of adulthood, an opportune time for the elimination of gender inequalities. Countries in Latin America and the Caribbean have not yet succeeded, however, in ensuring that both young women and men have the same rights and opportunities in education, vocational training and labour market integration.

It is estimated that 25.7% of young people in the region between the ages of 15–29 do not benefit from the main pillars of social inclusion, the education system and labour market, and that most are women (67.9%). Target 8.6 of Sustainable Development Goal 8 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development² is aimed at the reducing the number of young people **not in employment, education or training**. With this in mind, there is an urgent need for information that explains the barriers to the integration of young women into the education system and their participation in the labour market.

The fact that girls and young women are expected to undertake heavy domestic work, resulting in long-lasting consequences for all aspects of their lives, was recognized in the Beijing Platform for Action, adopted in 1995.³ In Latin America and the Caribbean, more than half of young women who are not in school or in employment (57.8%) spend their time on **unpaid care and domestic work**, while most young men in this situation (61.8%) are unemployed. Furthermore, less than one fourth of young people aged 15–29 in the region are studying or in training (see figure I).

A similar scenario is evident, and more prominent, among the subgroup aged 25–29, where 36.8% of women are outside the labour market and not in education or training and 12.4% of men are in the same situation. In this subgroup, a larger proportion of young women (66.1%) are engaged in unpaid domestic and care work, with a smaller proportion of women (3.7%) and men (3%) studying or in training. Regardless of the age group, a trend is clear: most of young people work and are either paid (mainly the case for men) or unpaid (primarily the case for women), showing a trend of early and unequal division of labour by sex.

Figure I: Activity status of young people aged 15–29 in the Latin America and the Caribbean region (17 countries): 2014–2018 (latest available year) (Percentage)



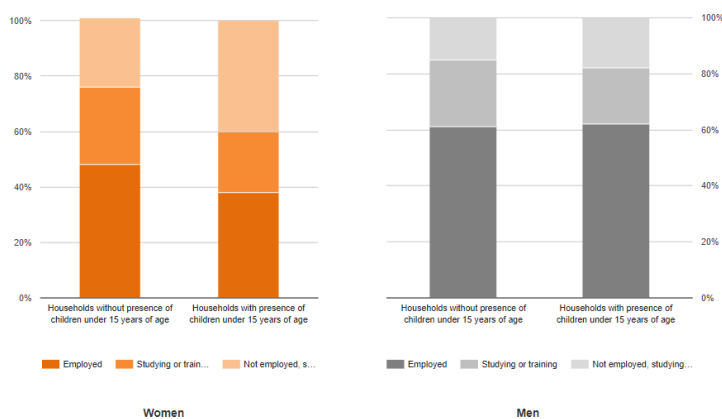
Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of tabulations of data from household surveys conducted in the respective countries.

Note: Data for Argentina, the Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay refer to 2018; those for Chile to 2017; and for Guatemala, Nicaragua and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) correspond to 2014.

Governments in Latin America and the Caribbean have identified the division of labour by sex and unfair social organization of care as one of the four structural challenges to the achievement of gender equality by 2030.⁴ The social distribution of the burden of care continues to be unfair and unbalanced, with heavy implications in terms of the equality gap between men and women. According to the information gathered from time-use surveys, adolescent girls (aged 15–19) spend more hours per week on work, both paid and unpaid, than adolescent boys, which reflects the limited time available to adolescent girls for educational activities, leisure and recreational activities or sports and community participation. At the same time, **pregnancy and motherhood in adolescent girls** (around 13% of women ages 15–19 were mothers according to the last available census information) is another major obstacle to women's autonomy during their teen years and into early adulthood. This problem is rooted, inter alia, in cultural patterns that associate women with motherhood and the resulting search for social approval or inclusion by having children; the lack of national policies on **sexual and reproductive health education**; the scarcity of specialized health services adapted to the needs of adolescent girls; and difficulties in addressing the power relationships in couples and making informed decisions about contraception.⁵

Data on the activity status of young people aged 15–29 show differences between men and women in households with children under age 15. Most young women living with children in their households are not engaged in employment, education or training (39.9%) while men living in households with children tend to be employed (61.3%) (see figure II).

Figure II: Distribution of activity status of the population aged 15-29 by presence of children in the household and by sex in the Latin America and the Caribbean region (18 countries): 2014-2018 (latest available year) (Percentage)

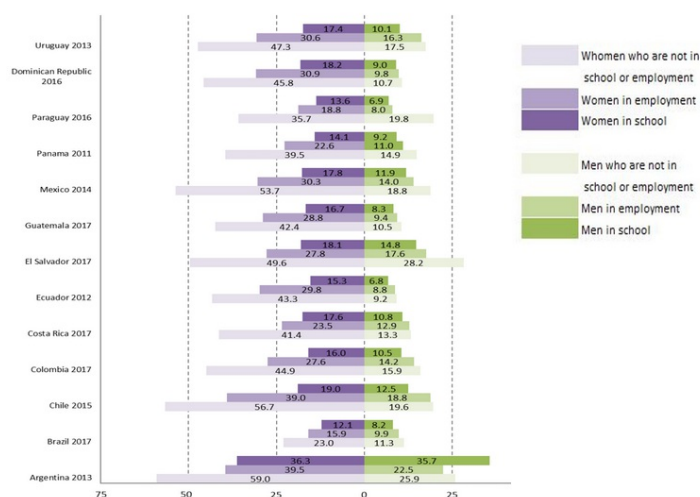


Source: ECLAC, on the basis of tabulations of data from household surveys conducted in the respective countries.

Note: Data for Argentina, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay refer to 2018; those for Chile to 2017; and the dates for Guatemala, Nicaragua and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) correspond to 2014.

The time-use data for young people aged 15–29 show that in Latin America and the Caribbean, on average, women who are out of school and not participating in the labour market spend at least 23 hours per week on unpaid domestic work, confirming that they are not in school and not being paid for their work (see figure III). In Argentina, Chile and Mexico, for example, young women who are not engaged in employment, education or training spend more than 50 hours per week on domestic and care work.

Figure III: Unpaid work performed by young people aged 15-29, by sex, in Latin America and the Caribbean (13 countries): 2011-2017 (latest year available) (Percentage)



Source: ECLAC, data based on hours worked per week calculated from data from household surveys conducted in the respective countries.

Note: Considering the heterogeneous nature of data sources, comparisons between countries are not possible; the aim of figure III is to show the trends in gender gaps within each country.

The burden of household and care work limits the opportunities of young women to participate in educational activities, find income-generating work and take part in public life and decision-making. Furthermore, they are unable to devote time to build the skills that might help them to find good-quality jobs, making them even more vulnerable to poverty and a lack of access to assistance available through social protection mechanisms.⁶

Time-use data for this population contradicts the perception that young people are inactive or unproductive members of society. To the contrary, young people spend a significant amount of time providing services that are indispensable to the well-being of their families and the economy of their countries, although they receive no payment and generally do not benefit from any form of social assistance. This information is relevant to the formulation of policies with a gender perspective to ensure that young people, in particular young women ages 15–29, may take advantage of academic and professional opportunities that promote social and economic inclusion without being restricted by the demands of unpaid domestic and care work.

About the data

Definitions

- **Unpaid work:** Work done without payment, which is measured by quantifying the time a person spends on own-use goods production work, unpaid domestic work, unpaid care of household members or unpaid work for other households or for the community and/or volunteer work.
- **Paid work:** Work for which a person receives a payment (work for pay or profit).
- **People in training:** People who are primarily pursuing training, educational activities and vocational schooling.
- **NEET:** People who are not engaged in employment, education or training

Coverage

Population aged 15–29 in the Latin America and Caribbean region.⁷

Availability

Sex-disaggregated data is available on activity status and on unpaid work for 18 United Nations Member States for the period 2014–2018 (latest available year) and for 13 United Nations Member States for the period 2011–2017 (latest available year) in the Latin America and Caribbean region.

Footnotes

1. Based on the [Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean \(ECLAC\), Social Panorama of Latin America 2016, Santiago, 2017](#).
2. "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development", General Assembly resolution 70/1, adopted on 25 September 2015.
3. Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4–15 September 1995 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), annex II, para. 71.
4. [ECLAC, Montevideo Strategy for Implementation of the Regional Gender Agenda within the Sustainable Development Framework by 2030, Santiago, 2017](#).
5. [ECLAC, Women's autonomy in changing economic scenarios, Santiago, 2019](#). ([back to text](#))
6. [ECLAC, Montevideo Strategy for Implementation of the Regional Gender Agenda within the Sustainable Development Framework by 2030, Santiago, 2017](#).
7. Under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) indicators framework, a young person is defined as being aged 15–24; however, for the purpose of measuring any possible mismatch in overeducation or undereducation, and in recognition of the fact that some young people remain in education after age 24, the upper age has been extended to 29 years for the present indicator. For more information, see the International Labour Organization (ILO) school-to-work transition survey, a household survey of young people aged 15–29, which describes this population group and the challenges it faces.

Maternity and paternity leave and related benefits



Key points

- As of 2020, 38 States Members of the United Nations had ratified the Maternity Protection Convention (Convention No. 183) adopted by the International Labour Organization (ILO) in 2000.¹
- In 2020, of the 185 countries and territories with available data, 53% offer at least 14 weeks of maternity leave, an increase from 38% in 1994.
- As of 2020, 77% of the 185 countries and territories with available data had granted two thirds of women's previous earnings as maternity leave benefits.
- Of the 188 countries and territories with available data reviewed by the World Bank in 2020, 103 countries (55%) have provisions for paternity leave, an increase over the 30 countries (16%) that offered such leave in 1995. As reported by the World Bank, globally, the median length of paid paternity leave is five days, a low number when compared with the 56 days of paternity leave granted in some high-income member States of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

Background

Maternity protection, which is a fundamental human right and a critical element of policies balancing the participation of women and men in family and work life, covers, inter alia: the prevention of exposure to health and safety hazards during and after pregnancy; entitlement to paid maternity leave and breastfeeding breaks; maternal and child health care; protection against discrimination in employment and occupations, including with respect to recruitment and dismissal; and the guaranteed right to return to the same position or an equivalent position after maternity leave.²

Maternity protection not only contributes to the health and well-being of mothers and their children, it also promotes gender equality in the workplace. Three conventions on maternity protection have been adopted by ILO, in 1919, 1952 and 2000: the most recent, the Maternity Protection Convention (Convention No. 183), stipulates that women should be entitled to no less than 14 weeks of maternity leave, with paid cash benefits amounting to at least two thirds of their normal earnings.³

Current situation

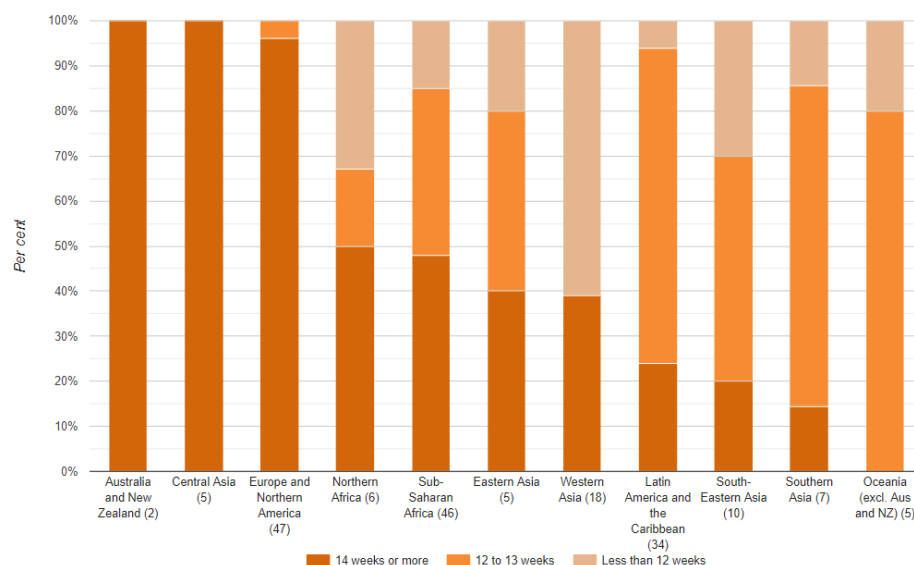
Worldwide in 2020 over 50% of countries offer at least 14 weeks of maternity leave, a marked increase over the last 25 years

As of 2020, 38 States Members of the United Nations in regions throughout the world had ratified the Maternity Leave Convention (Convention No. 183), 24 of them in developed regions: more than half (53%) of the 185 countries with available data offer 14 weeks minimum statutory maternity leave, specifying such leave in national laws and regulations, as recommended in Convention No. 183.

As of 2020, Australia and New Zealand and all countries in Central Asia offer at least 14 weeks of maternity leave. Almost all countries in developed regions have also followed the recommendation in Convention No. 183, with

the exception of Iceland (13 weeks) and the United States of America (12 weeks). Entitlement to maternity leave has been increased up to 52 weeks in five countries in Europe,⁴ and up to 59 weeks in Croatia, since the adoption of the Maternity Protection Convention in 2000. It should be noted that in these countries, women's labour force participation has grown in recent years, contrary to the global trend. In contrast, less than a quarter of countries with available data in Latin America and the Caribbean (24%), South-Eastern Asia (20%), Southern Asia (14%) and Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand) (0%) offer 14 weeks or more of maternity leave (see figure I). Globally, the proportion of countries with available data offering a minimum of 14 weeks of maternity leave increased from 38% to 53% during the period from 1994 to 2020.

Figure I: Distribution of countries with maternity leave provisions by length of leave and by region: 2020



Source: Calculated by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Development (UNDESA), Statistics Division, using data from the United Nations Minimum Set of Gender Indicators (last accessed on 29 May 2020).

Note: Numbers in brackets denote the number of countries in the region with available data: calculations for Oceania (excl. Australia and New Zealand) include the following five countries in the region: Fiji, Kiribati, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu.

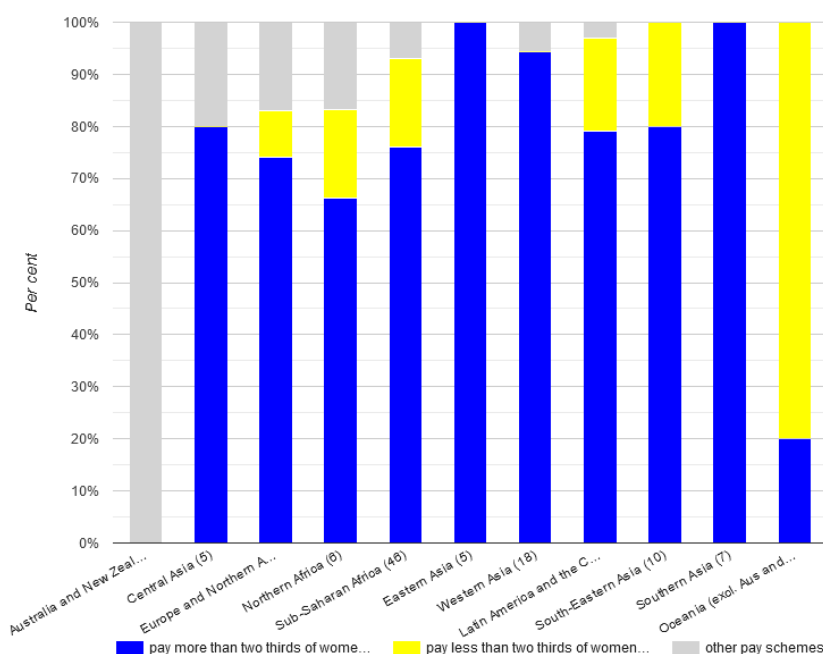
Four out of five countries grant at least two thirds of women's previous earnings as maternity leave payments as recommended by ILO Convention No. 183

According to ILO Convention No. 183, women should be granted paid cash benefits of at least two thirds of their previous earnings during maternity leave. In 2020, out of 185 countries with available information on maternity leave, 143 (77%) meet this criterion, including all countries in Eastern Asia and Southern Asia.⁵ The proportion that meet the criterion is slightly lower in Western Asia (94%), South-Eastern Asia (80%), Latin America and the Caribbean (79%), sub-Saharan Africa (76%) and Northern America and Europe (74%). Some countries have other pay schemes with conditional benefits constituting a higher or a lower proportion of maternity leave payments than two thirds of women's previous income (see figure II).

Three countries, Lesotho, Papua New Guinea and the United States (except the State of California), did not have legal provisions to provide cash benefits for women on maternity leave. In Tunisia, cash benefits during maternity leave for employed women varied based on institutional and **economic sectors**: while women employed in the

agriculture sector received 50% of their flat-rate daily wage during maternity leave, payments amounted to the full salary for women working as civil servants.

Figure II: Proportion of countries providing women with paid cash benefits during maternity leave by type of cash benefits, by region: 2020



Source: Calculated by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Development (UNDESA), Statistics Division, using preliminary data from the United Nations Minimum Set of Gender Indicators (last accessed on 29 May 2020).

Note: Numbers in brackets denote the number of countries in the region with available data: calculations for Oceania (excl. Australia and New Zealand) should be interpreted with caution as data were available for only five countries in the region.

Paternity leave is becoming more common

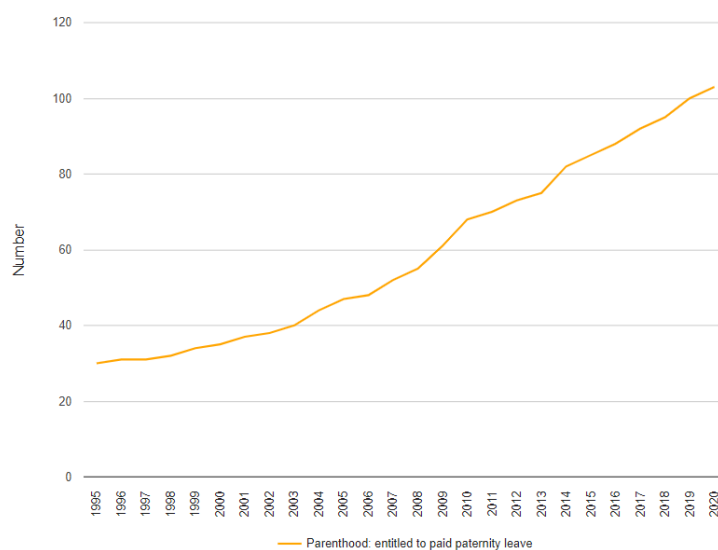
Many countries have adopted maternity and paternity benefits through legislation, benefitting both mothers and fathers. Paternity leave is a short period of leave for the father following the arrival of his child(ren), with the objective of encouraging fathers to assist in childcare and to attend to other family-related responsibilities. Paternity leave has become more common: in 2020, among 188 United Nations Member States and territories with available data worldwide, 103 countries (55%) had provisions on paternity leave, up from the 30 countries (16%) that provided such leave in 1995 (see figure III).

In 2020 in developed regions, new fathers are not entitled to paid paternity leave in Austria, Belarus, Switzerland, Israel, Montenegro, New Zealand, the Russian Federation, San Marino, Slovakia and Ukraine. Twenty-six countries in sub-Saharan Africa and 17 countries and territories in Latin America and the Caribbean do not mandate paid time off for new fathers. In 2020, the median length of paid paternity leave worldwide was five days, similar to the corresponding figures observed in countries in sub-Saharan Africa (3 days) and Latin America

and the Caribbean (5 days), a low number when compared with the 56 days of paternity leave provided in some high income member States of OECD.⁶ The European Union work-life balance directive, which entered into force as of 1 August 2019, extends the length of paternity leave in EU member states to at least 10 working days.⁷

Paternity leave also has significant positive effects on women's **employment**, with an estimated increase of almost 7% in the proportion of women employed in private firms in developing regions when paternity leave is mandated.⁸

Figure III: Number of countries and territories with legislation on paid paternity leave: 1995–2020



Source: World Bank, 2020, Women, Business and the Law, time series (<https://datacatalog.worldbank.org/dataset/women-business-and-law>), 2020 (last accessed on 29 May 2020).

Note: Assessment based on 188 countries with available data.

Institution in focus: United Nations

In 2019, the Chair of the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) communicated his commitment to reviewing parental leave entitlements to balance participation of all United Nations staff, irrespective of gender, in family and work life. If endorsed by ICSC, the proposed gender responsive and family-friendly policies, such as paid parental leave for all parents, including those who adopt, foster or have children through surrogacy or assisted reproductive technology, would set the standards of inclusive participation, respect for diversity and work-life balance called for in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in order to promote a gender-equal world.^{9 10}

Social protection

In 2016, the proportion of mothers giving birth who were covered by maternity cash benefits stood at 41% worldwide. The proportion was above 90% in developed regions (94% in Europe and almost 100% in Australia and New Zealand and Northern America) but varied greatly among developing regions, ranging from 69% in

Northern Africa to 2% in sub-Saharan Africa.^{11 12}

About the data

Definitions

- **Length of maternity leave; Percentage of wages paid during maternity leave; Number of countries with paid paternity leave provisions:** These indicators provide information on maternity and paternity leave and related benefits.

Coverage and availability

185 United Nations Member States and territories with available data under the relevant indicators of the United Nations Minimum Set of Gender Indicators;¹³ and the paternity leave policies of 188 United Nations Member States and territories reviewed by the World Bank.¹⁴

Footnotes

1. [International Labour Organization \(ILO\)](#) .
2. United Nations Department of Economic and Social Development (UNDESA), Statistics Division, The World's Women 2015: Trends and Statistics, New York, 2015 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.15.XVII.8).
3. International Labour Organization (ILO), Maternity Protection Convention, No. 183, Geneva, 2000.
4. Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.
5. Not all of the countries that meet this criterion provided the minimum statutory maternity leave of 14 weeks.
6. World Bank, Women, Business and the Law, Washington, D.C., 2020.
7. [European Commission, "EU Work-life Balance Directive enters into force", 2019](#) .
8. World Bank, "Does Paternity Leave Matter for Female Employment in Developing Economies?", Policy Research Working Papers, Washington, D.C., 2016.
9. Source: [Letter to staff from the Chair of the International Civil Service Commission \(ICSC\) dated 20 December 2019](#) . (Last accessed on 27 July 2020).
10. Parental leave is a relatively long-term leave available to parents, allowing them to take care of children over a period of time usually following the maternity or paternity leave period (ILO, Maternity at work: A review of national legislation, second edition, Geneva, 2010). As of 2017, paternity leave for United Nations staff was provided for a total period of up to 20 working days, or up to 40 working days for internationally recruited staff members serving at a non-family duty station or in exceptional circumstances (ST/AI/2005/2 and Amendments 1 and 2).
11. Source: [Global SDG Indicators Database](#) . (last accessed on 27 July 2020).
12. The proportion of mothers with newborns receiving maternity cash benefits includes all women giving birth: estimates for Northern America, Australia and New Zealand and sub-Saharan Africa regions should be interpreted with caution as they are based on reported data coverage below 40% of the population.
13. [United Nations Department of Economic and Social Development \(UNDESA\), Statistics Division, United Nations Minimum Set of Gender Indicators](#) .
14. World Bank, Women, Business and the Law, Washington, D.C., 2020.

Economic empowerment

Gender pay gap



Key points

- A gender pay gap by five percentage points or higher was observed in 49 out of 58 (84%) countries with available data for the period 2014–2018. In most countries, women earn less than men, and the median gender pay gap for the 58 countries with available data was 12% in favour of men.
- Among 27 countries of the European Union with comparable trend data on the gender pay gap, a slight downward trend was observed overall during the period 2014–2018, with the average pay gap in the 27 reporting countries of the European Union decreasing from 15.7% in 2014 to 14.8% in 2018.
- A gap in earnings between women and men persists across all economic sectors. The median gender pay gap in the European Union was larger than 10% in 15 out of 17 economic sectors, most notably in the financial and insurance activities subsector.
- Even when a large number of explained factors are taken into consideration, pay differentials between women and men can be explained only to a certain degree. Gender pay gaps that cannot be explained may be caused by omitted variables and other factors not covered by available data, including discrimination.

Background

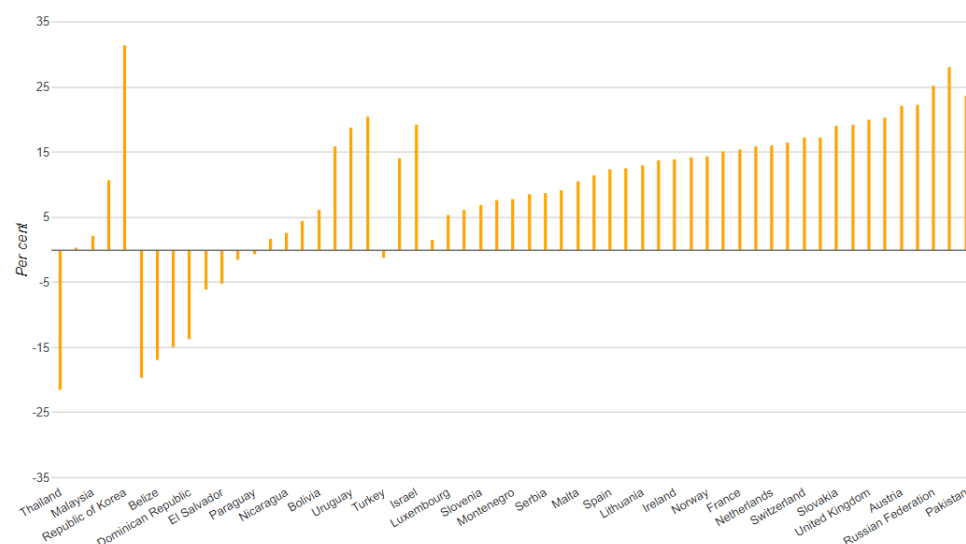
Gender pay gap is a global measure to assess progress in reducing the differences in average earnings of women and men, and it may result from a multitude of explained and unexplained factors. The explained factors combine: (a) the individual characteristics of women and men in the labour market; (b) the types of jobs they perform; and (c) the types of establishments or companies in which they work, and includes age, level and field of education, work experience, **occupation**, **economic sector**, type of contract and working time of employed women and men, as well as the age, size, legal status and private/foreign/state ownership of the establishments in which they work. Gender inequalities in most of these areas are associated with traditions and stereotypes (influencing the choice of education, professions and career paths of women and men) as well as difficulties in balancing work and family life, which often lead to part-time work and career breaks, mainly among women.¹

A notable gender pay gap is found in most countries with available data

A gender pay gap by five percentage points or higher was observed in 49 out of 58 (84%) countries with available data for the period 2014–2018. In most countries, women earned less than men, and the median gender pay gap for these 58 countries was 12% in favour of men. However, a gender pay gap in favour of women was found in Latin America and the Caribbean, where statistics on earnings were produced from a variety of data sources with discrepancies in coverage, scope and characteristics. In that region, in more than half the countries with available data for the period 2014–2018, men earned less than women. Among 33 countries in Europe with more comparable data on the gender pay gap during the same time period, women were generally paid less than men, with a gender pay gap in the region ranging between 2% and 28%. Six countries, namely, Austria, Estonia, Germany, the Russian Federation, Ukraine and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, had the

largest gender pay gaps in the region, amounting to more than 20%. Average hourly earnings of employed women and men differed the most in countries in Eastern and South-Eastern Asia, although data were available for only five countries: the gender pay gap was calculated as 22% in favour of women in Thailand (with women earning more) and 31% in favour of men in the Republic of Korea (with men earning more) (see figure I).

Figure I: Gender pay gap by region: 2014—2018 (latest available) (Percentage)



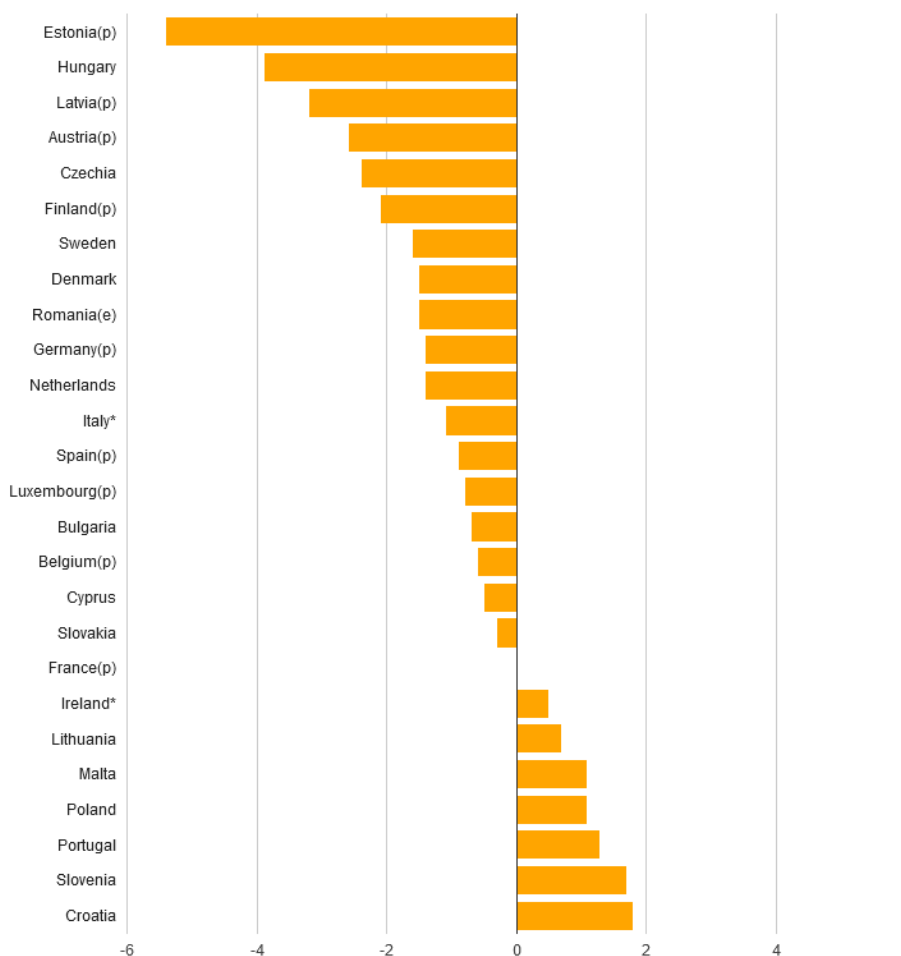
Source: Compiled by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), Statistics Division, based on data accessed from the Global SDG Indicators Database (last accessed on 7 May 2020) (<https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/database/>).

Note: Limited international comparability due to heterogeneity of data sources.

Countries in developed regions show a slight decline in gender pay gap

Among 27 member States of the European Union with comparable data on the gender pay gap, a slight downward trend was observed overall during the period 2014—2018, with the average pay gap in the 27 reporting member States decreasing from 15.7% in 2014 to 14.8%² in 2018. During the same period, 18 out of the 27 (67%) countries showed a decrease in the pay gap, with the largest decline in pay differences in Europe between women and men provisionally recorded in Estonia, where women were paid 28.2% less than men in 2014 and 22.7% less in 2018³ (see figure II).

Figure II: Percentage point change in the gender pay gap in 27 member States of the European Union: 2014–2018



Source: Calculated by UNDESA, Statistics Division, based on data retrieved from Eurostat on the gender pay gap in unadjusted form (last accessed on 31 August 2020) (https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/en/web/products-datasets/-/SDG_05_20).

Note: Reference year for data for Italy and Ireland is 2017. Greece does not have additional comparable data since 2014 and is excluded from the figure. Data for Austria, Belgium, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Latvia, Luxembourg and Spain in 2018 are provisional. Data for Romania in 2018 is estimated.

The gender gap persists across all economic sectors

A gap in earnings between women and men persists across all economic sectors, although significant variations in are found from one industry to another. Based on 2014 data for 27 member States of the European Union, the median gender pay gap in the European Union was greater than 10% in 15 out of 17 economic sectors, most notably in the financial and insurance activities subsector.

As called for by the Beijing Platform for Action, adopted in 1995, women and men have the right to equal pay for

equal work or work of equal value. However, even when a large number of explained factors are taken into consideration, pay differentials between women and men can be explained only to a certain extent. Those that cannot be explained may be attributed to omitted variables and other factors not covered by available data, including gender discrimination.⁴

The legal framework

Globally⁵ as of 2020, 173 United Nations Member States and territories have ratified [ILO Convention No. 100](#) (Equal Remuneration Convention), on equal remuneration for women and men workers.

With the aim of promoting equal pay for equal work or work of equal value, several countries in developed regions, including Australia, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom, have introduced legal or regulatory obligations for enterprises of varying sizes to publish sex-disaggregated data on wages.⁶

Country in focus: Canada

In 2018, the gender wage gap stood at 13.3% in [Canada](#), a decrease of 5.5 percentage points over 1998. Further analysis at the country level reveals that 39.7% of the gender wage gap in 2018 could be explained by women's and men's employment in different economic sectors.

Country in focus: Switzerland

In 2017, the difference between the average gross hourly earnings of employed women and men stood at 17% of men's gross earnings in Switzerland.⁷

Following the enforcement of the revised Gender Equality Act in 2020, companies in Switzerland with 100 or more employees are required to conduct an equal pay analysis by 2021. A free-of-charge web application standard analysis tool named [Logib](#) has been developed to enable companies with 50 or more employees to carry out standardized and reliable pay equality analysis with a minimal administrative burden. It is estimated that Logib will be used by thousands of companies both in Switzerland and abroad.⁸ Once anonymous data on employees' individual characteristics, workplace characteristics, working hours and payments are fed into the application, information on average payments to women and to men, as well as on the number of women in different wage quartiles, are produced in a simple manner, assisting the identification of possible gender pay gaps at the enterprise level.

About the data

Definitions

- **Average hourly earnings of employees, by sex, age, occupation and persons with disabilities:**

This indicator provides information on mean hourly earnings from paid employment of employees by sex and occupation. Earnings exclude employers' contributions on behalf of employees to social security and pension schemes and the benefits received by employees under these schemes, as well as severance and termination pay. This indicator is used to calculate the gender pay gap.

- **Gender pay gap:** Difference between the average hourly wages of men and women expressed as a percentage of the average hourly wages of men, as follows:⁹

$$[\text{Average hourly earnings of men} - \text{Average hourly earnings of women}] / [\text{Average hourly earnings of men}]$$

Coverage

Employed women and men. Differences in coverage in terms of minimum age, working time and economic sectors may be observed across different data sources.

Availability

58 United Nations Member States and territories (with latest available data for the period 2014–2018). Countries and territories are organized under the regional groupings of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) indicators framework.¹⁰

Limitations

Statistics on earnings are obtained from various data sources. Most countries in developing regions rely on labour force surveys or household income and expenditure surveys, while most countries in developed regions rely on establishment surveys. Cross-country comparisons of earnings data from different data sources are affected by type and age of workers covered, as well as by the exclusion of certain economic sectors. International comparability is hampered by differences across countries in the size criterion adopted in surveys or censuses. In addition, the average earnings of particular groups, including women, are affected by the different elements that make

up the groups and their characteristics. Furthermore, earnings reflected in SDG indicator 8.5.1 may omit earnings of part-time workers and/or of domestic workers, depending on the data source. This is particularly relevant given that women are more likely to hold part-time jobs and to work as domestic workers than men and that both part-time and domestic workers generally have lower hourly earnings.

Footnotes

1. Leythienne, P., and Ronkowski, P., 2018, A decomposition of the unadjusted gender pay gap using Structure of Earnings Survey data, 2018 edition, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2018 .
2. Eurostat, 2020, Gender pay gap in unadjusted form (last accessed on 31 August 2020) .
3. Ibid.
4. Leythienne, P., and Ronkowski, P., 2018, A decomposition of the unadjusted gender pay gap using Structure of Earnings Survey data, 2018 edition, Luxembourg, Publications Office of the European Union, 2018 .
5. Source: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), Sustainable Development Goal 16: Focus on Public Institutions, World Public Sector Report 2019, New York 2019 .
6. International Labour Organization (ILO), Convention No. 100 (Equal Remuneration Convention), 1951.
7. Source: Eurostat, 2020, Gender pay gap in unadjusted form (last accessed on 31 August 2020) .
8. Federal Office for Gender Equality, "Tackling the gender pay gap with digital solutions", webinar held on 19 August 2020..
9. Source: UNSD, 2020. Metadata file for SDG indicator 8.5.1. . Last accessed on 17 09 2020.
10. United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), Statistics Division, regional groupings under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) indicators framework .

Economic empowerment

Youth not in education, employment or training (NEET)



Key points

- In 2019, among youth aged 15–24 worldwide, 31.1% of young women and 13.9% of young men were not in education, employment or training. The gender gap in youth NEET rates has remained constant, at around 17 percentage points, since 2005.
- Across regions in 2019, while NEET rates among young men remained relatively constant, among young women the rates varied greatly, reaching above 40% in Western Asia and in Southern Asia. The gender gap in the NEET rate was relatively small in developed regions.
- The higher prevalence in the proportion of young women (more than three times higher than among young men) in Southern Asia who are not in education, employment or training accompanied with a relatively low youth unemployment may indicate a level of discouragement about entering into and participating in the labour market.
- Higher NEET rates among young women may prevent them from increasing their chances of future employability by gaining experience through employment or honing their skills through education or training.

Background

The youth NEET rate is a useful complement to the youth [unemployment rate](#) in gaining a better understanding of the labour market dynamics affecting young women and men, including their potential contribution to sustainable development through employment. The NEET rate includes young persons who are outside the labour force and not engaged in education or training. For example, a low youth unemployment rate and a high proportion of NEET may indicate that young people are discouraged about entering the labour market. In the case of young women, a high relative NEET rate may also be linked to their disproportionate engagement in [unpaid domestic and care work](#)¹ and a lack of available social services to balance family life and other activities.²

Current situation

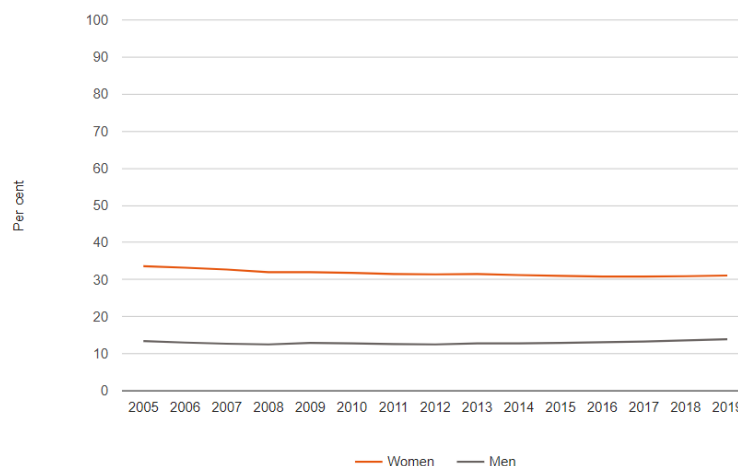
The gender gap between the proportion of young women and young men not in education, employment or training has narrowed only slightly over the last 15 years, with the proportion of young women being more than twice that of young men

In 2019, the proportion of youth aged 15–24 not in education, employment or training constituted 31.1% of the young female and 13.9% of the young male population, resulting in a gender gap of 17.2 percentage points. Since 2005, the NEET rate among young women has slightly decreased in all regions, with the exception of Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand), while it has remained relatively stable among young men. Over the same period, the gender gap in the youth NEET rate has narrowed only slightly, by 3 percentage points (see figure I).

Among 111 countries and territories with latest available data between 2015 and 2019, the proportion of young women not in education, employment or training was the highest in Afghanistan (65.9%), Pakistan (54.9%) and Zambia (49.5%) and the lowest in Japan (3.5%), the Netherlands (4.2%) and Norway (4.6%). The proportion of young men not in education, employment or training was the highest in Kiribati (46.2%), Zambia (36.4%) and

Armenia (35.7%) and the lowest in Japan (2.2%), Singapore (3.1%) and Czechia (3.6%). The gender gap in the youth NEET rate was the highest in Afghanistan (47.6 percentage points), Bangladesh (34.8 percentage points) and Guatemala (39.6 percentage points).

Figure I: Proportion of youth (aged 15-24) not in education, employment or training (NEET), by sex: 2005-2019



Source: ILO estimates; United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), Statistics Division, Global SDG indicators Database (<https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/database/>) (last accessed on 3 August 2020).

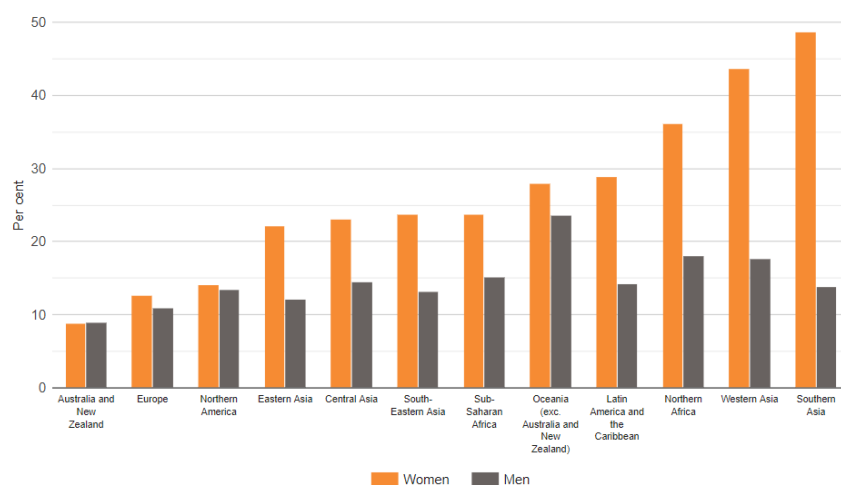
Note: Figures for 2019 are projections.

The gender gap in the proportion of youth not in education, employment or training is significant in developing regions

Across regions, while NEET rates remained relatively constant among young men, ranging between 9% and 18%, except in Oceania (excluding Australia in New Zealand), those rates among young women varied greatly, reaching above 45% in Southern Asia (more than three times the rate among young men) and above 40% in Western Asia in 2019.

Overall, the proportion was higher among young women than among young men in all regions except Australia and New Zealand (no gender difference) (see figure II). NEET rates among young women were at least 10 percentage points higher than those among young men in South-Eastern Asia (10.5 percentage points), Latin America and the Caribbean (14.6 percentage points) and Northern Africa (18 percentage points), and the NEET gender gap reached 35 percentage points in Southern Asia and 26 percentage points in Western Asia. The gender gap was relatively small in Northern America (0.7 percentage points) and Europe (1.7 percentage points).

Figure II: Proportion of youth (aged 15-24) not in education, employment or training (NEET), by sex and region, 2019



Source: ILO estimates; United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), Statistics Division, Global SDG indicators Database (<https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/database/>) (last accessed on 3 August 2020).

Note: Figures for 2019 are projections.

In 2019, the highest proportion of young women not in education, employment or training was in countries in Southern Asia (48.7%), where the unemployment rate for women aged 15–24 stood at 18.4%, similar to the overall youth unemployment rate of 18.8%. The relatively much higher prevalence of NEET than unemployment among young women in Southern Asia may indicate a level of discouragement about entering into and participating in the labour market.

Discriminatory **social norms** and **legal barriers** are likely to contribute to the youth NEET rate, preventing young women, in particular, from increasing their future employability by gaining experience through employment or honing their skills through education or training.³

Country in focus: Armenia

In Armenia in 2017, while 3% of young women aged 17 were married, the share was 28% among young women not in education, employment or training of the same age. Among young men, however, the starting age for family formation did not seem to vary by NEET status: overall marriage rates among young men, whether in NEET status or not, were similar across the 15–24 age category.⁴

Country in focus: Brazil

Youth NEET rates are different for young women and young men in **Brazil**, and further analysis reveals higher relative NEET rates among young women and young men who face distinct disadvantages owing to their geographic location or colour/race.

About the data

Definitions

- **Proportion of youth (aged 15–24) not in education, employment or training (NEET):** Proportion of youth (aged 15–24) who are not engaged in education, employment or training (NEET rate) among the total youth population. People are considered to be involved in education if they are enrolled in formal or non-formal education (with the exception of informal learning), as described by the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED).⁵ People in a non-academic learning activity, through which they acquire specific skills intended for vocational or technical jobs, are excluded as they are considered to be in training for the purposes of this indicator.

Coverage

Young women and young men aged 15–24 in 150 United Nations Member States and territories.

Data limitations

In the SDG framework,⁶ youth comprises persons aged 15–24, although, as reported by ILO, many young women and men complete their education after the age of 24.⁷ The gender [narrative of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean on the youth NEET rate](#) includes individuals aged 25–29 in that region.⁸

Footnotes

1. International Labour Organization (ILO), *A quantum leap for gender equality: for a better future of work for all*, Geneva, 2019.
2. A link between the educational attainment of women and men aged 15-24 and their respective NEET rates could not be made due to lack of disaggregated data on educational attainment for this specific age category.
3. ILO, Department of Statistics (ILOSTAT), "Share of youth not in employment, education or training (youth NEET rate)" (last accessed on 26 April 2020).
4. World Bank, *Exploring the Diversity of Young People Not in Employment, Education or Training: The Gender Profile of NEETs in Georgia and Armenia*, Washington, D.C., 2019. Owing to the lack of information on NEET rates for young women in Armenia aged 15 and 16 regarding their marital status, age figures for these data points were omitted.
5. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Institute for Statistics, *International Standard Classification of Education: ISCED 2011*, Montreal, 2012.
6. Global indicator framework for the Sustainable Development Goals, General Assembly resolution 71/313, annex.
7. ILO, *Key Indicators of the Labour Market*, ninth edition, Geneva, 2016.
8. Statement by the Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Brussels, June 2019.

Unpaid work and income poverty in countries in the Latin America and the Caribbean region [ECLAC]



Key points

- Women in lowest-income households spend more time on unpaid work compared to women in highest-income households (39 hours versus 29 hours per week); in contrast, there is little difference in the amount of time men in both lowest-income and highest-income households spend on unpaid work, on average, less than one hour per day. For this reason, the gender gap in time spent on unpaid work is even wider in lowest-income households.
- In 2017, for every 100 men living in poor households in the Latin America, there were 113 women in the same situation, a ratio that remained stable over the period 2012–2017.

Time poverty and income poverty: a vicious circle in countries in Latin America

Time-use data allow for the evaluation of public policies and programmes from an innovative perspective: an analysis of time-use data, based on household income per capita as a stratification variable in six Latin American countries, shows that women in lowest-income households spend more time on unpaid work than women in highest-income households. This is partly related to the size and dependency ratio of lowest-income households, which tend to have specific family structures.¹

The differences in unpaid working time are significant: while women in the poorest households (quantile I, poorest 20% of households) spend an average of 39 hours per week on unpaid work, those in the wealthiest households (quantile V, wealthiest 20% of households) spend around 29 hours per week on unpaid work, an average of 10 hours less. Meanwhile, the differences in the amount of time spent on unpaid work between men in households in the poorest and wealthiest quintiles is not significant, generally less than one hour per day.

Data show that men's contribution to domestic and care work is generally independent of their socioeconomic stratum, and that the gender gap in time spent on unpaid work is wider and more unequal in lowest-income households.

Monetary poverty and lack of time sustain a vicious circle that is difficult to break without policies focused on strengthening women's economic autonomy. The burden of unpaid work that has historically been assigned to women hinders their access to the labour market and thus their ability to generate their own income; this situation is even more pronounced in households with children under the age of five.

In addition, women in poor households are unable to acquire goods and services that could save time on domestic and care work and there is a lack of quality public services that provide care for children, older persons and persons with disabilities and with chronic illnesses, a regressive situation that is set to worsen, given the ongoing demographic changes in the region, including a rise in the older population.

Figure: Time spent in unpaid work (in hours per week) by women and men aged 15 and older in selected countries in Latin America by income quintile: 2014, 2016 and 2017 (latest available)



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of the repository of information on time use in Latin America and the Caribbean (<https://oig.cepal.org/en/infographics/repository-information-time-use-latin-america-and-caribbean>).

Note: Q I denotes quintile I: poorest 20% of households and Q V denotes quintile V: the wealthiest 20% of households.

Poverty reduction measures in the region have not benefited men and women equally, nor have they advanced at the same pace. In general, poor households contain a higher proportion of women of ages at which productive and reproductive demands are the greatest. In 2017, for every 100 men living in poor households in the region, there were 113 women in the same situation.

Moreover, despite variations in the regional poverty level, the femininity index of poverty (the ratio of women to men living in poverty) remained relatively constant during the period 2012–2017, with values between 1.13 and 1.14, equivalent to 113 to 114 women for every 100 men.²

In the case of extreme poverty, the index has been equally stable, with a slight increase between 2014 and 2016, before falling in 2017, returning to a level similar to the 2012 level, that is, 1.16, representing 116 women for every 100 men.³ The poverty suffered by women in Latin America is closely linked to the barriers they face in carrying out paid work.

The strong link between time and income means that lack of time worsens or reproduces poverty; for this reason, time-use analysis is fundamental to a more comprehensive and multidimensional management of this phenomenon.

Related stories and further reading

- [Unpaid work and total work burden](#)
- [Youth "not in employment, education or training" \(NEET\) and unpaid work in Latin America](#)

About the data

Definitions

- **Unpaid work:** in this story refers to work done without payment, which is measured by quantifying the time a person spends on own-use goods production work, unpaid domestic work, unpaid care of household members or unpaid work for other households or for the community and/or volunteer work.⁴

Coverage

Women living in six selected countries in Latin America.

Availability

Data on the six selected countries in Latin America have been provided by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC).

Footnotes

1. Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Social Panorama of Latin America 2016, Santiago, 2017.
2. Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Women's autonomy in changing economic scenarios, Santiago, 2019.
3. Ibid.
4. International Labour Organization (ILO), Department of Statistics (ILOSTAT), Unpaid work, subsistence production, unpaid care work and volunteer work.

Economic empowerment

Colombia: total workload of women and men; discriminatory attitudes towards women in the workplace; and unemployment



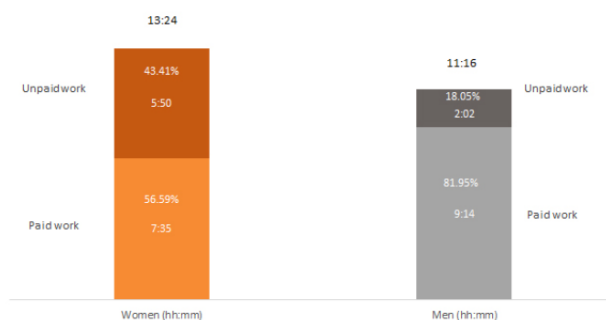
Key points

- In Colombia, in 2017: employed women spent 2 hours and 8 minutes more than employed men in paid and unpaid work per day; in the population aged 10 years and older, women worked 2 hours and 10 minutes more than men — this gap persists across all age groups.
- While gender gaps in paid work for indigenous persons (1:32 hours, with women working 5:31 hours and men 7:03) and for Afro-Colombians (1:54 hours, with women working 6:54 hours and men 8:48) were similar to the gender gap in the total population (1:39 hours, with women working 7:35 hours and men 9:14), indigenous and Afro-Colombian women and men spent proportionately less time in paid work than women and men in the total population.
- Cultural norms and traditional gender roles contribute to the sexual division of labour, with older persons and people living in rural areas tending to agree with the following statement: "The head of the home must be the man", and with men agreeing more than women across all age groups (overall agreement: 37% of all women versus 47% of all men).
- Engagement in unpaid work impacted participation in the labour market by Colombian women and men. In the period 2009–2019, the unemployment rate among women was higher than that among men by at least 4.9 percentage points. The unemployment rate among women never fell into a single-digit number range during this time period.
- In Colombia, the unemployment rate among women was higher than that of men across all levels of education, although in 2019 the unemployment rate dropped to 5.5% for women with postgraduate education. Women aged 18–24 were most affected by unemployment and faced the largest gender gap.

There is a gender gap in time use in Colombia

In 2017, the **total workload** of women in Colombia was 13 hours and 24 minutes per day, of which 56.5% was dedicated to paid work and 43.5% to unpaid work. The total workload of men was 11 hours and 16 minutes a day, 82% of which corresponded to paid work and 18% to unpaid work. In total, employed women worked 2 hours and 8 minutes more than employed men per day (see figure 1).

Figure I: Total time (in hours: minutes) spent daily in paid and unpaid work by employed women and men: 2016—2017 (Percentage)

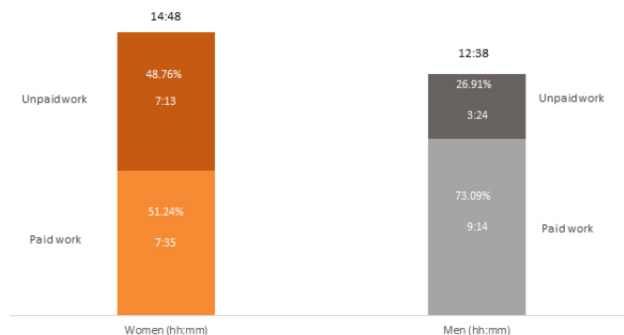


Source: National Administrative Department of Statistics (DANE), Time Use Survey: 2016—2017 (correspondence with DANE on 12 March 2020).

Note: Paid hours include work accounted for in the System of National Accounts (SNA); unpaid hours include work activities not covered by the SNA; total workload takes as reference the employed population.

Similarly, among the working population aged 10 or older, Colombian women worked about 2 hours more than men. Women received remuneration for 51.2% of their total working time, while men were paid for 73.1% of their total working time (see figure II).

Figure II: Total time (in hours: minutes) spent daily in paid and unpaid work by women and men aged 10 and older: 2016—2017 (Percentage)

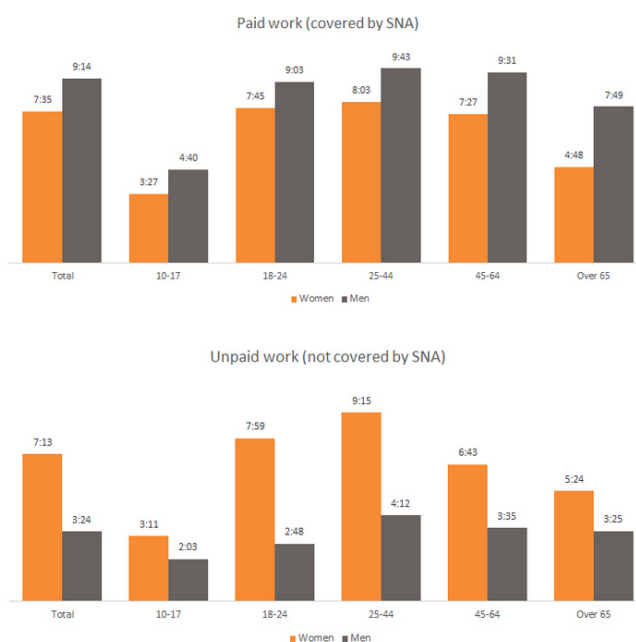


Source: National Administrative Department of Statistics (DANE), Time Use Survey: 2016—2017 (correspondence with DANE on 12 March 2020).

Note: Paid hours include work accounted in the System of National Accounts (SNA); unpaid hours include work activities not covered by the SNA.

Data indicate that Colombian women have less time available for personal activities, including rest and study, and less paid hours, which affects their economic empowerment, their bargaining power inside the home and their well-being. This gap persists across all age groups (see figure III), resulting in a sexual division of labour¹ within households throughout the life cycle.

Figure III: Average time (in hours: minutes) spent daily in paid and unpaid work and related activities by age group and sex: 2016—2017



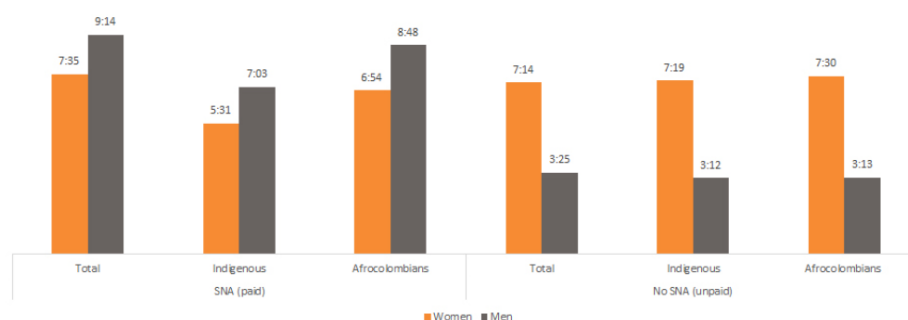
Source: National Administrative Department of Statistics (DANE), Time Use Survey: 2016—2017.

Note: Paid hours include work accounted in the System of National Accounts (SNA); unpaid hours include work activities not covered by the SNA.

This sexual division of labour was also observed by ethnicity (see figure IV). In the case of Afro-Colombians, the gender gap in unpaid work hours per day (4:17 hours, with women working 7:19 hours and men 3:12) was 11.8% (27 minutes), which was greater than the gender gap observed in the total population (3:49 hours, with women working 7:14 hours and men 3:25).

Gender gaps in paid work for indigenous persons (1:32 hours, with women working 5:31 hours and men 7:03) and for Afro-Colombians (1:54, with women working 6:54 hours and men 8:48) were similar to the gender gap in paid work in the total population (1:39 hours, with women working 7:35 hours and men 9:14). Nevertheless, among indigenous persons and Afro-Colombians, both men and women spent proportionately less time in paid work than men and women in the total population.

Figure IV: Average time (in hours: minutes) spent daily in paid and unpaid work activities by ethnicity and sex: 2016—2017



Source: National Administrative Department of Statistics (DANE), Time Use Survey: 2016—2017.

Note: Paid hours include work accounted in the System of National Accounts (SNA); unpaid hours include work activities not covered by the SNA.

The division of labour between women and men is enabled by cultural norms and traditional gender roles

In order to measure perceptions about stereotypical gender roles among women and men in Colombia, the national Time Use Survey: 2016—2017 included five questions containing sexist statements. Understanding the prevalence of rigid gender stereotypes in the population is crucial for the formulation of policies to promote cultural change towards the elimination of **harmful social norms and discriminatory attitudes**.

The prevalence of the sexual division of labour is not surprising given that 65% of the population agreed that “Women are better for domestic work than men”, and more than 35% thought that “A man’s duty is to earn money; a woman’s duty is to take care of the home and family”. In answers to almost all such questions in the survey, a greater proportion of men than that women agreed with the sexist statements (see table).

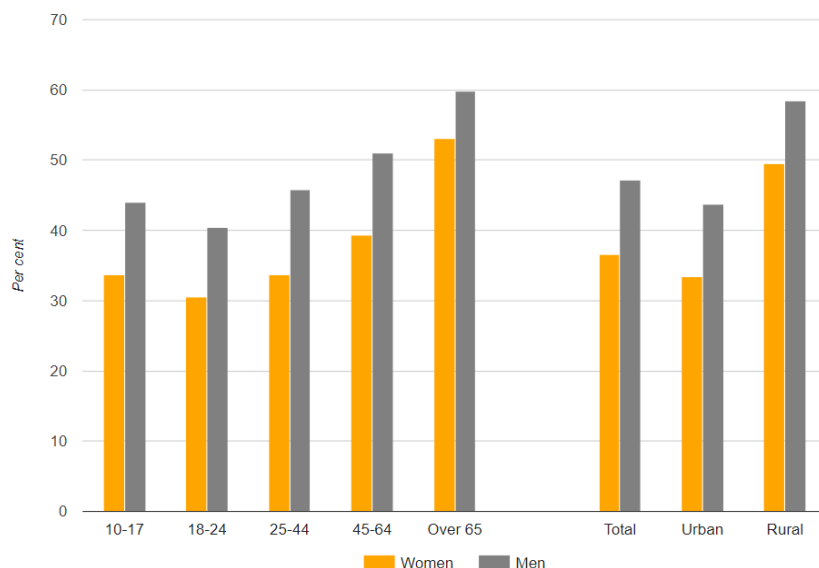
Table: Percentage of women and men in agreement with sexist statements

Statements	Women	Men
“A man’s duty is to earn money; a woman’s duty is to take care of the home and family”	36%	41%
“Women are better for domestic work than men”	67%	69%
“A working mother can form a relationship as warm and safe with her children as a mother who does not work”	60%	58%
“The head of the home must be the man”	37%	47%
“The husband must make the decisions related to the wife’s life”	15%	22%

Source: National Administrative Department of Statistics (DANE), Time Use Survey: 2016—2017.

Furthermore, elderly people and people residing in rural areas tended to be more in agreement with the following statement: “The head of the home must be the man.” To varying degrees, the proportion of men agreeing with that statement was higher than that of women across all age groups, but the proportion of men in agreement was above 40% in all cases (see figure V).

Figure V: Proportion of people in agreement with the statement “The head of the home must be the man” by sex and age group, in urban and rural areas: 2016–2017 (Percentage)

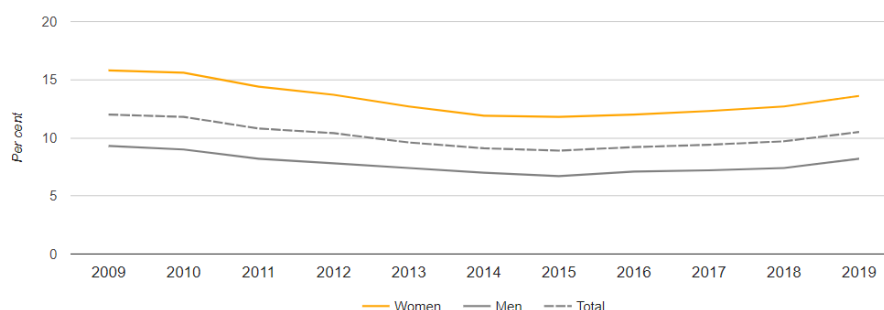


Source: National Administrative Department of Statistics (DANE), Time Use Survey: 2016–2017.

Decisions about which member of the household engages in unpaid work impact the labour market participation of women and men

Time is a scarce resource. During the entire period 2009–2019, the **unemployment rate** among women was higher than that of men, and the gender gap was measured, at its lowest, at 4.9 percentage points during the period 2014–2016. The overall unemployment rate among women did not fall into a single-digit number range during the entire period 2009–2019 (see figure VI).

Figure VI: Unemployment rate by sex: 2009–2019 (Percentage)

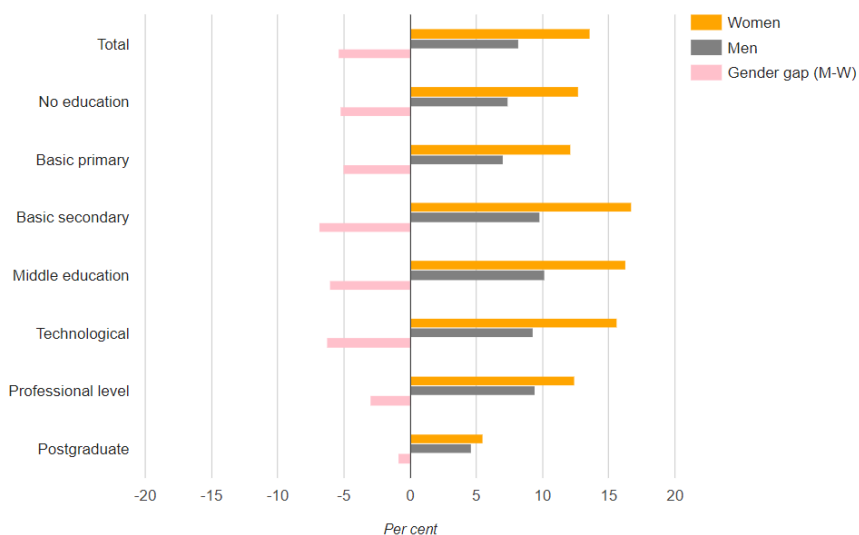


Source: National Administrative Department of Statistics (DANE), Large-scale Integrated Household Survey (GEIH): 2009–2019.

Against this backdrop, younger women and women with middle level education were more affected by unemployment compared to men. Women have a higher unemployment rate than men across all levels of

education, although, in 2019, the rate dropped to 5.5% for women with postgraduate education (see figure VII).

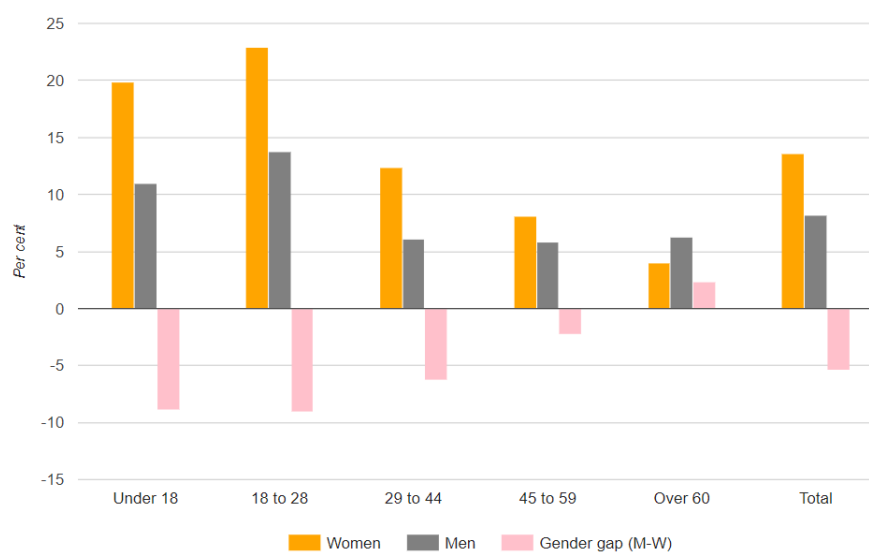
Figure VII: Unemployment rate by sex and education level, including the gender gap: 2019 (Percentage)



Source: National Administrative Department of Statistics (DANE), Large-scale Integrated Household Survey (GEIH): 2009–2019.

Women aged 18–24 were most affected by unemployment, and that age group was also the one with the most significant gender gap against women in the rate of unemployment (see figure VIII).

Figure VIII: Unemployment rate by sex and age group, including the gender gap: 2019 (Percentage)



Source: National Administrative Department of Statistics (DANE), Large-scale Integrated Household Survey (GEIH): 2009–2019.

About the data

Definitions

- **Total workload by sex is the** number of hours spent by women and men in paid and unpaid work each day. Unpaid work includes activities not included in the System of National Accounts (SNA), including the provision of unpaid domestic and caregiving services for the household and family members, as well as volunteer work for other households, the community or organizations.
- **Proportion of people in agreement with sexist statements by sex** measures female and male perceptions about traditional roles and sexist stereotypes through their responses to predefined statements about women and men.
- **Unemployment rate by sex** provides information on the proportion of women and men in the labour force in Colombia (aged 12 and above in urban areas and 10 and above in rural areas) who were unemployed during the reference period.

Coverage and availability

Women and men in Colombia in various age groups, with available data pertaining to 2017 (total workload, attitudes) and the period 2009–2019 (unemployment). Data are further disaggregated by ethnicity (total workload), geographic location (for example, urban versus rural attitudes) and education level (unemployment).

Footnotes

1. Work specialization within households has been a concept in economics since the proposal of the unitary family model by Gary Becker in his paper, "A Theory of the Allocation of Time" (*The Economic Journal*, vol. 75, No. 299, 1965), including the argument of efficiency, later criticized by a number of feminist economists, including Bina Agarwal in her paper, "Bargaining" and gender relations: within and beyond the household", Institute of Economic Growth, University of Delhi.

Methodological note on gender equality in trade [UNCTAD]



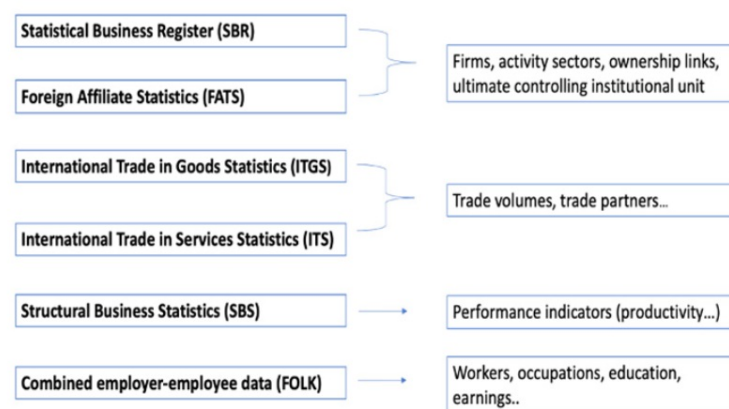
Key points

- Gender inequalities in trade, particularly in multinational enterprises and foreign trading enterprises, can be analysed by linking microdata from multiple statistical sources available in many countries, based on individual and enterprise characteristics such as employment, education, jobs, businesses and trade.
- Based on results of a case study in Finland, women participate in trade less often than men, especially in higher paying occupations.
- In exporting and importing enterprises (two-way trading enterprises) in Finland, the share of women is significantly lower in high-paying occupations, such as managers (19%) and professionals (26%), leaving women less likely than men to be able to fully benefit from economic globalization.
- The gender pay gap in Finland tends to be larger in high-paying jobs provided by foreign multinationals and enterprises that trade internationally and the highest in multinational firms situated in knowledge intensive services.

Background

This narrative provides a blueprint for linking business and social statistics in order to enable an analysis of gender inequalities in trade, particularly in multinational enterprises and foreign trading enterprises. The variables presented are drawn from statistical sources available for many countries, including statistical business registers, foreign affiliate statistics, international trade statistics, structural business statistics and combined employer-employee datasets (see figure I).

Merging data from official statistical datasets and registers enables the enrichment of gender analyses with economic aspects. Assessing gender equality, such as the gender pay gap, in the business sector is facilitated by the availability of indicators disaggregated by firm type and trading status. While most governments are committed to developing a gender-responsive trade policy, effective measures require country-specific indicators¹ in order to obtain a full understanding of gender inequalities in trade.

Figure I: Official statistical data sources and related variables for gender equality in trade analysis

Source: United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), 2020 (correspondence with UNCTAD on 28 May 2020), based on data from Statistics Finland (https://www.stat.fi/index_en.html).

Microdata linking can improve analyses of trade and gender in Europe

Recent work on microdata linking² and trade in goods by enterprise characteristics³ provide a good starting point for operationalizing trade and gender indicators using the UNCTAD conceptual framework⁴ and indicators illustrated in a related Finnish case study.⁵ The findings are in line with research showing that heterogeneous firms have an impact on gendered labour market outcomes,⁶ specifically on the gender pay gap, especially if they are international trading⁷ or multinational enterprises.⁸

Case study from Finland

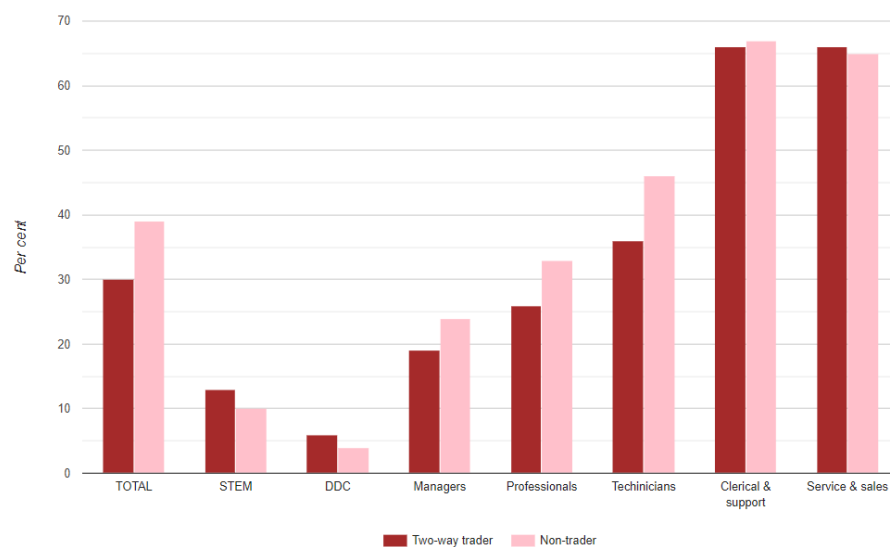
The share of women in high-paying occupations in exporting and importing (two-way trading) enterprises are significantly lower than in non-trading enterprises

In Finland, the shares of women in different occupations in two-way trading and non-trading enterprises reveal that women participate in trade less often than men, especially in higher paying occupations (see figure II). Thus, women in Finland are less likely to be able to fully benefit from economic globalization. Overall, only some 30% of the workforce in two-way trading enterprises are women, compared to 40% in non-trading enterprises.

When merged, data also show that the **gender pay gap** in Finland tends to be larger in high-paying jobs provided by foreign multinationals and enterprises that trade internationally. Independent firms and those belonging to domestic groups provide more equal pay.⁹

More specifically, the largest gender pay gaps are found in multinational firms situated in knowledge intensive services compared to independent firms, domestic groups, domestic multinationals and foreign multinationals in three industries: manufacturing, knowledge intensive services and other activities. Data on the wages of women in these industries can help to direct policy attention and measures to address the largest gender pay gaps.

Figure II: Share of women in selected occupational groups, by two-way trading and non-trading enterprises: 2008—2016 (Percentage)



Source: Statistics Finland, 2020 (https://www.stat.fi/index_en.html)(correspondence with UNCTAD on 28 May 2020).

Note: Data extracted from register-based variables over the period 2008—2016 allows for an in-depth analysis across large comprehensive linked datasets, with full coverage of data on individuals and firms, including variables ranging from individuals' education, occupation, income and gender to business activities, employee structures, wages and salaries, profitability and trade. Timeliness can be improved by using narrower datasets with selected variables only. Two-way trading refers to an enterprise that exports and imports. STEM refers to education on science, technology, engineering and mathematics, and DDC is its subset referring to deep digital competences.

About the data

Definitions

Gender equality in trade indicators measure the preconditions, outcomes and impacts of trade participation for women and men, taking into account their different roles as workers and entrepreneurs, producers and consumers. The indicators require microdata linking of employer and employee datasets to the trading status of enterprises and to various enterprise and individual characteristics to enable in-depth analysis.

Coverage

Female and male employees and employers in domestic, foreign and multinational businesses and enterprises operating in Finland.

Availability

Data provided by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and by Statistics Finland¹⁰ for Finland only.

Footnotes

1. World Trade Organization (WTO), Joint Declaration on Trade and Women's Economic Empowerment, Buenos Aires, 2017 .
2. Eurostat, Micro data Linking — 2019 Edition, 16 December 2019 .
3. Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Trade by enterprise characteristics data .
4. United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), Better data and statistics for gender-responsive trade policy, Policy brief No. 70, October 2018 .
5. Luomaranta H. et al., "The impact of multinational and trading enterprises on gender equality - case Finland", UNCTAD Research Paper No. 45 (UNCTAD/SER.RP/2020/4), May 2020 .
6. Card, D., Cardoso, A.R. and Kline, P., "Bargaining, Sorting, and the Gender Wage Gap: Quantifying the Impact of Firms on the Relative Pay of Women", The Quarterly Journal of Economics, vol. 131, Issue. 2, May 2016 ; Cardoso, A. R., Guimaraes, P. and Portugal, P., "What drives the gender wage gap? A look at the role of firm and job-title heterogeneity", Oxford Economic Papers, vol. 68, Issue 2, 2016 ; Gallen, Y., Lesner, R. V. and Vejlin, R., "The labor market gender gap in Denmark: Sorting out the past 30 years", Labour Economics, 56, 2019 .
7. Boler, E. A., Javorcik, B. and Ulltveit-Moe, K.H., "Working across time zones: Exporters and the gender wage gap", Journal of International Economics, vol. 111, Issue C, 2018 .
8. Vahter P. and Masso, J., "The contribution of multinationals to wage inequality: Foreign ownership and the gender pay gap", Review of World Economics, vol. 155, Issue 1, February 2019 .
9. While similar findings have been made in Estonia
10. Statistics Finland : data could be calculated to different degrees in other countries depending on available statistical data.

Women Heads of State or Government and Government Ministers



Key points

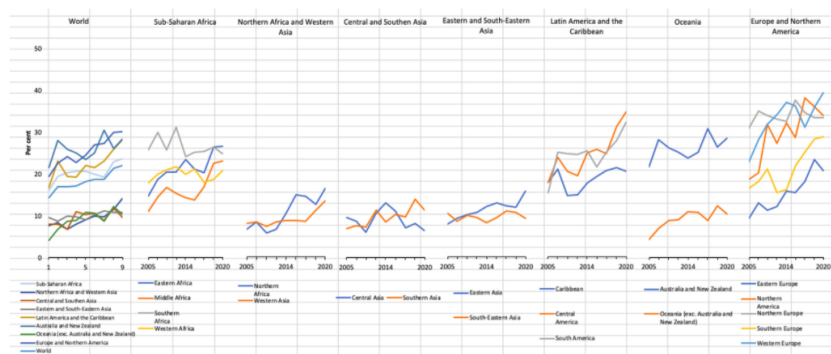
- Women's representation among cabinet ministers has increased almost four-fold over the last 25 years, although in 2020, on average, only one in five ministers (22%) is a woman.
- Progress in women's representation among regions over the past 15 years has been uneven, reaching 39% in Western Europe but only 6% to 16% in Northern Africa, Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand) and Asia.
- While progress in selected countries since 1994 has been significant, and the number of countries with at least 30% of women among ministers increased from 5 to 51, in 2020 gender parity (around 50%) among cabinet ministers has been reached or surpassed in only 14 countries.
- In 2020, female ministers continued to be concentrated in ministries related to family and social issues.
- Very few women get to the top position of power within government. As of 2020, the total number of countries with a female Head of State or Government was 20, a slight improvement over the 12 countries with female Heads of State in 1995; as of 2020, most countries headed by women were in Europe.

Women continue to be underrepresented in cabinet appointments in all regions of the world.

In 2020, the share of women among cabinet ministers was 22%.¹ Although this figure is low, it shows important progress since 1994, when the average share was only 6%.²

Progress among regions over the past 15 years has been uneven: by 2020, the highest level of representation of women among ministers, at 39%, was reached in countries in Western Europe. The share of women among ministers remained low, at 16% or less, in Northern Africa and Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand), and only between 6% and 16% of ministers were women in Asia (all regions) (see figure I).

Figure I: Share of women among ministers by region: 2005–2020 (Percentage)



Source: Compiled and calculated by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Development (UNDESA), Statistics Division, from information available from the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women, Women in Politics (2005, 2008, 2010 editions) and from IPU and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), Women in Politics (2012, 2014, 2015, 2017, 2019 and 2020 editions).

Note: Data as at 1 January of corresponding year.

Progress in selected countries since 1994 has been significant

Between 1994 and 2020, the number of countries with no female minister declined notably, from 59 countries³ to 9.⁴ Over the same period, the number of countries with 30% or more women ministers increased from 5 to 51.

By 2020, gender parity (around 50%) among cabinet ministers has been reached or surpassed in only 14 countries however: Spain (66.7%), Finland (61.1%), Nicaragua (58.8%), Colombia (57.9%), Austria (57.1%), Peru (55.0%), Sweden (54.5%), Rwanda (53.6%), Albania (53.3%), France (52.9%), Andorra (50%), Costa Rica (50%), Canada (50%) and Guinea-Bissau (50%) (closely followed by South Africa (48.3%), Ethiopia (47.6%) and El Salvador (47.1%).

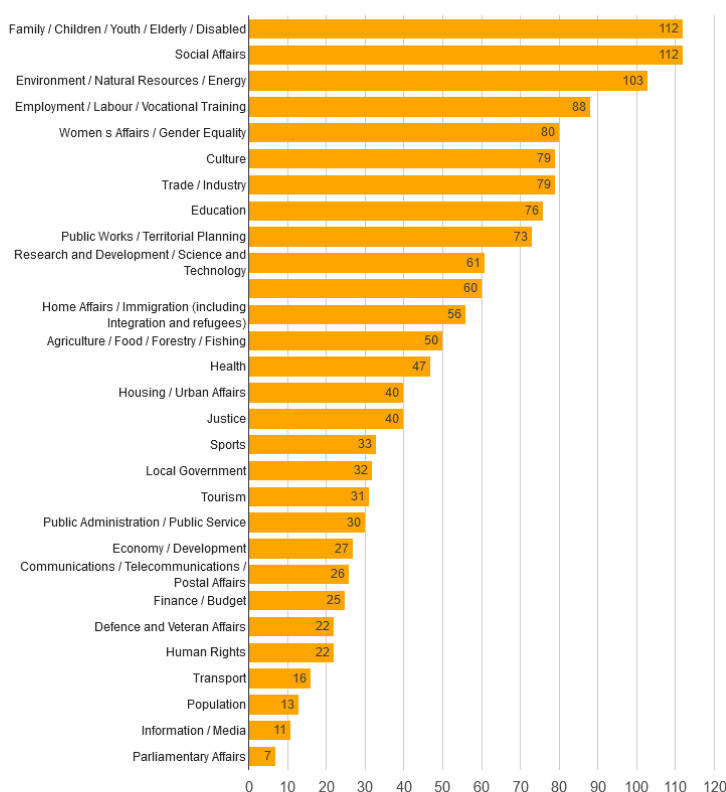
Looking at recent progress, the largest increase in the proportion of women among ministers was in Ethiopia, where the share of women in top positions rose from 10% in 2017 to 47.6% in 2020. At the other end of the spectrum, the greatest decrease in the share of female ministers took place in Slovenia during the same time period, where the proportion fell from 50% to 23.5%.

In 2020, portfolios held by female ministers continued to be those related to family and social issues

In general, women continue to be assigned to portfolios related to social issues, including those related to the family, children, youth, older persons and persons with disabilities and social affairs. Portfolios related to the environment, national resources and energy, employment and labour and vocational training are among the top four ministries led by women. Women's affairs, which includes the gender-equality portfolio, occupy the fifth position. In 2020, fewer female ministers held portfolios related to transport, population, information and the media, and parliamentary affairs (see figure II).

More detailed data available for selected countries⁵ show that, in 2017, the only countries with a 50% representation of women among core ministers of State⁶ were Canada, Norway and Slovenia; women occupy 40% of cabinet positions in Iceland and Sweden.

Figure II: Number of portfolios held by female ministers: 2020



Source: Compiled by UNDESA, Statistics Division, based on data obtained from IPU and UN-Women, Women in Politics (2020 edition) (<https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/03/women-in-politics-map-2020>). Women held a total of 1,451 portfolios in 190 countries.

Heads of State or Government

By holding the highest positions in the political sphere, women can also influence social norms and attitudes towards gender equality. However, very few women get to the top position of power within their government.

As of 1 January 2020, only 10 out of 152 elected Heads of State worldwide were women, and only 12 of 193 Governments were headed by women (see table). The total number of countries with a female Head of State or Government was 20, a slight improvement over the 12 countries with a female Head of State in 1995. In 2020, most countries with female Heads of State were in Europe, which is a change from 2015, when women led Governments in several countries both in Europe and in Latin America and the Caribbean.⁷

Table : Countries with a female Head of State and/or Government by region: as at 1 January 2020

<i>Head of State</i>	<i>Head of Government</i>
Sub-Saharan Africa	
Ethiopia	
Northern African and Western Asia	
Georgia	
Central and Southern Asia	
Nepal	Bangladesh
Eastern and South-Eastern Asia	
Singapore	
Latin America and the Caribbean	
Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Barbados
Trinidad and Tobago	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)
Oceania	
	New Zealand
Northern America and Europe	
Estonia	Belgium
San Marino	Denmark
Slovakia	Finland
Switzerland	Germany
	Iceland
	Norway
	Serbia
	Switzerland

Source: IPU and UN-Women, Women in Politics (2020 edition) (<https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/03/women-in-politics-map-2020>).

Note: Only elected Heads of State have been considered: countries with Kings/Queens/Governors-General or Sultans are excluded in the count of Heads of State.

About the data

Definitions

- **Share of women among ministers:** Percentage of women in the total number of ministers or cabinet appointments. The cabinet, also called the council of government, government or council of ministers, is a group of senior officials who provide executive advice to the Head of State and/or Government.
- **Heads of State or Government:** Number of Heads of State or Government who are women

Coverage

- **Share of women among ministers:** 190 countries with data available for 2020 (all 193 United Nations Member States except the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Haiti and Libya) organized by regional groupings under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) indicator framework.
- **Heads of State or Government:** All countries worldwide.

Footnotes

1. Calculated by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), Statistics Division, based on information from the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), *Women in Politics* (2020 online edition).
2. UNDESA, Statistics Division, *The World's Women 1995: Trends and Statistics*, New York, 1995.
3. Ibid.
4. Countries with no female minister in 2020: Brunei Darussalam, Kiribati, Papua New Guinea, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Saudi Arabia, Tuvalu, Thailand, Vanuatu and Viet Nam.
5. United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) (Statistical Database accessed on 13 June 2020).
6. Core ministries include: Cabinet of the Prime Minister, Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Defence and Ministry of Justice.
7. UNDESA, Statistics Division, *The World's Women 2015: Trends and Statistics*, New York, 2015.

Economic empowerment

Brazil: youth not in education, employment or training (NEET)



Key points

- In Brazil, 23% of young people (30% of young women and 19% of young men) were not in employment, education or training (NEET) in 2018.
- Since 2012, there has been a 15% growth in the proportion of youth classified as NEET, with a much larger increase among young men (25%) than young women (8%), mainly due to an overall increase in unemployment during the same period.
- NEET rates varied across regions within the country, and are lower in more developed regions, including differences by colour/race. Black or brown women had a higher NEET rate (32%) than white women (24%), and double the rate recorded among white men (16%).

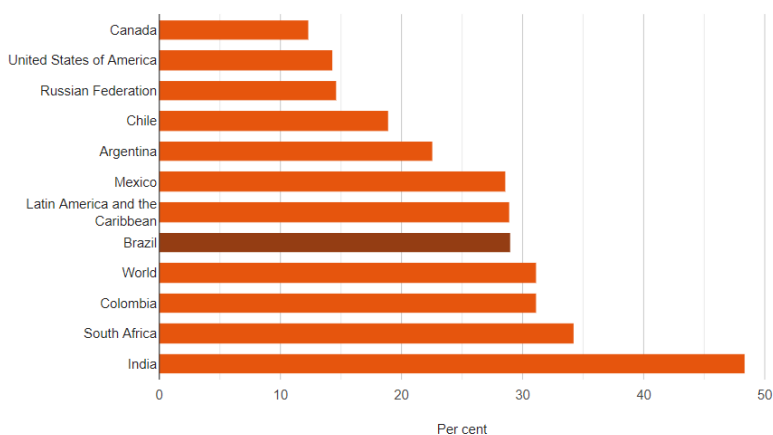
Background

The proportion of young people who are not in employment, education or training (the "NEET rate") is an important indicator for addressing a broad set of vulnerabilities among youth, such as unemployment, early school leaving and a widespread sense of discouragement about finding paid work (so-called labour market discouragement).¹ From a gender perspective, this indicator is crucial for monitoring how upcoming generations of young women are being affected by the traditional challenges faced by women, namely the balance between paid work and unpaid domestic and care work at home, including, for this specific cohort, the impact of the NEET rate on their opportunities to attain higher educational and professional qualifications.

Almost one in four young people in Brazil were in the NEET group, with higher rates recorded for young women than young men

In 2018, there were around 32.4 million people in the youth population (aged 15–24) in Brazil; of that total, 7.3 million people (23%) were included in the NEET group. Young women comprised 49% of the youth population, but 59% of the NEET group. In addition, considering the NEET rate by sex, almost 30% of young women were not employed, engaged in education or training compared to 19% of young men. Estimates provided by the International Labour Organization (ILO) reveal that the Brazilian rate is similar to rates observed for young women globally, but that the rate in Brazil is higher than that in other countries in the same region, such as Argentina (23%) and Chile (19%) (see figure I).

Figure I: Proportion of women (aged 15-24) not in education, employment or training, by selected countries: 2018 (Percentage)



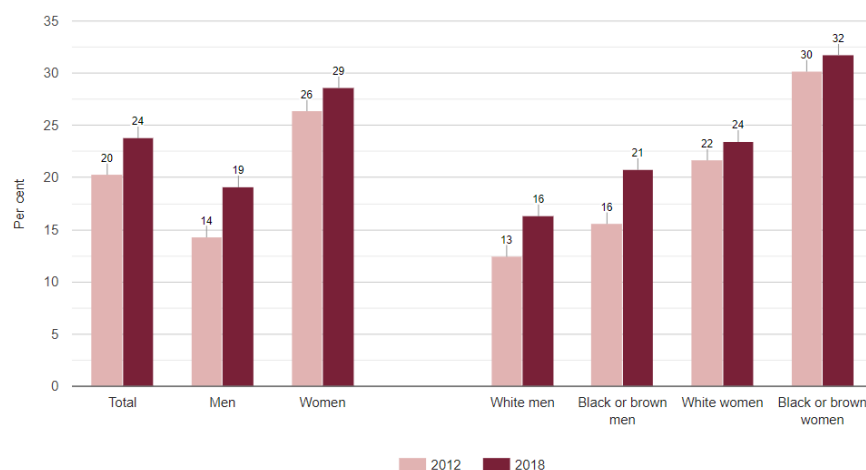
Sources: International Labour Organization (ILO) estimates; and United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), Statistics Division, Global SDG Indicators Database (<https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/database/>) (last accessed on 3 August 2020).

Note: Data refer to 2018 with the exception of data for the Russian Federation (2016), global data (2019) and data for the Latin America and the Caribbean region (2019).

NEET rates varied across regions and/or by colour/race

Because Brazil covers a huge territory, which is highly heterogeneous and socially unequal, further data disaggregation and analysis are crucial for gaining a better understanding of the NEET rate in the country. The difference in NEET rates among regions reaches up to 12 percentage points. In 2018, the proportion of NEET was 29% in the northeast (the least developed region of the country) and 17% in the southeast (a more developed region). In addition to regional differences, black or brown women had a higher NEET rate (32%) than white women (24%), and double that of white men (16%).

Figure II: Share of the population not in employment, education or training by colour/race and by sex in Brazil: 2012 and 2018 (Percentage)



Source: Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics, Continuous National Household Sample Survey (2012 and 2018) (<https://www.ibge.gov.br/en/statistics/social/labor/16833-monthly-dissemination-pnad1.html?=&t=o-que-e>).

There has been a 15% growth in the proportion of the NEET population since 2012,² with a higher rate of increase among young men (25%) than young women (8%), mainly due to an overall increase in unemployment during the same time period (unemployed individuals are considered to be part of the NEET group). The gender difference in NEET rates, which was 12 percentage points in 2012, had decreased to 9 percentage points in 2018, although it remained significantly higher for women (see figure II).

It is important to highlight that carrying out **domestic chores and caring for family** members is historically affected by traditional gender roles, which affect the entry and retainment of women in the labour market. In Brazil, 93% of women and 80% of men over age 14 reported doing some unpaid domestic chores and unpaid care work activities in 2018. Moreover, the amount of this unpaid work done by women and men was also markedly different: on average, 21 hours a week for women and 11 hours for men. Among youth, the inequality in the distribution of this undervalued and unpaid work was even more unfavorable to women: 88% of young women reported carrying out such work versus 67% of young men.

About the data

Definitions

- **The proportion of youth (aged 15–24) in Brazil who are not in employment, education or training (also known as "the youth NEET rate"):** This indicator refers to young people in that age cohort who are not employed and who are outside the educational system, that is, not enrolled in formal/regular education or in training to gain entry to tertiary education or technical education or to obtain professional qualifications.

Coverage

Youth population aged 15–24.

Availability

Data are available from national and subnational indicators.

Footnotes

1. International Labour Organization (ILO), Key Indicators of the Labour Market, ninth edition, Geneva, 2016.
2. Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics, Continuous National Household Sample Survey (which replaced the previous National Household Sample Survey in 2012).

Resource allocation within households and individual poverty [The World Bank]



Key points

- Monetary poverty measures are typically based on consumption data for the household as a whole, rather than for individual household members. However, assumption of equal sharing is not supported by available data and there are significant gender gaps in resource shares within households in some countries.
- In Bangladesh and Iraq, women's estimated resource shares are significantly lower than those of men in households with at least one adult woman and one adult man.
- Gender differences in resource shares translate into gender differences in consumption poverty, with women being poorer than men in countries where they command a lower share of household consumption.

Measuring monetary poverty at the individual level is challenging and there are data gaps in individual consumption patterns of women, men and children living in the same household

How many women, men and children are poor? This is a seemingly straightforward question, but it has no straightforward answer. Monetary poverty measures are typically based on consumption and household surveys, which usually collect consumption data for the household as a whole rather than for individual household members. As a result, individuals are typically classified as poor or non-poor in accordance with the poverty status of the household in which they live, which is an obvious problem if there is inequality in consumption within the household. Measuring differences in consumption between women, men and **children living in the same household** is not an easy task for two main reasons. First, it is very expensive to collect person-level spending on private goods. For example, food is consumed individually, but monitoring individual food intakes is difficult. Second, there are goods with varying degrees of shareability within households, for example, the amount of space occupied in a common dwelling or the use of a shared vehicle. Ascribing a value to services from the use of such goods to each household member is not straightforward, and it is extremely difficult to directly observe the consumption flow to individuals within households.

Individual poverty rates can be estimated through assigned goods spending disaggregated for women, men and children within a household

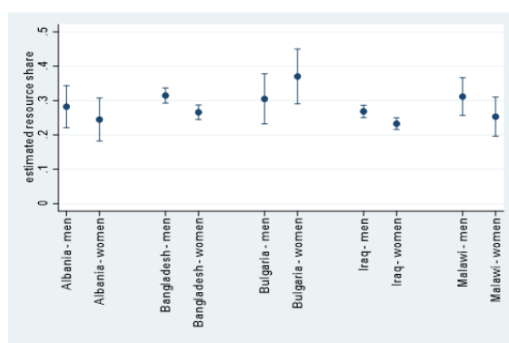
As a result of the data gap in individual consumption, researchers have long sought to estimate how resources are allocated within households by developing structural models of **household decision-making**, based on available survey data, by "assigning" parts of household consumption to individual household members. Such structural models make assumptions on how households and individuals behave. Much of this research has sought to identify the resource share of each person in the household, defined as the fraction of household consumption attributed to a given person. The data requirements of the approach are modest: most methodologies rely on a single "assignable good", typically clothing, that is disaggregated among groups of women, men and children in most household surveys. The combination of this data and the structural model allows for the identification of resource shares of women, men and children in the household. Although the

model uses only data on assignable goods spending relative to total household consumption, the resulting resource shares measure each person's claim on total household consumption.

In Bangladesh and Iraq, women's estimated resource shares are significantly lower than those of men in households with adult women and adult men

In an effort to operationalize model-based estimates of intra-household resource allocation for poverty monitoring, the World Bank partnered with the Institute for Fiscal Studies on a joint project aimed at ascertaining whether or not these methods can be used to estimate intra-household differences in consumption using off-the-shelf national household survey data with consumption modules.¹ The proposed methods were applied to 12 countries on data for clothing, the assignable good, and resource shares and poverty rates of women, men and children were estimated in 5 countries: Albania, Bangladesh, Bulgaria, Iraq and Malawi. The results show that equal sharing, that is, the implicit assumption underlying standard household-level poverty calculations, was rejected by the data, and that there are significant gender gaps in resource shares in some countries. Focusing on households that include at least one adult woman and one adult man, women's estimated resource shares are lower than men's in all countries, except for Bulgaria (see figure I). However, formal testing for gender differences shows that only in Bangladesh and Iraq are women's resource shares significantly different from men's. These gender differences in resource shares translate into gender differences in consumption poverty, with women being poorer than men in countries where they command a lower share of household consumption.

Figure I: Estimated resource shares in Albania, Bangladesh, Bulgaria, Iraq and Malawi, by sex: 2003-2015 (latest available)



Source: Lechene, V., Pendakur, K., and Wolf, A., "OLS estimation of the intra-household distribution of expenditure", IFS Working Paper W20/06, Institute for Fiscal Studies, London, 2020 (<https://www.ifs.org.uk/publications/14748>) and supplementary material (correspondence with the World Bank on 15 May 2020).

Note: The vertical axis shows the share of household resources, both the point estimate and the confidence interval, that are allocated to women and men, holding other observable characteristics fixed at their mean. Estimates refer to a subset of households that include at least one adult woman and one adult man. Based on the Albania Living Standards Measurement Survey 2008, Bangladesh Integrated Household Survey 2015, Bulgaria Multitopic Household Survey 2003, Iraq Household Socio-Economic Survey 2006-2007 and Malawi Third Integrated Household Survey 2010-2011.

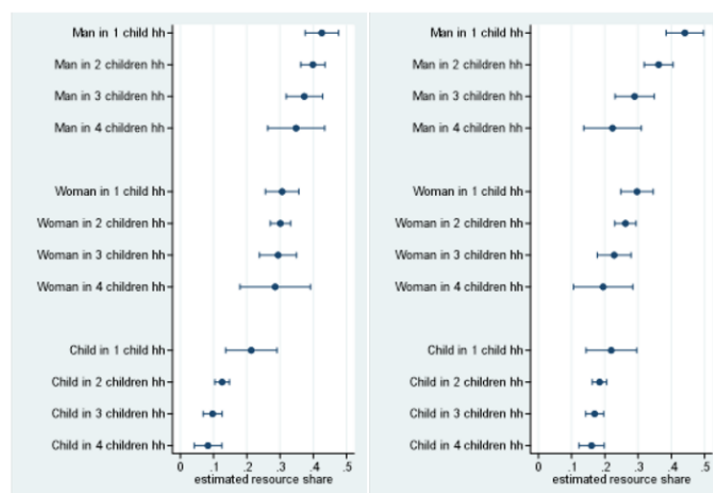
In Bangladesh, irrespective of the good assessed (food or clothing),

women's resource shares are smaller than men's, and this finding is consistent across households of different sizes (from 1-4 children)

To further validate the resource share estimates, a rare feature of the Bangladesh data was used, namely the availability of individual-level food consumption; this information was compared with the estimated resource shares based on food vis-a-vis those obtained from clothing (see figure II). Data show that, irrespective of the assignable good used (food or clothing), women's resource shares are smaller than men's, and this finding is consistent across households of different sizes (for example, differentiating between households with 1–4 children). However, children's resource shares in households with two or more children appear larger, and resource shares of adult women and men in such households are correspondingly smaller if food is used as the assignable good; this finding requires further investigation.

Overall, these results are encouraging and point towards the direction for next steps, that is, further validation of the estimated resource shares using field experiments, in order to move away from the unsatisfactory assumption of equal sharing and towards poverty measures that better reflect realities on the ground.

Figure II: Estimated resource shares in clothing (left) and food (right) allocated to women, men and children, by type of (1-4 children) in Bangladesh: 2015



Source: Lechene, V., Pendakur, K., and Wolf, A., "OLS estimation of the intra-household distribution of expenditure", IFS Working Paper W20/06, Institute for Fiscal Studies, London, 2020 (<https://www.ifs.org.uk/publications/14748>) and supplementary material (correspondence with the World Bank on 15 May 2020).

Note: The horizontal axis gives the percentage of household (hh) resources, both the point estimate and the confidence interval, that are allocated to a woman, man and to each child living in a household with 1-4 children, holding other observable characteristics fixed at their mean. The vertical axis are the types of individuals and household sizes. The share of household resources that goes to children has been divided by the number of children (based on the Bangladesh Integrated Household Survey 2015).

Sources

- Dunbar, G. R., Lewbel, A., and Pendakur, K., "Children's Resources in Collective Households: Identification, Estimation, and an Application to Child Poverty in Malawi", *American Economic Review*, vol. 103, No.1, February 2013

- Lechene, V., Pendakur, K., and Wolf, A., "OLS estimation of the intra-household distribution of expenditure", IFS Working Paper W20/06, Institute for Fiscal Studies, London, 2020

About the data

Definitions

- **Resource share of an individual in a household:** Fraction of household consumption enjoyed by that person

Coverage

Adult women and men and children within households in Albania, Bangladesh, Bulgaria, Iraq and Malawi.

Availability

Data are based on the Albania Living Standards Measurement Survey 2008, Bangladesh Integrated Household Survey 2015, Bulgaria Multitopic Household Survey 2003, Iraq Household Socio-Economic Survey 2006—2007 and Malawi Third Integrated Household Survey 2010—2011 (2003—2015, latest available data).

Footnotes

1. The estimates, summarized in [Lechene, V., Pendakur, K., and Wolf, A., "OLS estimation of the intra-household distribution of expenditure", IFS Working Paper W20/06, Institute for Fiscal Studies, London, 2020](#) , are based on a linear representation of a model proposed by [Dunbar, G. R., Lewbel, A., and Pendakur, K., "Children's Resources in Collective Households: Identification, Estimation, and an Application to Child Poverty in Malawi", American Economic Review, vol. 103, No.1, February 2013](#) . They require the estimation of linear "Engel curves" for the assignable good, something that can be easily done with standard statistical software. An "Engel curve" relates the fraction of the household's budget allocated to a specific good to total household consumption. In addition, the linear representation has the advantage that it provides a simple pre-test to check some of the identifying assumptions underlying the structural model.

Economic empowerment

Canada: gender wage gap



Key points

- Canada's gender wage gap was 13.3% in 2018, an improvement of 5.5 percentage points from 1998.¹
- Between 1998 and 2018, 26.3% of the narrowing in the gender gap came from changes in women's and men's occupations.
- In 2018, 39.7% of the gender wage gap was due to the effect of women and men being employed in different industries, with three high-paying, male-dominated sectors driving the gap in wages: construction; manufacturing; and mining, quarrying and oil and gas extraction. In addition, a significant portion of the gap (9.2%) was the result of women's higher rate of part-time work, which had lower average wages than full-time work.
- About two-thirds of the gender wage gap was driven by unexplained factors, including work experience, or unobservable factors, for example, gender-related biases.

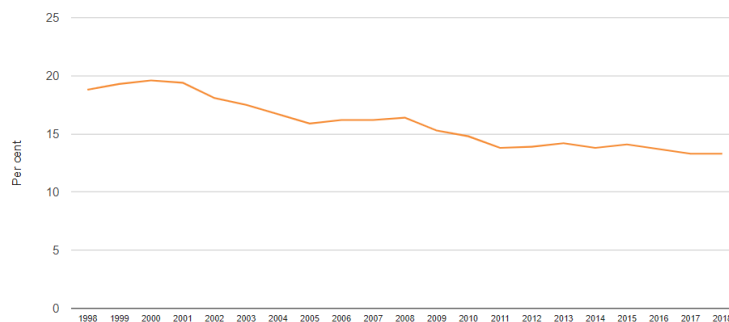
In 2018, women in Canada earned, on average, 87 cents for every dollar earned by men

In Canada, women in the core working ages (ages 25–54) earned an average of \$26.92 per hour in 2018, while their male counterparts earned \$31.05 per hour.² In other words, women earned \$4.13 (or 13.3%) less per hour, on average, than men, or \$0.87 for every dollar earned by men. Understanding the impacts of various factors on the gender wage gap, and its change over time, contributes to broader efforts to monitor the gender-based pay disparity in Canada, and could point the way towards relevant policy interventions.

The gender wage gap showed a long-term decline between 1998 and 2018

As of 2018, the gender gap in hourly wages among employees aged 25–54 was 13.3%, down 5.5 percentage points from 1998 (see figure).

Figure: Gender wage gap among employees aged 25-54 in Canada: 1998-2018 (Percentage)



Source: Pelletier, R., Patterson, M. and Moyser, M., The gender wage gap in Canada: 1998 to 2018, (online publication) October 2019 (<https://www.childcarecanada.org/documents/research-policy-practice/19/10/gender-wage-gap-canada-1998-2018>).

Note: The difference between men's and women's average wages was found to be statistically significant, at a 95% confidence level in all years between 1998 and 2018.

Narrowing of the wage gap has been driven by changes in occupational

distribution

More than half of the narrowing in the wage gap from 1998 to 2018 was attributable to human capital, job attributes, occupation and industry and demographics.³ Changes in men's and women's **occupations** were the largest contributor, explaining 26.3% of the narrowing over the 20 years, as larger shares of women became employed in higher-paying occupations in legal, social, community and government services; education services; and business and finance.

Women's increased educational attainment relative to men's (12.7%), and the decline in the share of men in unionized employment (9.3%), also contributed notably to the narrowing of the wage gap.

Gender differences in industry, in particular the underrepresentation of women in the increasingly highly-paid construction sector, worked against the narrowing trend (8%) in the gender wage gap.

The 2018 wage gap cannot be fully explained

The referenced study by Statistics Canada found that the largest explanatory factor behind the wage gap in 2018 (explaining 39.7% of the gender wage gap) was the fact that women were underrepresented in three high-paying and male-dominated sectors: construction; manufacturing; and mining, quarrying and oil and gas extraction. Differences between the industries in which women and men are employed were also found to have been behind the gap in 1998.

The only other factor explaining the wage gap in 2018 (and in 1998) was women's higher rate of **part-time work**, which tended to pay less than full-time work. This factor accounted for 9.2% of the gap in 2018.

While the above-noted factors were important, they were partially offset by a variety of other factors. As a result, about two-thirds of the gender wage gap in 2018 was unexplained by human capital, job attributes, occupation and industry and demographics. This could be due to factors that were beyond the scope of the study (for example, work experience) or unobservable factors (including gender-related biases). This points to a continued need for analysis in this area, in order to better understand the gender-based wage disparity.

The Statistics Canada study focused on the overall wage gap between men and women in Canada, and differences may exist within population groups, including indigenous or immigrant populations. Future research on the wage gap for diverse population groups could prove valuable in understanding and addressing the wage gap.

The legal framework: the Pay Equity Act (2018)

Pay equity, that is, equal pay for work of equal value to the employer, is a fundamental human right that has been protected under section 11 of the Canadian Human Rights Act since 1977. Under this Act, the burden to file complaints with the Canadian Human Rights Commission about gender-based wage inequality rests with employees.

In December 2018, the Canadian federal Government passed the first proactive pay-equity legislation in the country. Although the Pay Equity Act has not yet come into force, it requires that employers in federally-regulated sectors with an average of 10 employees in a given year develop pay equity plans for their workplaces and take action to address systematic disparities in wages.

About the data

Definitions

- **Gender wage gap** is the difference between the average hourly wages of men and women, expressed as a percentage of men's average hourly wages. The difference in gross hourly earnings between sociodemographic groups can be a partial indicator of the degree of inequality in the labour market. Average hourly wages may differ between some groups for a variety of reasons, including the level of educational attainment, work experience, industry of employment or occupation.

Coverage

Paid employees aged 25–54 at their main job.

Availability

The most recent data on the gender wage gap was made available by Statistics Canada.⁴

Footnotes

1. See [Statistics Canada, Center for Gender, Diversity and Inclusion, The gender wage gap in Canada: 1998 to 2018, October 2019](#).
2. [Statistics Canada, Employee wages by industry, annual, table no. 14-10-0064-01](#).
3. The study focused on [Blinder-Oaxaca decomposition](#), a well-known statistical method used to determine how much of a wage gap between two groups can be explained by various control factors.
4. [Statistics Canada, Average and median gender wage ratio, annual, table 14-10-0064](#).

Use of the Internet and mobile phone ownership among women and men [ITU]



Key points

- Worldwide, the most visible digital divide is the one between women and men, with 58.3% of men and 48.4% of women using the Internet in 2019.
- In regions with a high Internet use penetration, including developed regions and countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, there was only a small difference in Internet usage between women and men (at or below 2%).
- In relative terms, the gender gap among Internet users has grown wider in developing regions, increasing from 15.8% in 2013 to 22.8% in 2019. The largest gap was observed in Central and Southern Asia (51.3%).
- Globally, women are less likely than men to own a mobile phone, with men's ownership being 6.8 percentage points higher than women's, on average.

Background

Globally, digital technologies are transforming ways of living in an unprecedented fashion. Today, the Internet, the most prominent of these digital technologies, is one of the most important tools, if not the most important, in the world. The use of the Internet has a major impact on the economy, helping to raise productivity, enable trade and e-commerce and enhance research and innovation through a more efficient and effective diffusion of ideas.

The social impact of Internet use is equally significant, providing access to a wealth of information, including through social media platforms, and facilitating global communication. The outbreak of the Coronavirus-19 (COVID-19) pandemic has made connectivity even more important, with the shifting of work, education, communication and leisure to online forums for those fortunate enough to have access to the Internet.

Current situation

Use of these technologies is uneven: in 2019, 3.6 billion people, almost half of the world population, did not have access to the Internet.¹ There is a clear digital divide between developed regions, where 86.6% of the population is using the Internet, and developing regions, which have an overall share of 47% in Internet usage. In the least developed countries, only 19.1% of the population is using the Internet.

The most visible digital divide is the one between women and men

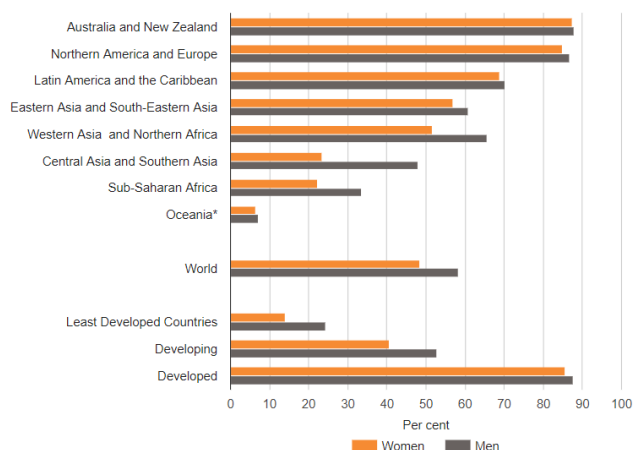
Beyond development status, there are additional digital divides, such as by level of education, skills and geographical location (including urban versus rural), but the most visible is the digital divide by sex. In many places, women have less access to technology and hence use it less than men.

In 2019, 58.3% of men were using the Internet, against only 48.4% of women (see figure I), resulting in a difference of 10 percentage points. In developed countries, there was a small gender gap, with 87.6% of men and 85.6% of women were using the Internet. In developing countries, there was a significant difference between men using the Internet (52.8%) and women (40.7%). Furthermore, the difference in levels of access to the Internet between men (24.4%) and women (13.9%) in the least developed countries was significant.

A similar picture emerges from a regional perspective. In regions with a high Internet use penetration, including Australia and New Zealand, Northern America and Europe and Latin America and the Caribbean, there were only small differences in usage between men and women. In other regions, however, the gaps were substantial, with the exception of Oceania (excluding

Australia and New Zealand) where Internet use was low overall.

Figure I: Internet penetration rate worldwide, including by region, least developed countries and developing and developed regions, by sex: 2019 (Percentage)



Note: *excluding Australia and New Zealand

Source: International Telecommunication Union (ITU), ITU modelled estimates (correspondence with ITU on 22 June 2020).

Note: Penetration rates in figure I refer to the number of women/men that use the Internet, as a percentage of the respective total female/male population.

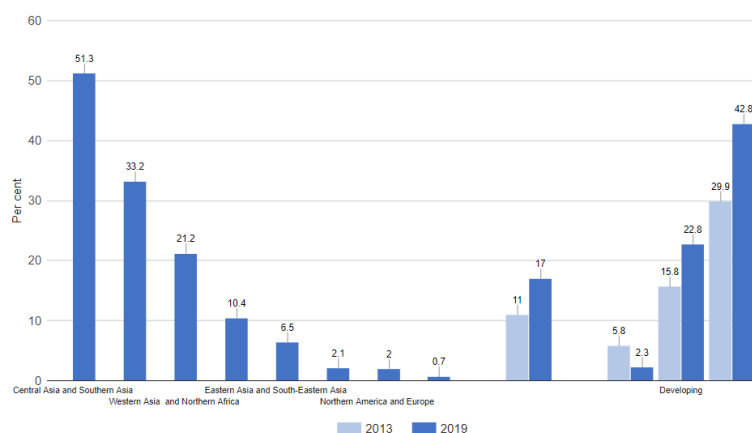
The gender gap among Internet users has grown wider in developing regions

A better way to explore the digital gender divide is to look at the gender gap in relative terms, by dividing the difference in men's and women's Internet use by men's Internet use and multiplying by 100 (see figure II).

The global gender gap among Internet users stood at 17% in 2019, which represented an increase of six percentage points compared with the gap in 2013. The main reason for this increase is a large uptake in use of the Internet by men in developing regions, not matched by an equally large uptake in use by women. In developed regions, the gender gap is disappearing, dropping from 5.8% in 2013 to 2.3% in 2019. In developing regions, on the other hand, the gender gap was estimated to have increased from 15.8% to 22.8%, and in least developed countries from 29.9% to 42.8%.

Data disaggregated at the regional level, available only for 2019, shows that the digital gender gap was markedly high in Central and Southern Asia (51.3%), and substantial in sub-Saharan Africa (33.2%) and Western Asia and Northern Africa (21.2%). As noted above, the gender gap was small in Australia and New Zealand (0.7%), Northern America and Europe (2%) and Latin America and the Caribbean (2.1%).

Figure II: Global gender gap in Internet usage, including by region, least developed countries and developing and developed regions: 2013 and 2019 (Percentage)



Source: ITU, 2020, ITU modelled estimates (correspondence with ITU on 22 June 2020).

Note: The gender gap represents the difference between the Internet user penetration rates for men and women relative to the Internet user penetration rate for men, expressed as a percentage.

Globally, women are less likely than men to own a mobile phone

Ownership of mobile phones is an important tool for reducing gender inequality, and the effect of mobile phone access for women has been shown to accelerate economic and social development. However, globally a gender gap for this indicator is evident.

Among 84 United Nations Member States and territories with latest available sex-disaggregated data for the period 2016–2018, mobile phone ownership among men, on average, was 6.8 percentage points higher than for women (see figure III). In 24 of those countries, more women than men owned a mobile phone, but the gender gap was small; in Chile, however, women's mobile phone ownership was substantially higher than that of men. In 23 of the 84 countries with latest available sex-disaggregated data, men's ownership was more than 10 percentage points higher than women's ownership, reaching as high as 53 percentage points in the Niger and 42 percentage points in Cote d'Ivoire. In most of the countries that had a large gender gap in mobile phone ownership, there was also a large gender gap in Internet usage.

About the data

Definitions

- **Proportion of women and men using the Internet:** Provides information on the proportion of women and men who used the Internet from any location in the last three months, measuring the digital divide between women and men.²
- **Proportion of women and men who own a mobile telephone:** Provides information on the proportion of women and men owning a mobile cellular phone device with at least one active subscriber identification module (SIM) card for personal use (an active SIM card is one that has been used in the last three months).³

Coverage

Women and men in all age groups.

Availability

84 United Nations Member States and territories with latest available sex-disaggregated data for the period 2016–2018 (mobile ownership) and 110 United Nations Member States and territories with latest available sex-disaggregated data (Internet use). Countries and territories are organized by regional groupings under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) indicators framework.⁴

Footnotes

1. [International Telecommunication Union \(ITU\), Measuring digital development: Facts and figures 2019](#) (last accessed on 3 September 2020).
2. [United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs \(UNDESA\), Statistics Division, Global SDG Indicators Database, metadata for Sustainable Development Goals indicators 17.8.1 and 5.b.1.](#)
3. [Ibid.](#)
4. [UNDESA, Statistics Division, Regional groupings under the Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\) indicators framework.](#)

Japan: households with dual incomes and presence of women in non-regular employment

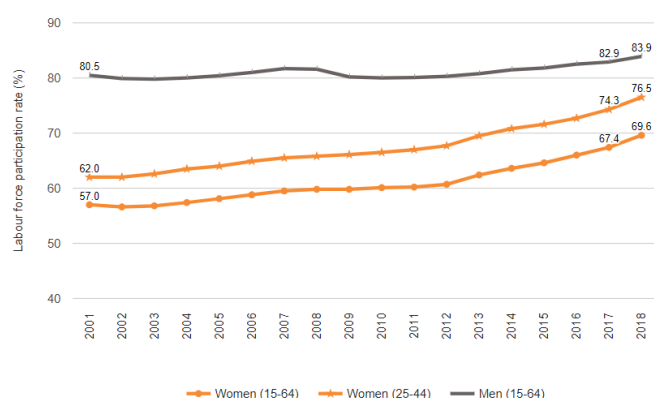


Key points

- Labour force participation rates in Japan have increased since 2001, particularly among women aged 15–64 (70%) and 25–44 years (76%) as of 2018.
- During the period 1980–2018, the share of dual-income households doubled, while the share households with working men and economically inactive women declined by almost half.
- 55.3% of women in dual-income households work as non-regular employees; they constitute 68.1% of total non-regular employees as of 2019.
- Large gender gaps are observed in the responses of women and men aged 34–54 among their reasons for choosing non-regular work, including "working at a convenient time", "supplementing family income" and "handling housework, childcare and nursing care work."
- Although non-regular employment facilitates flexible working arrangements, it is one of the main factors contributing to the gender pay gap in Japan.

In 2015, the Government of Japan passed the "Act on the Promotion of Female Participation and Career Advancement in the Workplace"¹ to promote women's participation in the labour force. Data for 2018 show a significant increase in the female labour force participation rate since 2001, which reached almost 70% among all working-age women (ages 15–64) and 76% among prime-age working women (25–44) and resulted in a gender gap in participation of 14 and 8 percentage points, respectively. These data represent an improvement from 2001, when the gender gap for the two age groups was 23 and 18 percentage points, respectively (see figure I).

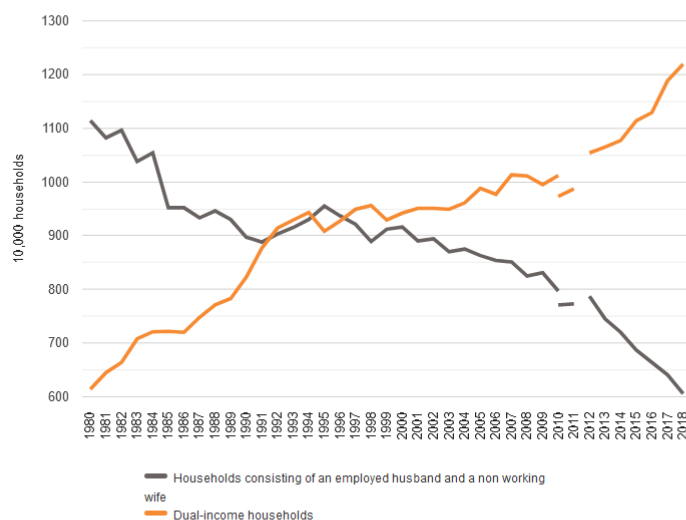
Figure I: Labour force participation rate by sex and age group: 2001–2018 (Percentage)



Source: Government of Japan, Cabinet Office of Japan, Gender Equality Bureau, White paper on gender equality 2019, and Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, Basic Tabulation of the Labour Force Survey, Tokyo, 2019 (correspondence with the Office of Director-General for Policy Planning on Statistical Standards, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, on 1 October 2020) (http://www.gender.go.jp/english_contents/index.html).

The growth in the number of dual-income households since 1980 is evidence of progress in increasing women's participation in the labour force. Over this time period, the number of dual-income households doubled in size while the number of households with working men and economically inactive women fell at the same ratio (see figure II).

Figure II: Number of dual-income households and households with working men and economically inactive women: 1980-2018

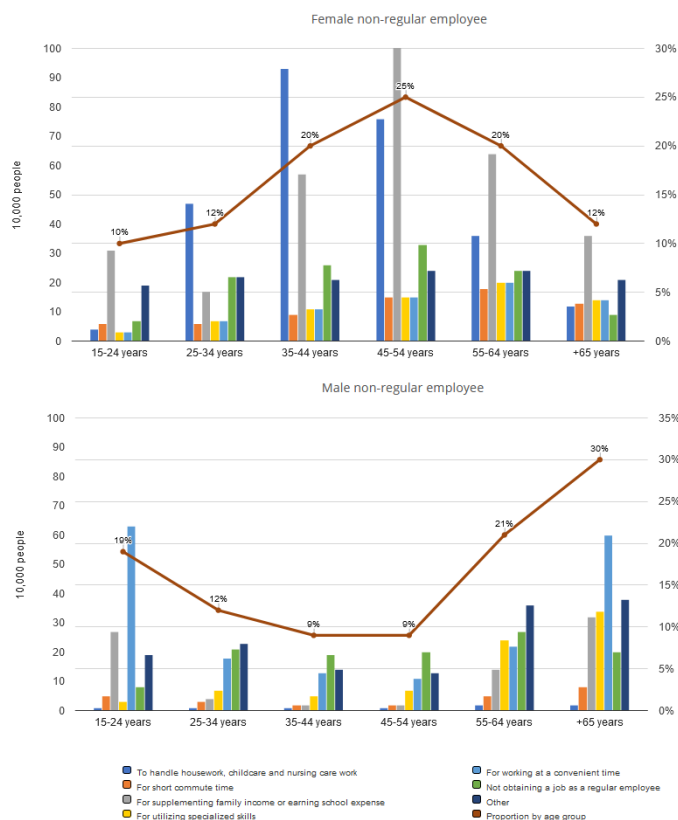


Sources: Government of Japan, Cabinet Office of Japan, Women and Men in Japan 2020, Tokyo, 2020 (http://www.gender.go.jp/english_contents/pr_act/pub/pamphlet/women-and-men20/index.html); data sourced from a specialized survey of the Labour Force Survey and calculated by Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications.

Note: Households consisting of working men and economically inactive women refer to the households in which men are employed in a non-agriculture and forestry sector and women are not employed. Dual-income households refer to the households in which both women and men are employees in the non-agriculture and forestry sectors. Actual numbers in brackets for 2010 and 2011 are nation-wide results, excluding Iwate, Miyagi and Fukushima Prefectures.

Statistics also indicate, however, that 55.3% of women in dual-income households work as non-regular employees.² As of 2019, 68.1% of the total number of non-regular employees were women.³ While the proportion of female regular employees is increasing, it remains at around 44%. In addition, the non-regular employment rate demonstrates opposing trends by sex and age. While the proportion of male non-regular employees reaches the highest point among ages 65 and older (30%), female non-regular employees are generally younger, with the peak observed among those aged 45–54 (25%). Gender gaps are also recorded under “reasons for taking a non-regular employment” (see figure III). The majority of female employees aged 35–54 gave reasons including: “for working at a convenient time”, “to supplement family income” and “to handle housework, childcare and nursing care work”, with significant gender gaps among the reasons given by women and men in the same age group (see figure III).

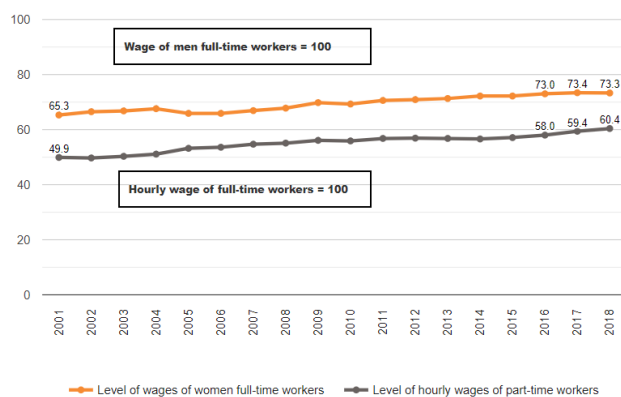
Figure III: Number and percentage of non-regular employees and reasons for taking non-regular employment, by sex and age group: 2019



Sources: Government of Japan, Bureau of Statistics, Labour Force Survey (detailed tabulation) (correspondence with the Office of Director-General for Policy Planning on Statistical Standards, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications on 1 October 2020) (<https://www.stat.go.jp/english/data/roudou/errata.html>).

While non-regular employment allows women to adopt a flexible working style, it is also one of the main factors contributing to the **gender pay gap** (see figure IV). Policies are being implemented to achieve gender equality in the workplace, including the adoption of a plan to promote the transition of working from non-regular to regular employment, the facilitation of **maternity and care leave** and the prevention of sexual harassment in the work place.

Figure IV: Gender pay gap and pay gap between full-time and part-time workers: 2001-2018
(Percentage)



Sources: Government of Japan, Cabinet Office of Japan, Women and Men in Japan 2020, Tokyo, 2020 (correspondence with the Office of Director-General for Policy Planning on Statistical Standards, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, on 1 October 2020) (http://www.gender.go.jp/english_contents/pr_act/pub/pamphlet/women-and-men20/index.html); data sourced from the Basic Survey on Wage Structure and calculated by Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare.

Sources

- Government of Japan, Gender Equality Bureau, Women and Men in Japan 2020, Tokyo, 2020
- Government of Japan, Gender Equality Bureau, White paper on gender equality 2019, Tokyo, June 2019
- Government of Japan, Statistics Bureau of Japan, Labour Force Survey, Tokyo, 2018

About the data

Definitions

- **Proportion of households with dual income:** Share of households in which both women and men work for pay or profit.
- **Proportion of non-regular employees:** Share of workers who are not classified as regular employees in the Japanese Labour Force Survey, and include, inter alia, part-time workers, Arubaito workers⁴ and dispatch workers.

Coverage

Women and men aged 15 and older who live in Japan, with certain exceptions (for example, residents who serve in foreign diplomatic missions).

Availability

Data is derived from the Labour Force Survey, which is conducted monthly.

Footnotes

1. [Act on the Promotion of the Female Participation and Career Advancement in the Workplace, Act No. 64, 4 September 2015.](#)
2. [Government of Japan, Portal of Official Statistics of Japan, Employment Status Survey 2017.](#)
3. [Government of Japan, Statistics Bureau of Japan, Labour Force Survey 2019.](#)
4. [Arubaito, refers to side-workers as a form of employment, Statistics Bureau of Japan, 1997, Employment Structure Survey: explanation of terms \(last accessed on 17 September 2020\).](#)

Income and unpaid work in Latin America: intersection of gender and race inequalities [ECLAC]



Key points

- In 2017–2018, indigenous women in countries with available data in the Latin America and the Caribbean region earned less than women and men of other ethnicities and racial groups, regardless of their education level. Income levels of men were higher in the region than those of women.
- Indigenous people tend to be part of larger households, with an average of 4.7 people per household, compared with an average of 3.9 for those who are neither indigenous nor Afrodescendants. The presence of children in the household often increases the hours of unpaid work, particularly for women.
- The gender gap in the amount of time spent on unpaid work is the largest among indigenous populations. Indigenous women are overburdened by unpaid work culturally assigned to them: in Ecuador and Mexico, indigenous women may spend up to six additional hours per week on unpaid work than non-indigenous women.

Background

As stressed in the Beijing Platform for Action, adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995, it is crucial to take measures to promote opportunities in the development process for women belonging to ethnic and racial minorities and for indigenous women in order to eradicate dimensions of poverty that affect them.¹

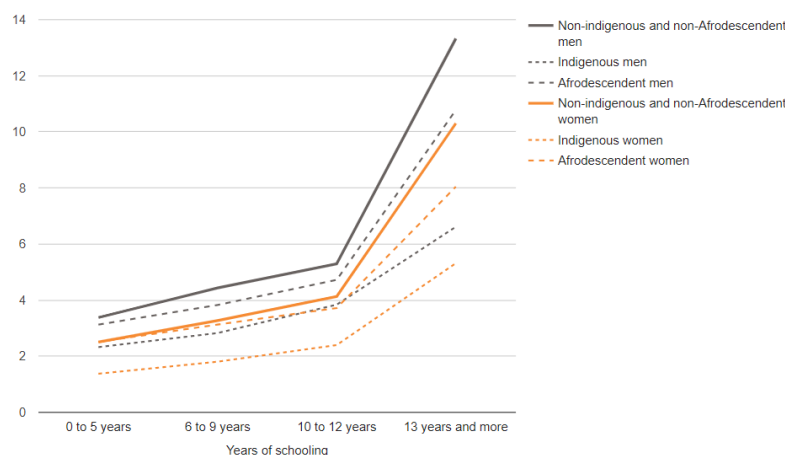
Given that patriarchal cultural patterns and racism are still prevalent in the Latin America and Caribbean region, the intersection of gender, race and indigenous background translates into different levels of income for women and men and people of different races with the same level of education.

Current situation

Gender inequality intersects and is exacerbated by ethnic-racial inequalities²

Data for six countries in the Latin America and Caribbean region for the period 2017–2018 on hourly labour income, disaggregated by sex, ethnicity and race and years of schooling, show that indigenous women have lower income levels, regardless of their education level (see figure I). Although academic achievement is associated with higher income levels,³ other factors play an influential role, including gender: income levels are statistically higher for men than for women — a manifestation of gender inequality. The difference between the wages earned by the most highly educated women and those of their male counterparts is more pronounced when ethnicity and race are factored in: with 13 years of schooling or more, men who are neither indigenous nor Afrodescendants earn the highest incomes, followed by Afrodescendent men, non-indigenous and non-Afrodescendent women, Afrodescendent women, indigenous men and, lastly, indigenous women, who are the most disadvantaged.

Figure I: Hourly income of employed persons in the Latin American and Caribbean region aged 15 or older by sex, years of schooling and ethnicity/race: 2017-2018 (latest available) (International dollars)



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), 2020. Special tabulations of data retrieved from the following household surveys: Pesquisa Nacional por Amostra de Domicílios Contínua (Brazil, 2018), Gran Encuesta Integrada de Hogares (Colombia, 2018), Encuesta de Empleo, Desempleo y Subempleo (Ecuador, 2017), Encuesta de Mercado Laboral (Panama, 2018), Encuesta Nacional de Hogares - Condiciones de Vida y Pobreza (Peru, 2018), and Encuesta Continúa de Hogares (Uruguay, 2018).

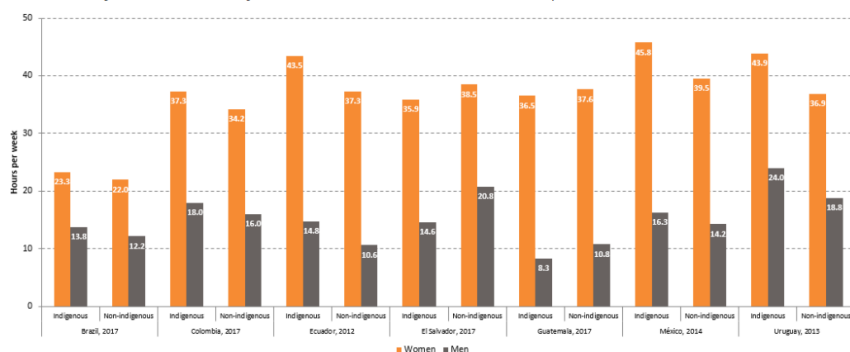
Note: In general, the categories could be associated with the educational levels defined by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The age 0-5 group would correspond to International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) level 1, the age 6-9 group to ISCED level 2, the 10-12 group to ISCED level 3 and the age 13 and older group to ISCED levels 5-8. The data for Brazil, Colombia, Panama, Peru and Uruguay refer to 2018 and the data for Ecuador correspond to 2017. To make monetary amounts from different countries comparable, currency conversions to international dollars have been made based on the purchasing power parities (PPP) (conversion rates between currencies that take into account both exchange rate and price level differences between countries).

In Latin America, the notions of race and ethnicity that are part of the political identity of Afrodescendants and indigenous people have made it possible to create the basis for these populations to self-identify in censuses and surveys, and thus to overcome the statistical invisibility that is another form of discrimination.⁴ Data disaggregated by ethnicity and race have shown that average **fertility rates** for Afrodescendants and indigenous populations are statistically higher than national averages and that of the rest of the population.⁵ Indigenous people tend to be part of larger households, with an average of 4.7 people per household, compared with an average of 3.9 for those who are neither indigenous nor Afrodescendants. The presence of children in the household often increases the hours of unpaid work of women, and also of men, although not by comparable levels.⁶

Traditionally, and from early ages, indigenous women, especially in rural areas, are expected to carry out numerous daily tasks that require a large investment of time, such as caring for members of the family and the community, providing households with basic supplies (fetching water or gathering firewood), caring for animals and collaborating on agricultural work. This burden of **unpaid work** limits women's ability to fully **participate in the labour market**. In addition, as has been well documented, indigenous women, in particular, are overrepresented among the poor and have less access to productive resources and **land ownership**.⁷

Time-use surveys show that the gender gap in terms of time spent on unpaid work is wider within indigenous populations in all countries in Latin America and the Caribbean with available data (see figure II). Indigenous women may spend up to six hours more per week on unpaid work than non-indigenous women, which is the case in Ecuador and Mexico. This underscores the importance of considering the strict gender division of labour in indigenous households, the need for care policies and basic infrastructure to support indigenous families, particularly those living in rural areas, and the barriers to women's economic autonomy. For further information on the intersection of gender, household type and unpaid work, the report on the **impact of unpaid work on the economy of Mexican households** provides in-depth analysis.

Figure II: Time spent on unpaid work by persons in the Latin America and the Caribbean region aged 15 and older by sex and ethnicity: 2012-2017 (latest available) (Hours per week)



Source: ECLAC, 2020, Special tabulations of data retrieved from the following time-use surveys: Módulo en la Encuesta Nacional de Hogares Continua (Pesquisa Nacional por Amostra de Domicílios Continua o PNAD-C) (Brazil, 2017); Encuesta Nacional de Uso del Tiempo (Colombia, 2017); Encuesta Específica de Uso del Tiempo (Ecuador, 2012); Encuesta Nacional de Uso del Tiempo (El Salvador, 2017); Módulo en la Encuesta Nacional de Empleo e Ingresos (Guatemala, 2017); Encuesta Nacional sobre Uso del Tiempo (Mexico, 2014) Módulo en la Encuesta Continua de Hogares (Uruguay, 2013).

Note: In light of the heterogeneous nature of data sources, comparisons between countries are still not possible. The aim of figure II is to show gender differences within each country. In Brazil, indigenous people identified themselves in the survey in accordance with their colour or race. In Colombia, the population was selected according to the cultures, towns or physical features recognized as indigenous. In Ecuador, the population that self-identified as indigenous according to their culture and customs was selected. In Guatemala, indigenous people identified themselves in the survey. In Mexico, indigenous people identified themselves in the survey in accordance with their culture.

About the data

Definitions

- **Hourly income** : Average hourly income of employed persons.
- **Average time spent on unpaid work**: Work done without payment and is measured by quantifying the time a person spends on own-use goods production work, unpaid domestic work, unpaid care of household members and unpaid work for other households or for the community and volunteering.

Coverage

Women and men aged 15 and older in paid and unpaid work in countries in the Latin America and the Caribbean region.

Availability

- **Hourly income**: Data analysis of hourly income (latest available), with data disaggregated by ethnicity/race and by years of schooling, from household surveys conducted in six countries: Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Panama, Peru and Uruguay (2017–2018).
- **Time spent on unpaid work** : Data analysis of time spent on unpaid work (latest available), with data disaggregated by ethnicity, from time-use surveys conducted in seven countries: Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico and Uruguay (2012–2017).

Limitations

Although time-use surveys in the Latin America and the Caribbean region include questions that allow the self-identification of Afrodescendants, each question poses difficulties for analysis for various reasons, including: sample size (Uruguay); lack of cultural relevance of the questions and activities included in the questionnaires (Colombia and Ecuador); and the lack of measuring care as a component of unpaid domestic work (Brazil). With a view to ensuring that the information obtained describes time-use in Afrodescendent populations, race should be a focus of analysis from the design stage of measurement tools and methodologies.

Footnotes

1. Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4–15 September 1995 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II, para. 58 (q).
2. Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Women's autonomy in changing economic scenarios (LC/CRM.14/3), Santiago, 2019 and Social Panorama of Latin America 2016 (LC/PUB.2017/12-P), Santiago, 2017 .
3. ECLAC, Social Panorama of Latin America, 2019 (LC/PUB.2019/22-P/Rev.1), Santiago, 2019 .
4. ECLAC, The social inequality matrix in Latin America (LC/G.26go(MDS.1/2)), Santiago, October 2016 .
5. Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Women's autonomy in changing economic scenarios (LC/CRM.14/3), Santiago, 2019; ECLAC, Situación de las personas afrodescendientes en América Latina y desafíos de políticas para la garantía de sus derechos, Santiago, 2017 ; ECLAC, Afrodescendent women in Latin America and the Caribbean: Debts of equality, Santiago, 2019 ; and ECLAC, Mujeres indígenas en América Latina: dinámicas demográficas y sociales en el marco de los derechos humanos, Santiago, 2013
6. Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Women's autonomy in changing economic scenarios (LC/CRM.14/3), Santiago, 2019 .
7. ECLAC, Mujeres indígenas en América Latina: dinámicas demográficas y sociales en el marco de los derechos humanos, Santiago, 2013 .

Economic empowerment

Mexico: economic impact of unpaid work on households



Key points

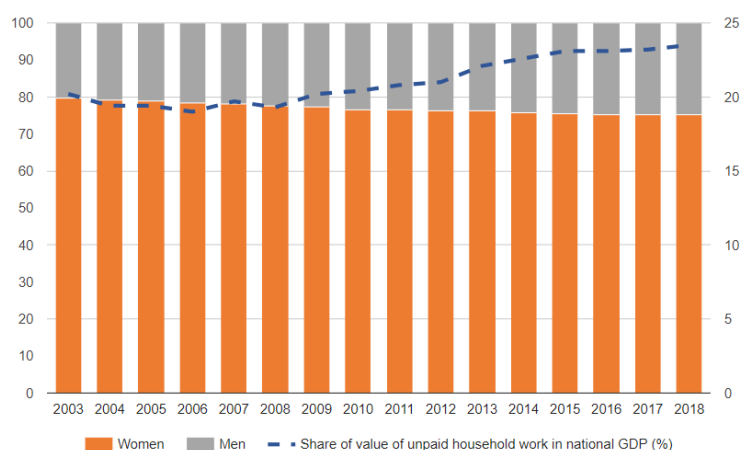
- The value of unpaid domestic and care work in Mexico increased from \$78.8 billion in 2003 to \$274.2 billion in 2018, accounting for 23.5% of Mexico's gross domestic product in 2018.
- In Mexico, women work a total of 10 hours a day, on average, while men work 8.1 hours. Women also dedicate more hours to unpaid domestic and care work, spending an average of 37.9 hours per week, while men spend 14.9 hours per week on unpaid domestic and care work.

Economic valuation of unpaid domestic and care work

In the context of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action at the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995,¹ it is informative to examine the evolution of unpaid domestic and care work in Mexican households. In terms of monetary value, the contribution to the national GDP made by unpaid services provided by households, increased from \$78.8 billion in 2003 to \$274.2 billion in 2018. The value of unpaid domestic and care work expressed as a share of GDP, which remained above 20% over a 10-year span, accounted for 23.5% of GDP in 2018 (see figure I).

Although these unpaid activities are not traded in the economy, the estimate of their monetary value (23.5% of GDP in 2018) is comparatively larger than the GDP generated by sectors of the Mexican economy such as commerce (18.8%) and the manufacturing industry (17.3%). The value of unpaid work of Mexican women alone (who carry out 75.1% of the total unpaid work of Mexican households), represents 17.7% of the national GDP, a higher share than manufacturing. The dedicated story on [unpaid work and total work burden](#) provides more information on this subject.

Figure I: Proportion of unpaid domestic and care work undertaken by women and men and share of unpaid work in the gross domestic product of Mexico: 2003–2018



Sources: National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI), *Unpaid Household Work: Satellite Account of Mexico 2018*, Mexico, 2019.

Unpaid household work, by whom, for whom

By adding up the total of paid and unpaid work performed by the entire population, it is evident that Mexican women have a larger total amount of the workload compared to Mexican men, since for every 10 hours worked by women, men worked only 8.1 hours. Women dedicate more hours to unpaid domestic and care work: in 2018 they spent an average of 37.9 hours per week, which in some cases represented a second working day per week for women with a paid job, which, on average, took up to 41.3 hours a week. In contrast, men spent 53.6 hours on paid work and only 14.9 hours on unpaid domestic and care work.

In terms of specific unpaid activities, women also carried out the bulk of those tasks, food preparation being the activity that represented the highest burden, taking up 31.3% of the total amount of weekly time. Time spent on general health care provided to household members represented 18.2% of women's time per week, while also representing the most important economic contribution (see figure II).

Figure II: Distribution of weekly hours and economic value of unpaid domestic and care work done by women and men by type of function: 2018 (Percentage)



Source: INEGI, Unpaid Household Work: Satellite Account of Mexico 2018, Mexico, 2019.

Taking into consideration the average economic value of unpaid household work per person in 2018, each Mexican woman contributed the equivalent of \$2,959 annually to the household, a figure roughly equivalent to 1.8 times the national minimum wage (\$1,600). While women's contribution in terms of unpaid household work varies according to their sociodemographic characteristics, location and family composition (see table), their contribution is consistently larger than that of men. The dedicated stories submitted by [Colombia](#) and the [Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean](#) provide additional information on this topic.

In addition, in order to analyse the subject in detail, several studies have been carried out, including the measurement of unpaid domestic work relative to the population under age 12. Around 8.8 million girls and boys between ages 5 and 11 carry out unpaid household domestic and care activities. In 2018, girls spent an average of 4.2 hours per week on these activities, while boys spent 4.0 hours per week, which shows that socially assigned roles begin from as young as 5 years of age, when girls are charged with greater responsibility for domestic and care work than boys. In terms of monetary value, this means that each girl between the ages of 5 and 11 works for the equivalent of \$299 per year.

Another contribution derived from these studies is the simulator of the economic value of domestic and care work, a tool intended to contribute to the understanding of the economic importance of unpaid household work in contributing to the well-being of the household and its members, based on the acknowledgement of the value that individuals contribute through daily domestic and care work.

Table: Number of hours and annual economic value of unpaid domestic and care work done by women and men, by socioeconomic factors, education and age group: 2018

Women				Men			
National average							
2 049				750			
2 959				1 111			
Annual hours				Annual hours			
Annual economic value (\$)				Annual economic value (\$)			
Place of residence							
Urban	Rural			Urban	Rural		
1 999	2 220			783	641		
2 896	3 175			1 152	977		
Presence of children under age 6 in the household							
With children under 6 years old	Without children under 6 years old			With children under 6 years old	Without children under 6 years old		
2 625	1 790			846	712		
3 785	2 589			1 271	1 048		
Marital situation							
Single	Married or in-union	Separated, divorced or widowed		Single	Married or in-union	Separated, divorced or widowed	
1 142	2 614	1 797		671	782	902	
1 655	3 780	2 568	Annual hours	972	1 181	1 263	Annual hours
Annual economic value (\$)				Annual economic value (\$)			
Age group							
12 - 19	20 - 39	40 - 59	60 and more	12 - 19	20 - 39	40 - 59	60 and more
1 114	2 407	2 283	1 768	641	810	755	749
1 600	3 545	3 273	2 448	942	1,212	1 129	1 071
Level of education							
Without education or incomplete primary education	Completed primary or incomplete secondary education	Completed secondary education	Some years of high school education	Without education or incomplete primary education	Completed primary or incomplete secondary education	Completed secondary education	Some years of high school education
1 997	1 904	2 292	2 009	590	653	759	862
2 807	2 738	3 330	2 936	879	975	1 130	1 269
Annual hours				Annual hours			
Annual economic value (\$)				Annual economic value (\$)			

Source: INEGI, Unpaid Household Work: Satellite Account of Mexico 2018, Mexico, 2019.

Unpaid health care, a support to the health system

In an analysis of data series from 2003 to 2018, there is an observable shift in the health services offered by the market to the household sphere. Although health services in Mexico have been increased to meet the needs of the sick, they have also been complemented, to a significant degree, by an increase in unpaid household care.

In 2018, the total amount of time spent in providing unpaid health care amounted to more than 5,656 million hours, 68.5% of which were spent within the household (on temporary care, preventive care and specialized care), and the rest as support to other households, either directly or through non-profit organizations providing health-care services. Within households, care for the chronically ill or those with disabilities took up 27.8% of the time. Of the total proportion of unpaid work, 69.0% was carried out by women and 31.0% by men; the majority of care provided by women within the household was specialized care, while men mainly handled preventive care.

The economic value of unpaid health care amounted to \$18.8 billion in 2018, equivalent to 1.6% of national GDP. Had families been obliged to hire a person to provide health care for their members in need, for every \$100 spent, about \$50 would have been spent on members with disabilities or chronic illness; \$22 to provide health assistance to members with a temporary health-related condition (flu, cough or headache) or on a preventive basis, and the remaining \$28 to help other households and/or as volunteer work for health-care related non-profit organizations.

Measuring and valuing unpaid household domestic and care work and acknowledging the greater burden of those activities on women than men, help to provide an integral view into the total contribution of women to the economy and the well-being of households in Mexico.

In this context, the national Supreme Court of Justice concluded that "the economic contribution of unpaid household domestic work represents monetary savings, because to obtain the same level of well-being in the household without doing such work would imply the payment of large amounts of money".

Sources

- National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI), System of National Accounts of Mexico. Unpaid Household Work Satellite Account of Mexico 2018, Mexico, 2019.
- INEGI, National Survey on Time Use (ENUT) 2014, Basic tables, Mexico, 2015.
- Mexico, Supreme Court of Justice, Direct protection in review 1754/2015 (Spanish original).

About the data

Definitions

- **Time spent on unpaid work:** Includes time spent on unpaid domestic chores such as cleaning or cooking; unpaid care work entails taking care of others, including childcare, help to other households and volunteer work.
- **Total work burden:** Total of time spent on paid and unpaid work.
- **Paid work:** Work-related activities in formal or informal employment, carried out for pay or profit.
- **Value of unpaid work:** Amount of money² that a particular unpaid activity (for example, childcare) would cost in the market. It can also be expressed as a share of gross domestic product (GDP).

Coverage

Population carrying out unpaid work in Mexico: women aged 12 and older in selected population groups.

Footnotes

1. Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4–15 September 1995 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annexes I and II.
2. In all cases throughout the indicator, amounts of money are given in United States dollars (\$).

Italy: gender differences and trends in reading as a leisure activity



Key points

- The gender gap in reading books as a leisure activity among the adult population aged 18 and over has consistently been in favour of women over the past two decades (1998–2019).
- The inclination to read books is affected by an individual's level of education, increasing with each level of educational attainment for both women and men across all age groups.
- Among children and young people aged 6–17, more girls than boys read at least one book in their free time.
- More men than women read newspapers, and gender differences are also observed in the proportions of women and men reading newspapers online and reading digital publications, including electronic books (e-books).

Background

Reading is a significant gauge of overall well-being and social development, and reading for pleasure, in particular, can play a vital role in improving educational outcomes, increasing empathy, improving relationships with others, reducing symptoms of depression and improving well-being throughout life. In contemporary society, the spread of technological means of communication (such as social networks) may mean that there is little time or desire left for reading.

It is important therefore to survey trends in reading as a leisure activity, taking into account the impact of new technologies, including the evolution of dedicated devices, new standards of publication (portable document format (pdf) or electronic publications) and digital (e-book) lending.

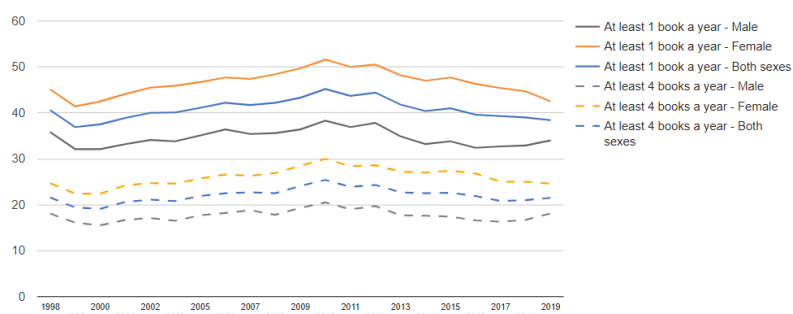
Current situation

In Italy, as in many other countries, there has been a growing disaffection with reading as a pastime over the course of recent decades, although there are evident gender differences in reading patterns and preferences based on the type of media, for example, books, e-books, newspapers or reading on the web.

Gender disparities in reading habits among the adult population aged 18 and over persist when it comes to reading books as a leisure activity

In Italy, in 2019, 38.4% of the adult population aged 18 and over read at least one book a year (see figure I). The gender gap, which, since the end of the 1980s, has shown that women are more inclined than men to read books, was confirmed in the 2019 ISTAT survey, which showed that the proportion of female readers aged 18 and over was 42.5%, almost 9 percentage points higher than men. This gap shows no signs of changing over time (it was 9.3 percentage points in 1998), exceeding 13 percentage points over the period 2009–2016. It is worth noting, however, that the gap is slightly narrower (6.5 percentage points) when considering the reading of four or more books in a year.

Figure I: Women and men aged 18 and over who had read at least one book a year in their leisure time: 1998-2019 (Per 100 persons aged 18 and over with the same characteristics)

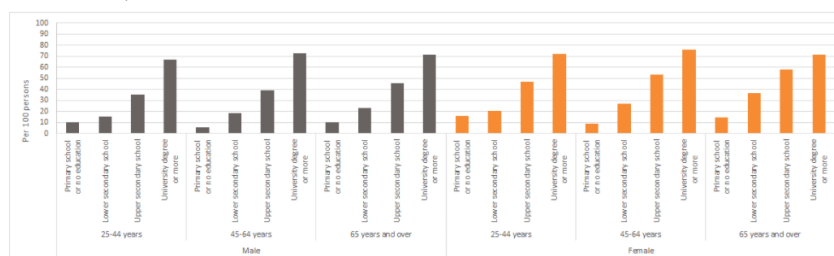


Source: National Statistical Institute (ISTAT), Multipurpose Survey on Households: Aspects of Daily Life.

The tendency to read books grows with increased educational attainment

People with higher levels of educational attainment read more, and the more educated a population the more likely it is that increased time spent in reading will be observed; this holds true for women and men in all age groups. At all levels of education, however, women read more than men (see figure II).

Figure II: Persons aged 25 and older who had read at least one book a year in their leisure time by sex, age group and level of education: 2019 (Per 100 persons aged 25-65 and older with the same characteristics)



Source: ISTAT, Multipurpose Survey on Households: Aspects of Daily Life.

Among children and youth aged 6-17, more girls than boys had read at least one book a year in their free time

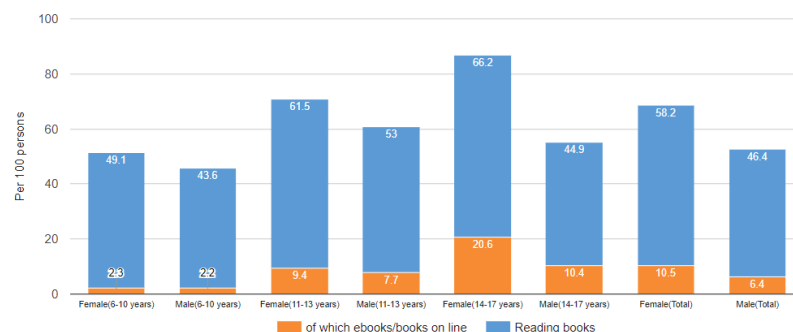
Many studies focusing on **young people** agree about the importance of reading, starting from childhood. Reading for pleasure makes an enormous difference to children's educational performance: children who read for enjoyment every day not only perform better in reading tests, they also develop a broader vocabulary, increased general knowledge and a better understanding of other cultures.

In Italy, during 2018–2019, around 3.6 million children and young people aged 6–17 (52.1%) had read at least one book in their free time during the past year: 46.9% had read up to 3 books (weak readers), 40.7% had read 4 to 11 books (average readers); and 12.5% had read 12 or more books (strong readers).

Even among the very young, more girls than boys stated that they had read at least one book in their free time (58.2% of girls versus 46.4% of boys) (see figure III). Furthermore, among girls, the proportion of those who had read e-books or books online was higher (10.5% of girls versus 6.4% of boys). For girls, the highest percentage of readers was recorded between ages 14–17

(66.2%), for boys, between ages 11–13 (53%).

Figure III: Girls and boys and young women and men aged 6-17 who had read at least one book a year in their leisure time by age group: 2018-2019 (Per 100 persons aged 6-17 with the same characteristics)

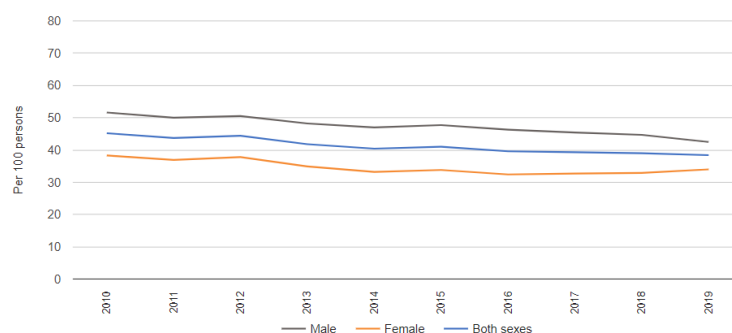


Source: ISTAT, Multipurpose Survey on Households: Aspects of Daily Life.

On average, men read newspapers more than women

Men are more likely to read newspapers than women: in 2019, 44.5% of males versus 33.6% of women read a newspaper at least once a week. However, over the course of the past 20 years, the gender gap has narrowed, from over 17 percentage points in 1998 to around 11 percentage points in 2019.

Figure IV: Women and men aged 18 and over who read newspapers at least once a week: 1998-2019 (Per 100 persons aged 18 and over with the same characteristics)



Source: ISTAT, Multipurpose Survey on Households: Aspects of Daily Life.

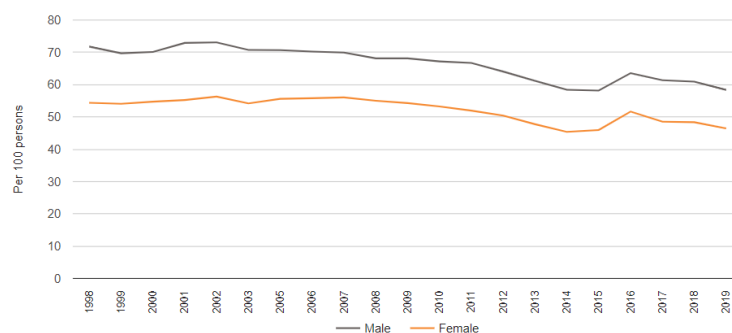
Digital reading is characterized by limited gender differences, with the highest rates of reading among young girls

Overall, despite the wide scope of reading opportunities offered by new technologies, a disaffection with reading as a pastime is pervasive in all sectors of the population, and it is not yet clear whether the digital revolution and the availability of e-books might bring about a renewed interest in reading. In 2018, only 8.4% of the population aged 6 and over (20.6% of readers, a total of about 4.8 million people) stated that they had read an e-book and/or a digital book available online. According to available data, girls read more digital books than boys and more than the older female and male population, although reported gender differences are not significant.

There has been a marked decrease in the reading of print edition newspapers in the past 20 years, only partially mitigated by

the increase in the viewing of newspaper content online. In 1998, 62.7% of the population aged 18 and over read newspapers at least once a week, a share that had dropped to 38.9% in 2019. There has been a modest recovery in readership due to the interest in online products (which was 32.5% in 2019), which has brought total newspaper readership (both paper and digital) to 52.2%, or 46% for women and 58% for men, resulting in a gender gap of 12 percentage points in 2019 (see Figure V).

Figure V: Women and men aged 18 and over who read newspapers or online newspapers at least once a week: 1998-2019 (Per 100 persons aged 18 and over with the same characteristics)



Source: ISTAT, Multipurpose Survey on Households: Aspects of Daily Life.

About the data

Definitions

- **Reading behaviour:** Includes the proportion of the population that reads at least one book a year, and the proportion of the population that reads newspapers at least once a week

Coverage

Population aged 6 and older living in households and resident in Italy

Availability

The main data source for reading behaviours and other related information is the Multipurpose Survey on Households: Aspects of Daily Life produced by the National Statistical Institute (ISTAT) of Italy.¹ The survey collects basic information on individuals and daily household life and provides valuable information on the habits and problems faced by people in Italy in everyday life. The survey, which has been carried out on an annual basis since 1993, provides estimates at the national, regional and municipal levels.

Footnotes

1. National Statistical Institute (ISTAT), Multipurpose Survey on Households: Aspects of Daily Life, 31 March 2020 .

Ratification of international agreements on equal remuneration and on equal rights in employment and discriminatory laws and regulations at the national level



Key points

- As of 2020, 173 United Nations Member States and territories (93%) have ratified ILO Convention No. 100 on equal remuneration for women and men workers, and 175 Member States and territories (94%) have ratified ILO Convention No. 111 against discrimination in the field of employment and occupation.
- A number of least developed countries, small island developing States and territories and the United States of America have not ratified ILO Convention No. 100 and/or ILO Convention No. 111.
- National laws and regulations may not adequately protect women from discrimination in employment nor guarantee equal remuneration for women and men. As of 2020, in 33 out of 188 (18%) countries and territories with available data, laws do not "prohibit discrimination in employment based on gender" nor "mandate equal remuneration for work of equal value".¹ In 26 out of those 33 countries and territories discriminatory laws exist, despite their having ratified ILO Convention No. 100 and/or ILO Convention No. 111.

Background

Over 60 years ago, the International Labour Conference adopted two international conventions aimed at promoting gender equality in employment, ILO Convention No. 100, in 1951, and ILO Convention No. 111, in 1958. By ratifying ILO Convention No. 100, countries declare their commitment to gender equality in the workplace and to the adoption of national policies that ensure "the application to all workers of the principle of equal remuneration for men and women workers for work of equal value",² including addressing the **gender pay gap** and eliminating biases determining the value of women's and men's work. By ratifying ILO Convention No. 111, countries declare their determination to ensure "equality of opportunity and treatment in respect of employment and occupation"³ through the elimination of any direct or indirect discrimination, including on the basis of sex.

A number of least developed countries, small island developing States and territories and the United States of America have ratified neither ILO Convention No. 100 nor ILO Convention No. 111

Globally, as of 2020, 173 Member States and territories (93%) have ratified ILO Convention No. 100 and 175 Member States and territories (94%) have ratified ILO Convention No. 111 against discrimination in the field of employment and occupation.

A total of 14 Member States and territories have not ratified ILO Convention No. 100, including four least developed countries (Liberia, Myanmar, Somalia and Tuvalu), five small island developing States and territories (the Cook Islands, the Marshall Islands, Palau, Tonga and Tuvalu)⁴ and one developed country (the United States of America). Four of those 14 Member States are in Western Asia and Northern Africa and five are in Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand).

A total of 12 Member States and territories have not ratified ILO Convention No. 111, including two least developed countries (Myanmar and Tuvalu), five small island developing States and territories (the Cook Islands, the Marshall Islands, Palau, Tonga and Tuvalu) and two developed countries (Japan and the United States). Five

of those 12 Member States are in Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand) and five in Eastern and South-Eastern Asia (see table).

Table: Member States and territories that have not ratified ILO Convention No. 100 and/or ILO Convention No. 111: 2020

<i>Member States that have not ratified ILO Convention 100 on equal remuneration for women and men workers</i>	<i>Member States that have not ratified ILO Convention 111 on discrimination in the field of employment and occupation</i>
Bahrain, Brunei Darussalam, Cook Islands, Kuwait, Liberia, Marshall Islands, Myanmar, Oman, Palau, Qatar, Somalia, Tonga, Tuvalu, United States of America	Brunei Darussalam, Cook Islands, Japan, Malaysia, Marshall Islands, Myanmar, Oman, Palau, Singapore, Tonga, Tuvalu, United States of America

Source: ILO, Information System on International Labour Standards (NORMLEX), Ratifications by country (last accessed on 31 August 2020) (<https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/?p=NORMLEXPUB:11001:0::NO::>).

Note: Countries are colour-coded in line with the following regional groupings under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) indicator framework: Europe and Northern America, Eastern and South-Eastern Asia, sub-Saharan Africa, Oceania (excl. Australia and New Zealand), Northern Africa and Western Asia.

National laws and regulations may not always ensure gender equality in employment

In several parts of the world, however, laws and regulations currently in force do not adequately protect women from discrimination in employment nor guarantee equal remuneration for women and men. As of 2020, in 33 out of 188 (18%) countries and territories with available data, laws neither "prohibit discrimination in employment based on gender" nor "mandate equal remuneration for work of equal value",⁵ despite the fact that 26 of those countries and territories have ratified ILO Convention No. 100 and/or ILO Convention No. 111. Among these 33 countries and territories with discriminatory laws, Brunei Darussalam, the Marshall Islands, Myanmar, Palau and Tonga have ratified neither ILO Convention No. 100 nor ILO Convention No. 111.

Even when protective legislation exists, this does not always mean that women and men enjoy **equal rights** to/at work. **Discriminatory attitudes** on the part of both women and men towards women's employment may also contribute to unfair treatment of women and impede gender equality in employment.

About the data

Definitions

- **Qualitative indicator 1:** Whether International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention No. 100 (Equal Remuneration Convention)⁶ has been ratified or not.
- **Qualitative indicator 2:** Whether ILO Convention No. 111 (Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention)⁷ has been ratified or not.

These qualitative indicators provide information about whether a country or territory has ratified ILO Convention No. 100 and/or ILO Convention No. 111.

Coverage

187 United Nations Member States and territories (2020).⁸

Availability

Data on the ratification of ILO Convention No. 100 and ILO Convention No. 111 is provided through the ILO Information System on International Labour Standards (NORMALEX).⁹

Footnotes

1. The World Bank, Women, Business and the Law, table 1.1, Washington, D.C., 2020 (last accessed on 13 April 2020) .
2. ILO Convention No. 100, article 2 (accessed on 13 April 2020) .
3. ILO Convention No. 111, article 2 (accessed on 13 April 2020) .
4. For statistical purposes, Tuvalu is categorized as both a least developed country and a small island developing State .
5. The World Bank, Women, Business and the Law, table 1.1, Washington, D.C., 2020 (last accessed on 13 April 2020) .
6. International Labour Organization (ILO) Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (ILO Convention No. 100) .
7. ILO Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (ILO Convention No. 111).
8. Countries and territories have been organized in regional groupings under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) indicator framework .
9. ILO, Information System on International Labour Standards (NORMLEX), Ratifications by country .

Chapter 5

Power and Decision-making

Introduction

Progress in achieving gender parity in all spheres of political and public life remains slow

Women need to have a more prominent role in power and decision-making, a highly visible area where access has been restricted and progress has been slow. Women's participation in political and public life has steadily increased: women's representation in parliament has more than doubled globally, reaching 25% of parliamentary seats in 2020, mainly as a result of the adoption of gender quotas and milestones achieved in countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. Gender quotas have also contributed to women's access to local government positions, a necessary condition for ensuring the inclusion of women's interests and perspectives in local decision-making. Worldwide, women held 36% of elected seats in local deliberative bodies, 10 percentage points higher than their level of representation in national parliaments.

Women's representation among cabinet ministers has quadrupled over the last 25 years, and in 2020, on average, one in five ministers (22%) was a woman. In the judiciary, 40% of judges were women in 2017, an increase over the proportion of 35% reported in 2008.

Despite the steady increase in the proportion of parliamentary seats held by women, as of 2020, women held at least 50% of seats in only four national parliaments. Overall, few women held key positions in the higher echelons of parliamentary hierarchies, particularly at the top levels, as president or speaker of the house. As of 2020, women held only 20.5% of high-level legislative positions, which is still too low a percentage to have an effective influence on policymaking.

In terms of executive power, as of 2020, gender parity among cabinet ministers had been reached or surpassed in only 14 countries; female ministers continued to be concentrated in ministries related to the family and social issues; and only 20 countries had a female Head of State or Government, an improvement over the 12 countries with a female Heads of State in 1995. While women are at the centre of efforts countering the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, too few women are yet in charge of leading response and recovery efforts.

Although higher representation of women in decision-making roles in the private sector has been proven to have a positive effect on corporate profitability, the proportion of women in managerial positions remains low. Globally, women held only 28% of managerial positions in 2019 – almost the same proportion as in 1995. The underrepresentation of women in management positions is even more visible at higher levels of decision-making: in 2020, only 18% of enterprises surveyed had a female Chief Executive Officer, and among Fortune 500 corporations only 7.4%, or 37 out of 500 Chief Executive Officers, were women (compared to 1 out of 500 in 1998).

Overall, female representation on corporate boards has been slowly growing, particularly in developed countries, thanks in large part to the adoption of legislative quotas. At the current pace, the goal of 30% of women's representation on corporate boards will not be reached until 2029, and 30% is not the 50/50 gender parity aimed for by women's groups worldwide.

Women in managerial positions



Key points

- Although higher proportions of women in decision-making roles in the private sector has a positive correlation to superior corporate profitability, the proportion of women in managerial positions remains low in both the public and private sectors.
- Globally, women held only 28% of managerial positions in 2019, with some regional variations, and in countries in Northern Africa and Western Asia and Central and Southern Asia the proportion barely reached 13%, a statistic that has not changed significantly over the past 20 years.
- Since 2000, while the proportion of women in managerial positions has increased in most regions, the rate of improvement is slight.
- The underrepresentation of women in management positions is even more visible at the higher levels of decision-making: 48% of companies surveyed by the International Labour Organization (ILO) in 2018¹ had at least one woman in senior management, but only 31% had women in top executive positions.
- Women CEOs or top managers are even more scarce: only 18% of enterprises surveyed by the World Bank had a woman CEO.
- Among Fortune 500 corporations, women accounted for only 7.4%, or 37 out of 500 CEOs. Despite the minor improvement from 1998, when only 1 out of the top 500 corporations had a female CEO, the gender gap at the level of top corporate decision makers remains significant.
- The bigger the enterprise, the lower the chances of it having a woman CEO: over 26% of small enterprises surveyed by ILO in 2018 (employing 2 to 100 workers) had female CEOs, compared with 16% of large enterprises (employing more than 250 workers).
- Enterprises with more women in their workforce are more likely to have a female CEO. Of the enterprises surveyed by ILO in 2018, enterprises with a gender balanced workforce were 15% more likely to have a female CEO; and enterprises with a predominantly female workforce (between 61% and 100%) were 22% more likely to have a female CEO.

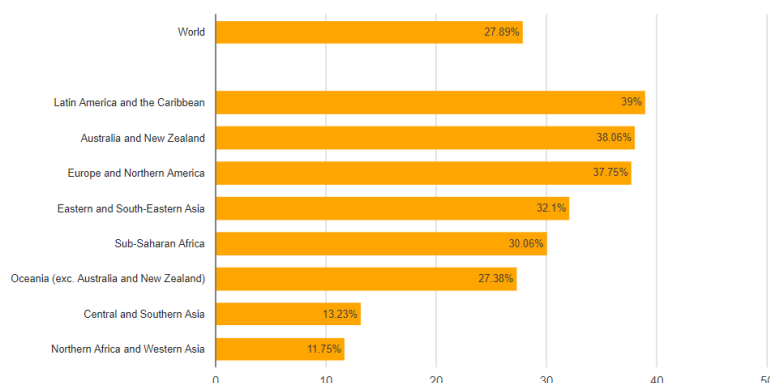
Background

Gender diversity in managerial positions, as evidenced by greater representation of women in senior roles, as CEOs and senior-level managers, is not just about human rights and social equality. A number of studies have shown that a higher proportion of women in decision-making roles in the private sector has had a positive effect, boosting stock market returns and creating superior corporate profitability.²

A global survey of enterprises conducted by ILO in 2018 reaffirmed that company profits increase as a result of gender diversity and equality initiatives.³ Nevertheless, the proportion of women in managerial positions remains low in both the public and private sectors, and the number of women fall as they move up the corporate ladder towards the top executive positions.

Women are less likely than men to be employed and if employed are less likely to hold managerial positions.

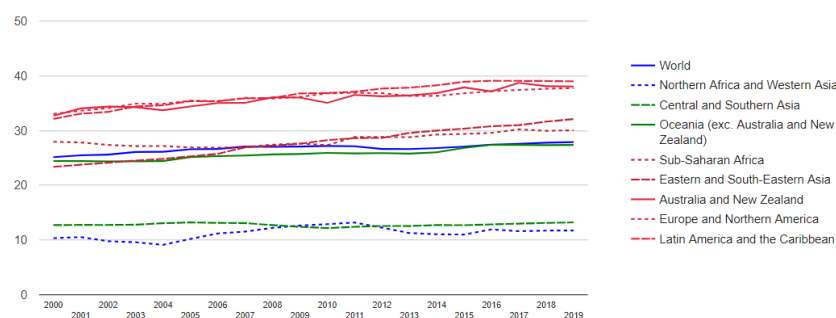
In 2019, on average, women comprised 39% of the **workforce worldwide**, but held only 28% of managerial positions.⁴ In the three regions with the highest proportion of women in managerial positions, Latin America and the Caribbean, Australia and New Zealand and Europe and Northern America, women held 38% of managerial positions; in the two regions with the lowest proportion of women in managerial positions, Northern Africa and Western Asia and Central and Southern Asia, women barely reached 13% of such positions – less than half the global average (see figure I).⁵

Figure I: Proportion of women in managerial positions, by region, 2019

Source: Compiled by the United Nations Statistics Division based on data from the SDG database (accessed on 29 June 2020)

Note: Data cover managerial positions from the public and private sectors. Data refer to employment under ISCO-08 categories 11 (chief executives, senior officials and legislators) and 12 (administrative and commercial managers) and 13 (production and specialized services managers).

Since 2000, the proportion of women in managerial positions has increased in all regions, although their numbers remain disproportionately low and overall there has only been a slight improvement. In particular, female managers in countries in Central and Southern Asia and Northern Africa and Western Asia have remained in the minority over the last 20 years, with the share of all managerial positions held by women at between only 9% and 13% (see figure II).

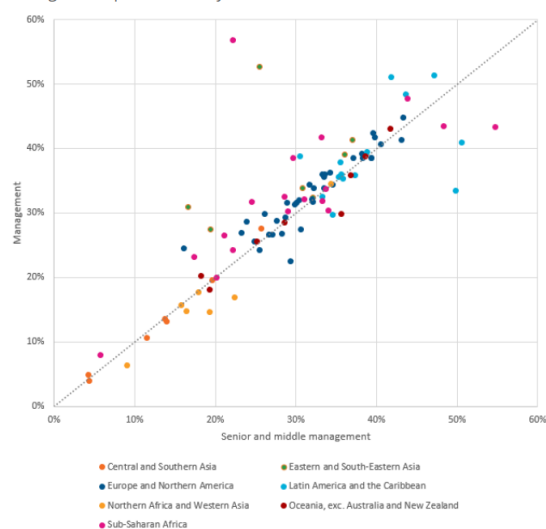
Figure II: Proportion of women in managerial positions by region: 2000–2019 (Percentage)

Source: Compiled by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), Statistics Division, based on data from the Global SDG Indicators Database (<https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/database>) (accessed on 29 June 2020).

More women are employed in junior management than in senior and middle management positions, and the glass ceiling is more difficult to break through at the top echelons of management

In the majority of countries in the world, more women work in junior managerial positions than at the level of senior and middle management. In countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, however, where the proportion of women managers tends to be the highest, there are some country variations in the proportion of women in top management positions, relative to their overall share in management (see figure III).

Figure III: Share of women in any management positions, by the share of women in senior and middle management positions only, 2000-2019 (latest available)

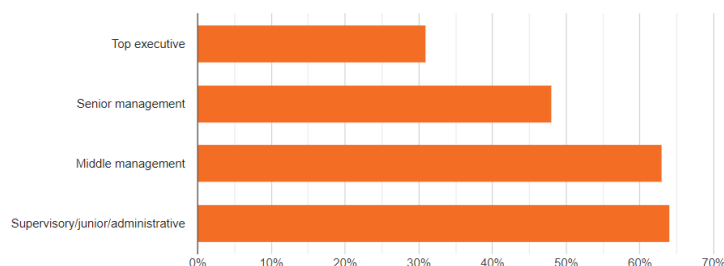


Source: Compiled and calculated by the United Nations Statistics Division based on data obtained from ILO database (accessed on 13 July 2020)

The finding that fewer women than men are represented at the higher levels of management is also supported by an ILO survey conducted in 2018,⁵ which collected a sample of almost 13,000 companies in 70 countries across five regions: sub-Saharan Africa; Asia and the Pacific; Europe and Central Asia; Latin America and the Caribbean; and the Middle East and Northern Africa.⁶

The survey showed that more than 60% of companies had at least one woman in supervisory, junior or administrative management and middle management. However, at the senior echelons, there were very few women: only 48% of companies had at least one woman in senior management, and less than a third had women in top executive positions (see figure IV).

Figure IV: Proportion of companies that have at least one woman in different levels of managerial positions, 2018



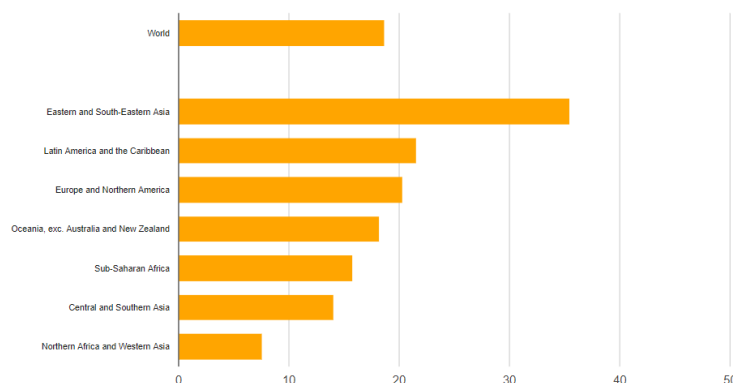
Source: Compiled by the United Nations Statistics Division based on data from a 2018 ILO Survey, which collected a sample of 12,940 companies in 70 countries across five regions.

Women are better represented in support management functions than in more strategic managerial posts

The glass ceiling at senior managerial levels has created occupational segregation within management functions. As of 2018, even though 63% of surveyed enterprises had at least one female middle manager and close to 50% of surveyed enterprises had at least one female senior manager, when looking at their functional responsibilities, women were over represented in support management functions, such as human resources, finance and administration, while managerial posts in the areas of research and development and profit-and-loss management, which are considered to be more strategic, were generally occupied by men.

At top managerial positions, among enterprises with a CEO, less than a fifth have a woman in that position.⁸ Variations exist across regions, however, with countries in Eastern and South-Eastern Asia reporting the highest proportion of enterprises with female top managers, at 35.5%, while countries in Northern Africa and Western Asia reported the lowest share, at 6.4% (see figure V).

Figure V: Proportion of firms with a woman as top manager by region, 2010-2020 (latest available)



Source: Compiled and calculated by the United Nations Statistics Division based on data obtained from [Enterprise Surveys](#), The World Bank accessed on 29 June 2020.

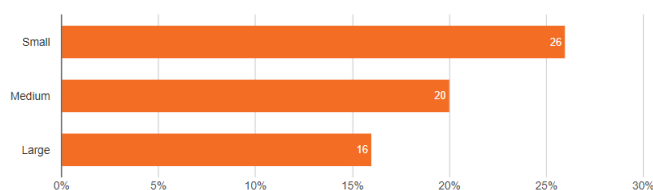
Note: Regional and "all countries" averages of indicators are computed by taking a simple average of country-level data. For each economy, only the latest available year of survey data is used in this computation. Only surveys, posted during the years 2011-2018.

Company size and share of female CEOs: it is unclear how the size of a company affects the chances that a woman will be a CEO

The link between the size of a company and the likelihood that it will have a woman as CEO is not straightforward. While large companies have higher profiles, and may thus be less likely to discriminate against women candidates for top managerial positions, they also tend to be more hierarchical, making it more difficult for women to reach those positions as they may fall behind men in terms of networks, training and relevant job experience.⁹

Furthermore, recent evidence shows that the proportion of enterprises with a female CEO shrinks as the size of an enterprise grows: over 26% of small enterprises (employing 2–100 workers) have female CEOs, compared with 20% of medium-sized enterprises (employing 101–250 workers) and 16% of large enterprises (employing more than 250 workers)¹⁰ (see figure VI).

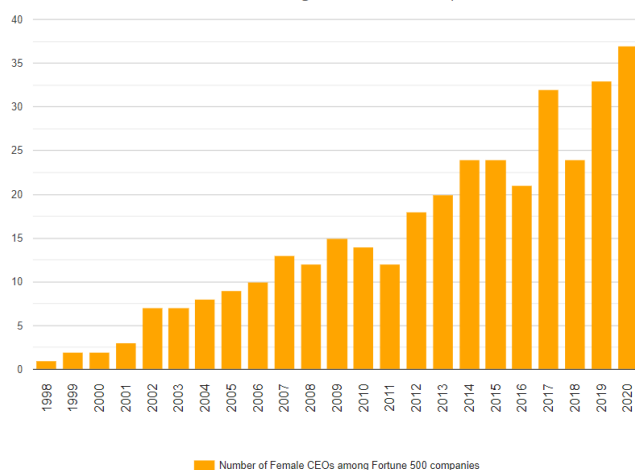
Figure VI: Proportion of enterprises with a female CEO, by size of enterprise, 2018



Source: Compiled by the United Nations Statistics Division based on data from a 2018 ILO Survey.

This argument is also supported by the historical data on the number of female CEOs on the list of the Fortune 500,¹¹ which shows the largest corporations in the United States of America. While the list from 2020 has more female CEOs than ever before, women only account for 7.4% of the total number: only 37 out of 500 CEOs are women (see figure VII).

While this shows an improvement from 1998, when only 1 out of the top 500 corporations had a female CEO, the gender gap remains significant and is even more pronounced than among large enterprises, where in 2018 the share of women CEOs was reported at 16% (figure VII).

Figure VII: Number of Female CEOs among Fortune 500 companies: 1998-2020

Source: Compiled by the United Nations Statistics Division based on data from Fortune magazine, as of May 18 2020.

Enterprises with more women in their workforce are more likely to have a female CEO

In 2018, enterprises where women accounted for 30% to 39% of the workforce had a 6% higher likelihood of having a female CEO than enterprises where women made up less than 30% of the workforce; when the workforce was gender balanced, enterprises were 15% more likely to have a female CEO; and when the workforce was predominantly female (61% to 100%), enterprises were 22% more likely to have a female CEO.¹³

About the data

Proportion of managerial positions held by women

- Definition: Percentage of women in management positions as a measure of total employment in management. Managerial positions correspond to major group 1 of the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO-88 or ISCO-08).
- Data availability: Data are derived from International Labour Organization (ILO) modelled estimates at the regional level

Proportion of women in senior and middle management positions

- Definition: Senior and middle management correspond to sub-major groups 11, 12 and 13 in ISCO-08 and sub-major groups 11 and 12 in ISCO-88. If disaggregated statistics were not available at the sub-major group level (two-digit level of ISCO), major group 1 of ISCO-88 and ISCO-08 was used as a proxy, and in such cases the indicator refers only to total management (including junior management).
- Data availability: Available data from 63 countries (with 2018 data) and 50 countries (with 2019 data).

Percentage of firms with a female Chief Executive Officer/top manager

- Definition: The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) is the top manager in a company, the person who is ultimately responsible for making managerial decisions. The percentage of firms with a female CEO/top manager is calculated as the weighted average of data obtained from businesses in enterprise surveys, using sampling weights.
- Data availability: For the period 2010–2020, latest data on the percentage of firms with a female top manager were available for 134 countries from enterprise surveys conducted by the World Bank in 144 countries covering more than 161,000 companies.

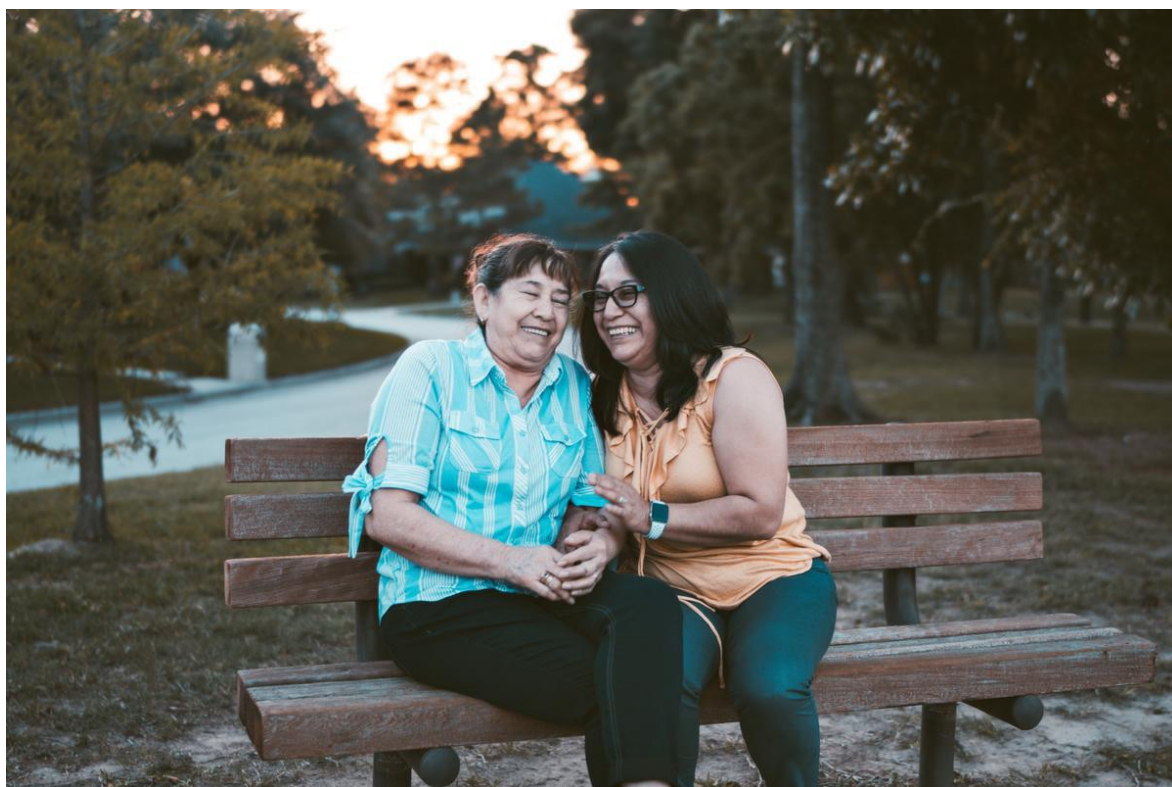
Related stories and further reading

- [Women in power and decision-making positions in the corporate world](#)

Footnotes

1. International Labour Organization (ILO), *Women in Business and Management: -A Global Survey of Enterprises*, Geneva, 2019.
2. Credit Suisse AG, Research Institute, *The CS Gender 3000: The Reward for Change*, 2016; ILO, *Women in Business and Management: The business case for change*, Geneva, 2019; *Harvard Business Review*, "Research: When Gender Diversity Makes Firms More Productive"; and McKinsey & Company, "Women in the Workplace 2019", October 2019.
3. ILO, *Women in Business and Management: The business case for change*, Geneva, 2019.
4. United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), Statistical Division, *Sustainable Development Goals Report 2020*.
5. ILO, *Women in Business and Management: A global survey of enterprises*, Geneva, 2019.
6. The regional groupings shown here are not the same as those used under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
7. ILO, *Women in Business and Management: The business case for change*, Geneva, 2019.
8. World Bank, "Enterprises surveys".
9. The World Bank Group, "Female Top Managers in Malaysia", Enterprise Note No.36, 2018.
10. ILO, *Women in Business and Management: The business case for change*, Geneva, 2019.
11. *Fortune 500* is an annual list compiled and published by Fortune magazine that ranks the 500 largest corporations in the United States of America by total revenue for the respective fiscal year.
12. Fortune (magazine), "The number of female CEOs in the Fortune 500 hits an all-time record".
13. ILO, *Women in Business and Management: The business case for change*, Geneva, 2019.

Mexico: women in the national parliament and in local government



Key points

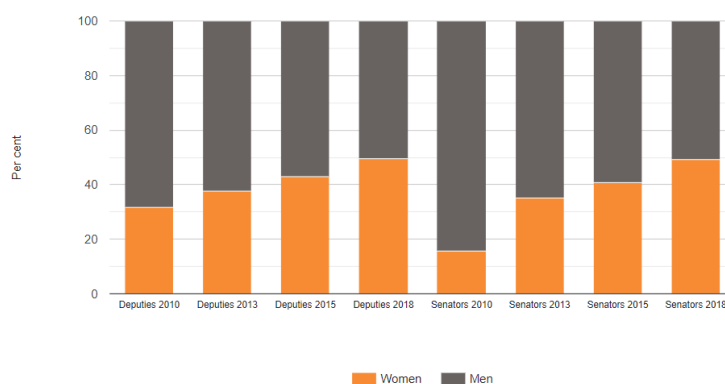
- Achieving the equal political integration of women enables their full and effective participation in decision-making.
- In 2014, the Mexican federal constitution and electoral laws were amended to ensure gender parity in all nominations for federal and local legislative seats; these same requirements have been extended to include nominations to municipal councils.
- By September 2018, gender equality in the national legislation was achieved, with 49.4% of women in the Lower Chamber of Deputies and 49.2% in the Upper Chamber of Senators.
- The current Federal Congress has been named the "Gender-Parity Legislature" because of this important achievement.
- By 2010, women's participation in municipal councils reached 25.5%; by 2018, women's representation was 44.9%.
- At the municipal level, however, the achievement of gender parity has not yet proven possible in some municipalities and municipal councils.¹
- As of 2018, only 20.9% of municipal governments were led by women.

In Mexico, the political participation of women and men under conditions of equality and equity, without restrictions, is recognized as a human right. Equal political participation promotes democracy and political pluralism, and enables the full and effective participation of women, who have historically faced discrimination in the area of political and policy decision-making.²

Mexico has come a long way in breaking down the obstacles that prevented political-electoral equity between women and men. While electoral reforms, aimed at changing the regulation on access to electoral posts were promoted in 2011, it was not until 2014 that constitutional and legal reforms were carried out to guarantee gender parity in electoral nominations for federal and local legislatures.³ These reforms also included electoral processes for municipal councils.

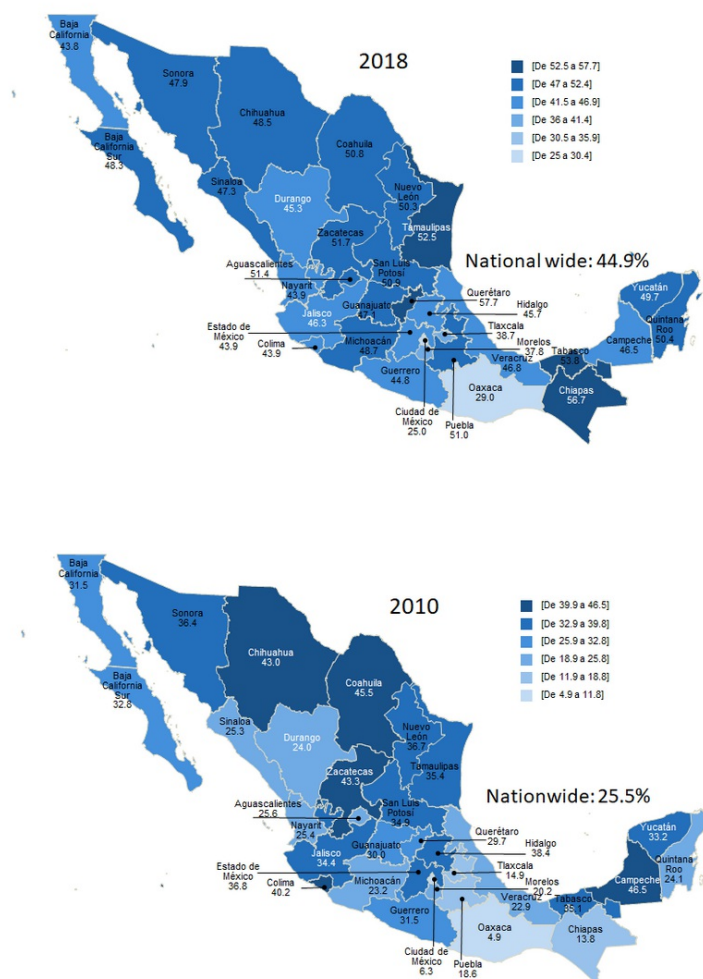
Despite progressive change in electoral legislation and the fact that by September 2015 a trend toward gender parity was already observed, the composition of the Federal Congress was unbalanced: women held 42.8% of seats in the Lower Chamber of Deputies and 40.6% in the Upper Chamber of Senators. Gender equality was achieved in September 2018, with 49.4% of women elected in the Lower Chamber and 49.2% of women in the Upper Chamber (see figure I). As a result of this important achievement, the current Federal Congress has been named the "Gender-Parity Legislature".

Figure I: Percentage of seats held by women and men in the Chamber of Deputies and in the Senate: 2010, 2013, 2015, 2018



Source: Senate of the Republic of Mexico (Spanish original website) (<https://www.senado.gob.mx/64/>, <https://www.senado.gob.mx/63/>, http://www.diputados.gob.mx/sistema_legislativo_LXII.html); Chamber of Deputies of the Republic of Mexico (Spanish original website) (http://www.diputados.gob.mx/sistema_legislativo_LXI.html).

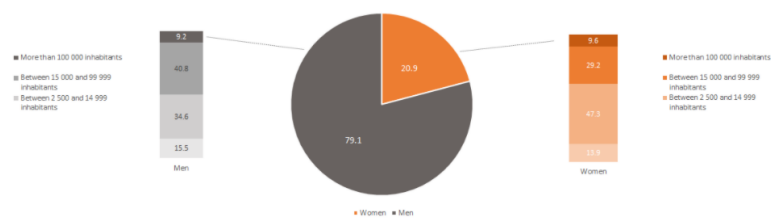
The Government of Mexico is organized at three levels: the Federal Government; state governments; and local municipal governments. The main governing body at the local level is the municipal council, a collegiate body directly elected by the people, comprising councillors and controllers, and headed by a municipal president. In 2010, women's participation in municipal councils was 25.5% (see figure II); by 2018, women's representation was 44.9%. In spite of the fact that women's political participation at the local level has advanced in most of the 32 Mexican states, there are some areas where the share of women's representation in municipal councils has barely reached 29.0%, for example, in the state of Oaxaca, which has the highest indigenous population in the country.

Figure II: Percentage of women's representation in municipal councils: 2010 and 2018

Source: National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI) National Census on Municipal and Borough Governments, 2011, and National Census on Municipal Governments and Territorial Demarcations of Mexico City, 2019.

As of 2018, 45% of members of municipal councils were women, including mayors, aldermen and councilors, although only 21% of mayors were women, and 86.1% of female mayors were elected in urban areas. Among the proportion of urban municipalities, women were more likely than men to be mayors of communities with 2,500 to 14,999 inhabitants (47.3% compared to 34.6%, respectively) and less likely than men to be mayors of communities with 15,000 to 99,999 inhabitants (29.2% and 40.8%, respectively).

Women and men were equally represented as mayors of municipalities with 100,000 and more inhabitants (9.6% and 9.2%, respectively), while men had a slightly greater chance of being mayors of rural municipalities with less than 2,500 inhabitants (15.5% compared to 13.9%, respectively) (see figure III).

Figure III: Percentage of municipalities led by women and men by population of municipalities: 2018

Source: INEGI, National Census on Municipal Governments and Territorial Demarcations of Mexico City, 2019, and National Population Council (CONAPO), Population Projections of Mexico, 2015-2020.

Further reading and related stories

- [Women in national parliaments](#)
- [Women in local government positions](#)
- [Women in politics and decision-making positions in Africa](#)

About the data

Definitions

- **Proportion of seats held by women in national parliament and local governments:** Total number of seats occupied by women divided by the total number of seats

Coverage

Women and men who hold elected seats in federal legislative chambers and local deliberative bodies (municipalities) at national and state levels in Mexico.

Availability

Data on the political participation of women at the local level have been obtained through the national census on local governments,⁴ which has been conducted biennially by the National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI) since 2011.

Footnotes

1. Colección: Equidad de género y democracia (Collection: Gender Equality and Democracy) (Spanish original).
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. National Census on Municipal Governments and Territorial Demarcations of Mexico City, 2019, previously called the National Census on Municipal and Borough Governments.

Power and decision making

Financial decision-making in the household [ECE]



Key points

- In developed countries with available data, a large majority of women participate in decision-making about household purchases and decisions about occasional more expensive purchases are largely egalitarian (on average, 80% of women and men equally participate in these decisions).
- In most countries, however, decisions about routine or day-to-day household purchases are most frequently taken by women alone.
- Responsibility for deciding how to spend money on food, clothing and items for daily living may reflect obligation rather than autonomy or influence; responsibility to decide how money is spent on more expensive purchases, such as a car, home remodelling or a vacation, may be more indicative of power.

Background

Financial decision-making is a fundamental element among the many dimensions of intra-household power¹

Gender inequalities in the public sphere often reflect unequal power relations between women and men within the household. Policies aimed at reducing gender inequality are likely to be more effective if they consider the underlying origins of disparities relating to the balance of power and decision-making within the home.

Realizing goals in nearly all areas of public and private life depends on access to and control over financial resources. Data on household financial decision-making provide valuable information on individual agency and the empowerment of women across societies. This topic has direct policy relevance for social welfare and development programmes aimed at increasing economic well-being through income transfers, the outcomes of which depend on access to income. Information on household financial decision-making can also shed light on the distribution of responsibilities among women and men within households.

Current situation

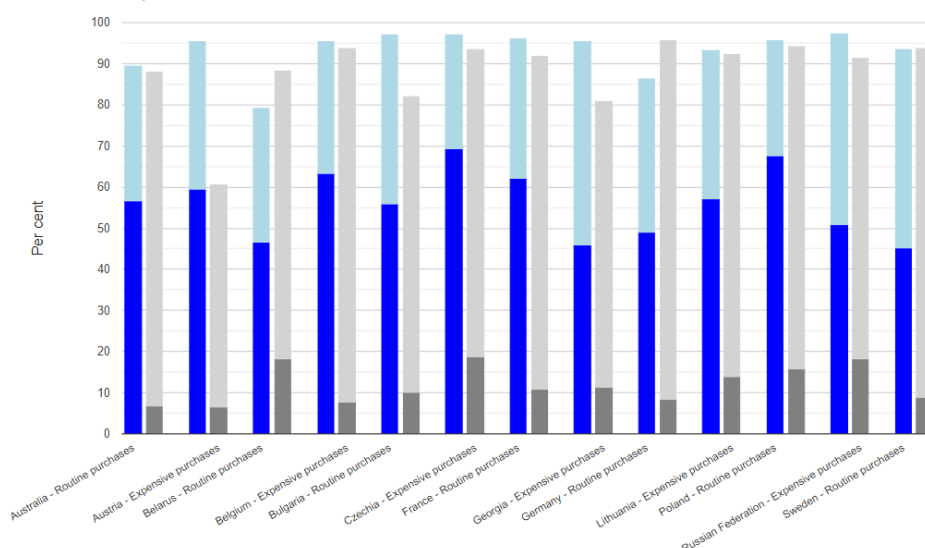
Women in Europe manage day-to-day expenses

In developed countries, a large majority of women participate in decision-making about household purchases. Recent surveys indicate that in Australia and in 12 countries in Europe decisions about occasional more expensive purchases are largely egalitarian. On average, more than 80% of women and men indicated that decisions about expensive purchases are shared equally between partners.²

The situation with regard to decision-making on routine purchases for the household is quite different. In most countries with available data, decisions about day-to-day household purchases are most frequently taken by women alone (see figure I). While participation in financial decision-making is an important marker of the empowerment of women, sole responsibility in this area may not be desirable. Sustainable Development Goal 5, target 5.4, of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development calls for “the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family”. That women perceive themselves as being principally responsible for decisions about routine purchases may indicate an imbalance in the management of domestic tasks.

Responsibility for deciding how to spend money on food, clothing and items for daily living may reflect obligation rather than autonomy or influence; the responsibility for deciding on how money is spent on a car, home remodelling or a vacation may be more indicative of power.

Figure I: Share of female respondents in co-residing couples who are responsible for decisions on household expenses, by type of expenditure in selected countries: 2005—2017 (latest year available) (Percentage)



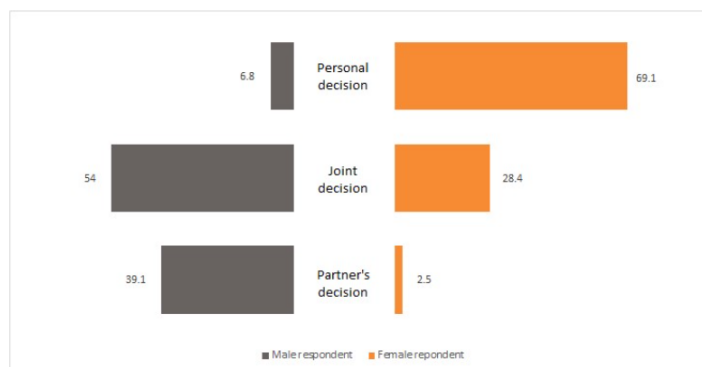
Source: Generations and Gender Programme, Generations and Gender Survey, Waves 1 and 2, see website for methodology (https://www.unece.org/pau/pub/ggp_survey_instruments.html); and Gauthier, A.H., Cabaco, S.L.F. and Emery, T., "Generations and Gender Survey study profile", *Longitudinal and Life Course Studies*, vol. 9, No. 4, 2018 (<https://www.lifecoursejournal.org/index.php/lifcs/article/view/500>).

Gender differences in perceptions of decision-making

Most male respondents agreed that their female partners are more likely to be primarily responsible for decisions about routine purchases, although there are differing perceptions of the degree to which decision-making is mutual. Male respondents were much more likely than female respondents to perceive household decisions on routine purchases as being shared. Across 13 countries with available data, 54% of male respondents indicated that decisions about routine household purchases are made jointly with a partner, however, only 28% of female respondents interpreted the sharing of decision-making in this way (see figure II).

Gender differences in perceptions about decision-making provide support for the methodological recommendation that surveys including questions about intra-household power and decision-making should interview respondents privately, whenever possible.

Figure II: Share of respondents in co-residing couples who are responsible for decisions on routine household purchases, by sex of respondent in selected countries: 2005—2017 (latest year available) (Percentage)



Source: Generations and Gender Programme, Generations and Gender Survey, Waves 1 and 2 (https://www.unecp.org/pau/pub/ggp_survey_instruments.html).

Note: Data were pooled across countries identified in Figure I.

About the data

About the data

Definition

- **Proportion of individuals in co-residing couples who are primarily or equally responsible for decisions on household expenses, by type of expenditure and sex:** Calculated as the percentage of individuals in co-residing couples who indicate whether they always, or usually, make decisions about household expenses alone or jointly with their partners, reported separately for females and males and for routine and for occasional more expensive purchases.

Coverage

Women and men in co-residing couples in selected countries.

Availability

Data related to this indicator are from the Generations and Gender Survey conducted by the Generations and Gender Programme ³ and from Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS). ⁴

Footnotes

1. United Nations, Economic Commission for Europe, *Guidance for measuring intra-household power and decision-making* (forthcoming) .
2. Unweighted average of countries for which data are available (see figures I and II).
3. *Generations and Gender Programme, Generations and Gender Survey* .
4. Internationally comparable data for developed regions are limited. In its forthcoming publication, "*Guidance for measuring intra-household power and decision-making*" the Economic Commission for Europe suggests that this indicator could be more widely produced based on existing survey data or with the addition of a small number of questions to existing surveys .

Factors affecting women's representation in parliament



Key points

- In 2020, elections in 118 countries are governed by some type of gender quota in lower or single houses of parliament.
- In 2020, women hold 27% of seats in lower or single houses of parliament in countries implementing some type of gender quota compared to 18% in countries without any quota.
- Among the three types of quotas, reserved seats, voluntary political party quotas and legislated candidate quotas, the latter two appear slightly more effective than the reserved seats quota: in 2020, over 28% of seats were held by women in countries implementing voluntary political party quotas and legislated candidate quotas, compared to 25% in countries with reserved seats quotas.
- High proportions of female candidates in parliamentary elections are correlated with high proportions of seats held by women in parliament.
- During the period 2015–2020, while the Northern America and Europe region continued to rank first in terms of the highest share of female candidates (36%), the largest increase in the number of female candidates in parliamentary elections was recorded in countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, where the proportion of women candidates rose from 17% to 27% (10 percentage points).

Gender quotas

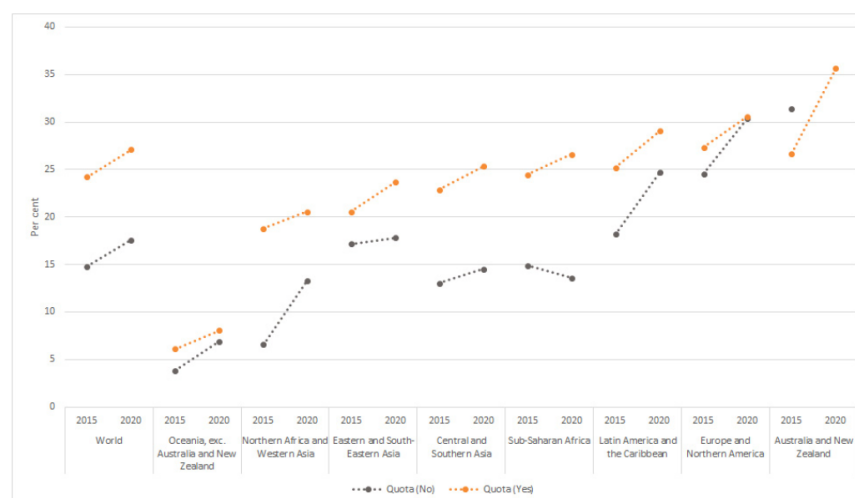
Gender quotas are aimed at reversing discrimination in law and practice and to levelling the playing field for women in politics. Gender quotas may be mandated in the constitution, stipulated in domestic legislation or formulated in the statutes of political parties. Typically, three types of electoral quotas are used: (a) reserved seats quotas, which reserve a number of seats for women in a legislative assembly; (b) legislated candidate quotas, which reserve a number of places on electoral lists for female candidates; and (c) voluntary party quotas, which are targets voluntarily adopted by political parties to include a certain percentage of women as candidates in elections.

Electoral quotas for women have spread to all regions of the world

Elections in 118 countries are currently governed by some type of gender quota in the lower or single houses of parliament. Across all regions, the **proportion of seats held by women in lower or single houses of parliament** is higher in countries with some type of gender quota compared with those without quotas in the same region (see figure I).¹ In 2020, the global average proportion of seats held by women in lower or single houses of parliament was 27% in countries implementing some type of gender quota compared to 18% in countries without any quota.

Gender quotas tend to play a more important role in improving women's representation in parliament in regions with overall lower representation of women in parliament, with the exception of Oceania, excluding Australia and New Zealand, where the proportion of seats in parliament held by women remains below 10% even in countries that have adopted gender quotas.

Figure I: Proportion of seats held by women in lower or single houses of parliament by region and by use of electoral quotas: 2015 and 2020 (Percentage)

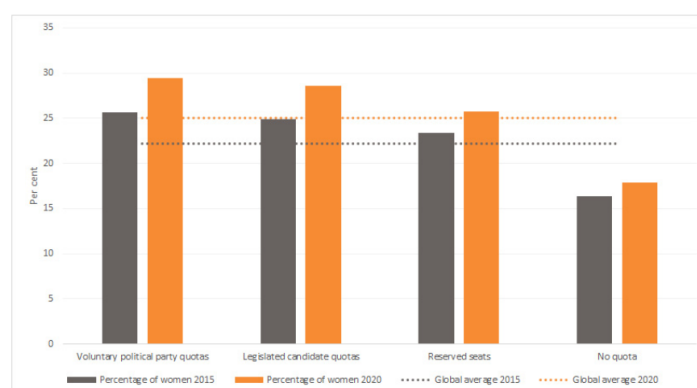


Source: Compiled and calculated by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), Statistics Division; data for 2015 were obtained from the Sustainable Development Goals database (<https://unstats.un.org/sdgs>) (last accessed 10 July 2020) and the World's Women 2015: Trends and Statistics (<https://unstats.un.org/unsd/gender/worldswomen.html>), data for 2020 were obtained from the Sustainable Development Goals database (<https://unstats.un.org/sdgs>) (last accessed 10 July 2020) and the Gender Quotas Database (<https://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/gender-quotas>) (last accessed January 2020).

Among the three types of gender quotas, voluntary political party quotas and legislated candidate quotas continue to appear more effective than reserved seats

Voluntary political party quotas and legislated candidate quotas mandate the number or percentage of women to be included in a candidate list, while reserved seats quotas allocate a number of seats for women in a legislature. In 2020, over 28% of parliamentary seats are currently held by women in countries implementing voluntary political party quotas and legislated candidate quotas. The majority of countries (79%) also tend to apply these two types of quotas (34 implementing voluntary political party quotas and 59 implementing legislated candidate quotas, out of 191 countries with data).

Figure II: Proportion of seats held by women in lower or single houses of parliament by type of gender quota: 2015 and 2020



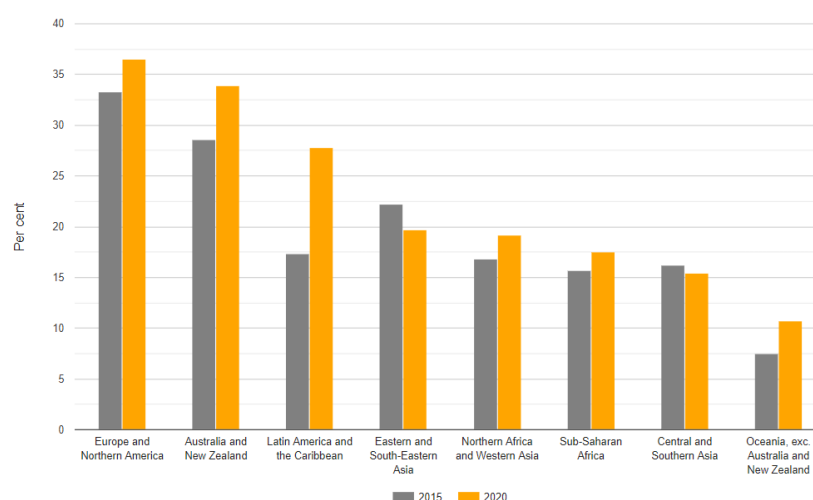
Source: Compiled and calculated by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), Statistics Division; data for 2015 were obtained from the Sustainable Development Goals database (<https://unstats.un.org/sdgs>) (last accessed 10 July 2020) and the World's Women 2015: Trends and Statistics (<https://unstats.un.org/unsd/gender/worldswomen.html>), data for 2020 were obtained from the Sustainable Development Goals database (<https://unstats.un.org/sdgs>) (last accessed 10 July 2020) and the Gender Quotas Database (<https://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/gender-quotas>) (last accessed January 2020).

High proportions of female candidates standing in parliamentary elections are correlated with high proportions of seats held by women in parliament

As of 2020, the proportion of female candidates in parliamentary elections was higher than 40% in only 18 of 139 countries with available data. With the exception of Chile (see country in focus below), these are also the countries where women's representation in parliament is higher than 24.9%, which is the global average. Cuba stands out as the only country in the world where women hold over 50% (53%) of parliamentary seats.

In most regions of the world, the proportion of female candidates in parliamentary elections increased between 2015 and 2020. In 2020, countries in Northern America and Europe continued to rank first in terms of the highest share of female candidates (36%). The greatest increase was recorded in Latin America and the Caribbean, where the share of female candidates rose from 17% in 2015 to 27% in 2020. Improvement was also recorded in Oceania, excluding Australia and New Zealand, the region with the lowest share of female candidates, where the proportion of women running for parliament increased from 7% in 2015 to 19% in 2020 (see figure III). ²

Figure III: Share of women among candidates for lower or single houses of parliament: 2015 and 2020



Source: Compiled by UNDESA, Statistics Division, from the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) PARLINE database on national parliaments, (www.ipu.org/praline-e/parlinesearch.asp) (accessed on 25 March 2015) and the IPU database on parliamentary elections (<https://data.ipu.org/elections>) (accessed on 30 April 2020)

Country in focus: Chile

After implementing a gender quota in 2015, Chile recorded a 22 percentage point increase in the proportion of female candidates for parliament (from 20% in 2015 to 41% in 2020). Furthermore, there has been a 7 percentage point increase in the proportion of parliamentary seats held by women, reconfirming the positive correlation between women as candidates and women as parliamentarians. Before 2015, although a voluntary political party quota had been implemented in Chile, results in terms of women's representation were not satisfactory. To address the inequality, in 2015 Congress passed a bill on constitutional reform, including a gender quota, as well as legal sanctions for non-compliance. Parties that fail to comply with the mandated gender quota by submitting candidacy lists with more than 60% of men are sanctioned, and all candidates on the list are rejected. ³

About the data

Definitions

- **Proportion of female candidates for parliamentary elections:** The number of women among candidates for lower or single houses of parliament, expressed as a percentage of all candidates in the latest election year and calculated as the total number of female candidates divided by the total number of candidates for parliamentary elections.

Coverage

This indicator covers the single chamber in unicameral parliaments and the lower chamber in bicameral parliaments but not the upper chamber of bicameral parliaments.

Availability

As at 1 January 2020, data on the proportion of parliamentary seats held by women were available for 191 countries. Data on the proportion of women among candidates for parliament were available for 139 countries. Data on quota systems were available for 191 countries. Countries are organized by regional groupings under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) indicator framework.⁴

Footnotes

1. The exception of Australia and New Zealand shown in figure I is caused by the reclassification of New Zealand from the group of countries without any type of quota in 2015 to the group of countries implementing some type of quota in 2020.
2. United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), Statistics Division, *The World's Women 2015: Trends and Statistics*, New York, 2015 .
3. Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA), *Country Data*, Chile .
4. United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), Statistics Division, regional groupings under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) indicator framework .

Power and decision-making

Women in the civil service



Key Points

- Women continue to be underrepresented among senior-level civil servants: they represented less than 50% of senior-level civil servants in 60% of the 27 countries with available data for the period 2008–2017.
- As of June 2020, about a quarter (24%) of national statistical offices worldwide were headed by women, close to the proportion observed in 2015.
- Women are underrepresented among senior professionals and managers within the United Nations system. Women occupied 44% of the total number of appointments for a period of one year or more, an improvement compared to 32% of appointments in 1997. However, their representation is higher at the junior professional levels (above 50%) and declines at higher senior professional and management levels (between 30% and 40%).

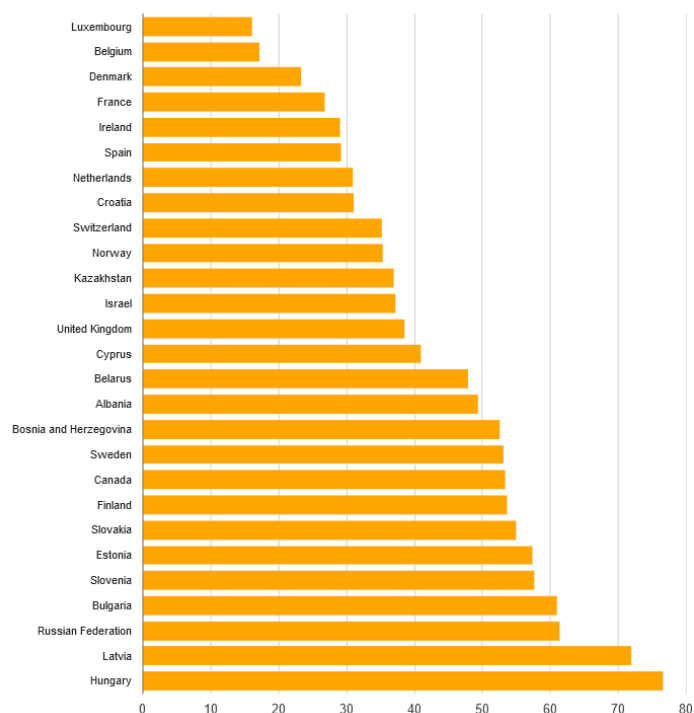
Current situation

Women continue to be underrepresented among senior-level civil servants.

Women tend to be underrepresented among senior-level civil servants, including government administrators, administrators at intergovernmental organizations, ambassadors and consuls-general. During the period 2008–2017, the representation of women at senior-level civil servant positions was below parity in 60% of the 27 countries with available data (see figure I).

As in the past,¹ rates of representation varied widely across countries, ranging from 16% to 77%. Among the four countries with the highest proportions of women as senior-level civil servants (above 60%), Hungary (76.6%), the Russian Federation (61.5%), Bulgaria (61.1%) and Latvia (72%), only the latter exceeded 60% of female representation for the first time. Women's representation among senior-level civil servants is the lowest, below 20%, in Belgium (17.2%) and Luxembourg (16.1%).

Figure I: Proportion of women among senior-level civil servants: 2008–2017 (latest available) (Percentage)



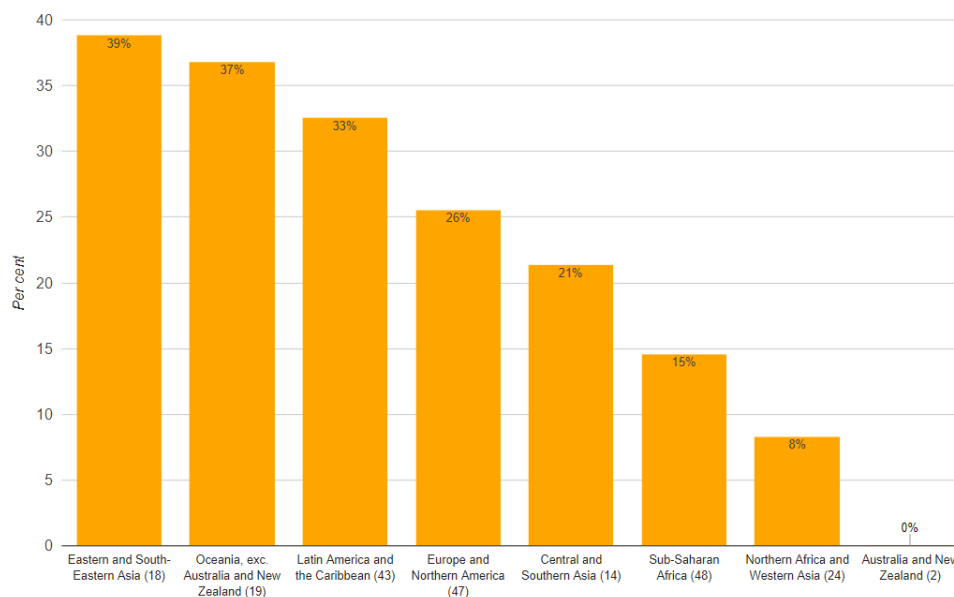
Source: Compiled by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), Statistics Division, based on data obtained from the UNECE Statistical Database (accessed on 6 June 2020) (https://w3.unece.org/PXWeb2015/pwweb/en/STAT/STAT_30-GE_05-PublicAnddecision/).

About a quarter of national statistical offices worldwide are headed by women

Chief statisticians are high-ranking administrators in charge of national statistical offices, which are responsible for producing official statistics in countries worldwide. As at 2 June 2020, 24% of national statistical offices (52 out of 215) had a woman as chief statistician, very close to the proportion observed five years ago. As at 2020, in countries in Eastern and South-Eastern Asia, 39% of national statistical offices were headed by a female chief statistician (see figure II).

Over the past five years, there has been significant progress in Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand): in June 2020, national statistical offices in 7 out of 19 countries or areas in the region were headed by a woman, while in 2015 there were none.² In contrast, there were no female chief statisticians of national statistical offices in Australia and New Zealand.

Figure II: Proportion and list of countries or areas where the national statistical office is headed by a woman by region: 2020



Source: Compiled and calculated by UNDESA, Statistics Division, Contacts database (accessed on 2 June 2020).

Note: Numbers in parentheses indicate the total number of countries and territories in each region.

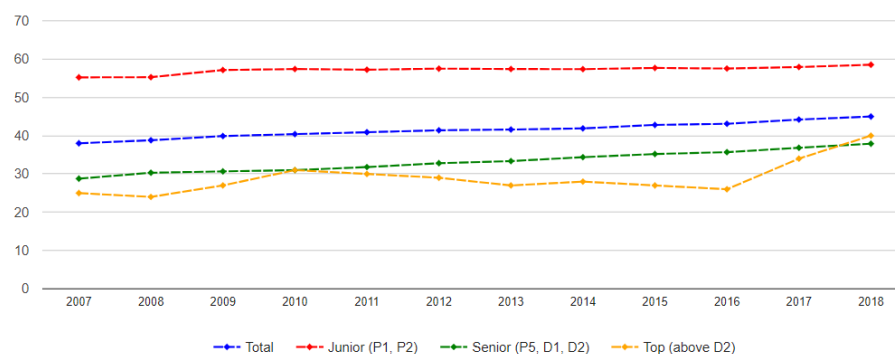
Women are underrepresented among senior professionals and managers within the United Nations system.

The goal of achieving gender parity at all levels among the staff of the United Nations is a commitment that is now two decades old. During this time, significant progress has been made towards advancing the representation of women in the organizations and agencies of the United Nations system. As at 31 December 2018, the latest available data from across all entities of the common system showed that, among senior professionals and managers, women occupied 44% (out of 109,589 total staff) of the total number of appointments for a period of one year or more, an improvement compared to 32% of appointments (out of 15,192 total staff) in 1997.

The achievement of the goal of gender parity has remained slow and uneven however. The representation of women continues to be higher at the junior professional levels³ (above 50%) and declines at higher senior professional and management levels⁴ (between 30% and 40%). The most significant progress has been achieved at the highest levels of decision-making and responsibility,⁵ with a 40% representation of women – a direct result of the commitment of the Secretary-General to reach parity at the highest levels by 2021. At the very top of the hierarchy, however, no woman has been appointed Secretary-General since the establishment of the United Nations in 1945.

As of December 2018, 34.6% of heads and 48% of deputy heads of United Nations peacekeeping and special political missions were women, a record number. In addition, in 2018, the Secretary-General appointed the first female Under Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, and three female special envoys.⁶ Nevertheless, despite these appointments, the proportion of female staff in Field Services, who are generally recruited internationally to serve in a civilian capacity at field missions, was significantly lower (27%). Furthermore, in 2019, out of approximately 95,000 peacekeepers, women comprised only 4.7% of military personnel and 10.8% of police personnel at United Nations peacekeeping missions.⁷

Figure III: Proportion of women among international professional staff in the United Nations system: 2007–2018 (Percentage)



Source: Compiled and calculated by UNDESA, Statistics Division; data for 2007–2017 are drawn from the report of the Secretary-General on improvement of the status of women in the United Nations system (A/74/220) (<https://undocs.org/en/A/74/220>); data for 2018 are drawn from the report of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB/2019/HLCM/HR/17) (https://unsceb.org/sites/default/files/CEB_HR_Statistics_31_12_2018_0.pdf).

Note: Data for 2007–2013 and 2018 reflect staff on contracts of one year or more. Data for 2014–2017 reflect staff on permanent/continuous/fixed-term appointments; junior professional staff include P-1 and P-2 levels; senior professional staff include P-5, D-1 and D-2 levels; and top positions refer to levels above D-2.

About the data

Share of women among senior-level civil servants

- Definition: Calculated as the total number of female senior-level civil servants divided by the total number of all senior-level civil servants. Senior-level civil servants are defined according to the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO-08, 1120),⁸ and include senior government officials (i.e., government administrators, administrators at intergovernmental organizations, ambassadors and consuls-general).
- Coverage: Data are available for 27 developed countries.
- Source: [United Nations Economic Commission for Europe \(UNECE\) Statistical Database](#) (last accessed on 6 June 2020)

Proportion of countries or areas where the national statistical office is headed by a woman

- Definition: Calculated as the total number of countries or areas where the head of the national statistical office is a woman divided by the total number of countries or areas where there is a national statistical office.
- Coverage: Data cover 215 national statistical offices.
- Source: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), Statistics Division, Contacts database.

Footnotes

1. United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), Statistics Division, The World's Women 2015: Trends and Statistics, New York, 2015 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.15.XVII.8).
2. UNDESA, Statistics Division, The World's Women 2015: Trends and Statistics, New York, 2015 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.15.XVII.8).
3. Including P-1 and P-2 levels.
4. Including P-5 to D-2 levels.
5. Encompasses all levels above D-2, including Assistant Secretary-General, Director General, Deputy Director-General, Assistant Director-General, Under-Secretary-General and Secretary-General.
6. Report of the Secretary-General on improvement of the status of women in the United Nations system (A/74/220), para.1.
7. United Nations Department of Peace Operations, Women in Peacekeeping: A Key to Peace.
8. International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO-08), sub-major group 11, minor group 111, unit group 1120, Managing Directors and Chief Executives.

Women as decision makers in the corporate world



Key points

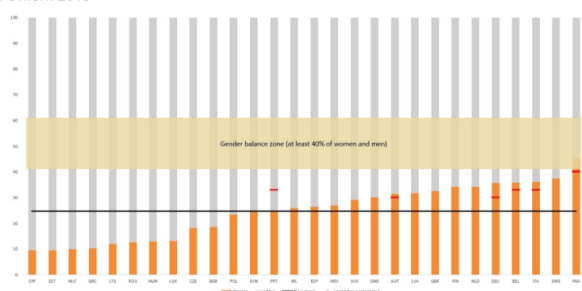
- In 2019, one country in the European Union had surpassed the target of 40% of women on corporate boards recommended by the European Commission, and four other countries in the European Union came close, with shares above 35%.
- Government intervention has proven to be an effective method for improving gender diversity on corporate boards. Since the European Commission recommended the adoption of legislative action to set a gender target for board membership in 2010, the average proportion of women on the boards of the largest listed companies in the European Union has doubled (from 11.9% in 2010 to 28.8% in 2019).
- In those countries in the European Union with legislative quotas, women's representation on boards increased by 20 percentage points more than in countries without quotas or related actions.
- Overall, female representation on corporate boards has been growing, particularly in developed countries, although not fast enough: at the current pace, the goal of 30% of women's representation on boards will not be reached until 2029.
- The representation of women on corporate boards varies across economic sectors. In 2019, the financial sector had the highest proportion of companies with at least three women on their boards (45%) while the industrial sector had the largest proportion of companies without female representation at the board level (25%), as was also the case in the information technology (22%) and communications services sectors (22%).
- The "glass wall" phenomenon, which keeps women in support management positions rather than allowing them access to strategic management functions, still exists at the board level.
- While the share of female participation in the boardroom has increased, boards remain largely chaired by men, and in 2018 the share of female board chairs was less than 10% in almost all regions. Even in Europe, where the majority of legislative quotas on female board membership have been implemented, only 6.9% of board chairs are women.
- Data from 2018 show that, across regions, companies with female rather than male board chairs have a significantly higher number of women on their boards. The same phenomenon was found to apply at companies with a female Chief Executive Officer.

Current situation

Globally, an increasing number of companies are using 30% as the gender balance target on corporate boards, following initiatives such as the "30% Club", a campaign promoting greater female representation on corporate boards launched in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in 2010.¹ Furthermore, in 2010, the European Commission suggested legislative action to set a gender target on boards, proposing a target of 40% of women's representation on corporate boards in 2012.

In 2019, the highest percentage of female board members in the largest publicly listed companies in the European Union was found in France (45.3%), the only country reaching the 40% target suggested by the European Commission. Four other countries exceeded 35%, Sweden (37.5%), Italy (36.1%), Belgium (35.9%) and Germany (35.6%), with the latter three also surpassing their legislative quota targets. Overall, a total of 11 countries out of the 28 countries in the European Union (39%) had over 30% of women as board members of their largest publicly listed companies. Nevertheless, in 12 countries, women constituted less than a fifth of board members, and in 3 countries they represented less than 10% of board members: Cyprus (9.1%), Estonia (9.4%) and Malta (10%) (see figure I).

Figure I: Percentage of women and men on the boards of the largest publicly listed companies in the European Union: 2019



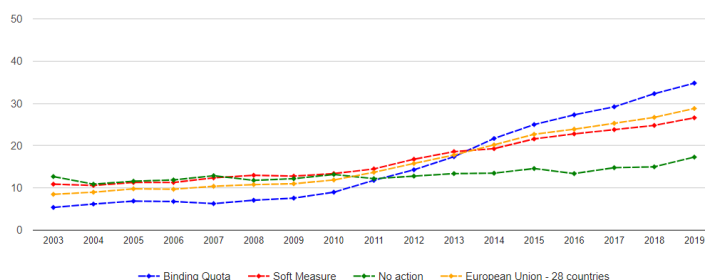
Source: Compiled and calculated by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), Statistics Division, from data obtained from the European Institute for Gender Equality, Gender Statistics Database (accessed on 25 June 2020); and European Institute for Gender Equality, Legislative quotas can be strong drivers for gender balance in boardrooms (<https://eige.europa.eu/gender-statistics/dgs/data-talks/legislative-quotas-can-be-strong-drivers-gender-balance-boardrooms>).

Legislative quotas can be strong drivers for gender balance in boardrooms

Government intervention has proven to be an effective method for improving gender diversity on corporate boards. Before 2010, the proportion of women on the boards of the largest listed companies in the countries of the European Union was steady. In 2010, the European Commission recommended the adoption of legislative action to set a gender target on boards. Since 2010, the average proportion of women on the boards of the largest listed companies has doubled, from 11.9% in 2010, to 28.8% in 2019.

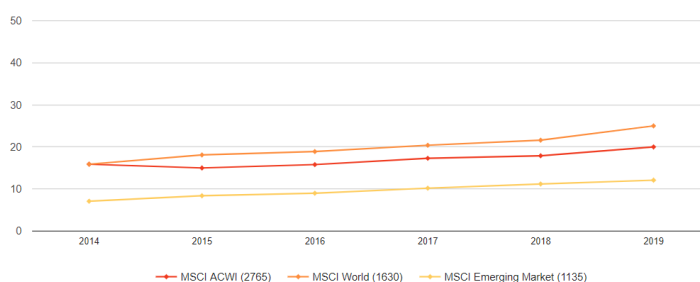
Of the 11 countries with over 30% of female board members, five had implemented legislative quotas. The proportion of women on boards has gone up by 25.8% in the five countries with legislative quotas compared to a 16.9% overall increase in the 28 countries of the European Union. This difference is striking when compared to countries without quotas or that have taken no action at all, where there was only a 4.1% increase in women's representation over the same nine-year period. Less dramatic improvements have been observed in countries using soft measures, or non-binding quotas, where women's representation on boards increased by 13.2% over the same time period (see figure II).

Figure II: Change in the proportion of women on the boards of the largest listed companies in the European Union by type of action taken by governments: 2003–2019



Source: Compiled and calculated by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), Statistics Division, based on the data obtained from European Institute for Gender Equality, Gender Statistics Database (accessed on 25 June 2020).

A 2019 study² revealed a similar trend of female representation on corporate boards in 23 out of 49 developed countries with available data (figure III).³ Overall, female representation on boards has been growing, although not fast enough. Over the last five years, the growth rate was faster in developed countries (9.1%) than in emerging economies (5%). According to another report, at the current pace the goal of 30% of women's representation on boards will not be reached until 2029.⁴

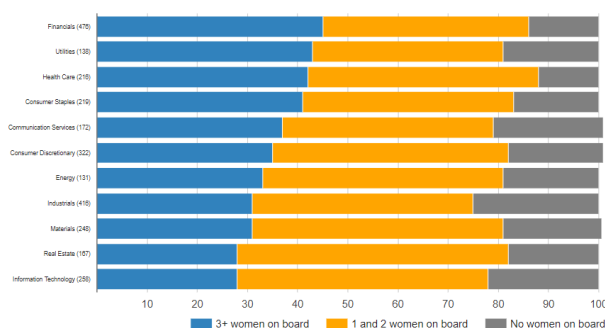
Figure III: Trends in the share of women on corporate boards in selected countries: 2014–2019

Source: Compiled by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), Statistics Division, based on the 2015, 2017, 2018 and 2019 Morgan Stanley Capital International "Women on Boards" progress reports.

Note: The Morgan Stanley Capital International "All Country World Index" is comprised of the MSCI World Index, which captures 23 developed economies, and the MSCI Emerging Market Index, which covers 26 emerging economies (numbers in parentheses indicate the number of companies reflected in the analysis in 2019).

Distribution of companies by number of women on their boards are not even across economic sectors

In 2019, the distribution of companies by number of women on their boards were not even across economic sectors (see figure IV). Out of more than 2,700 companies in over 50 countries, the financial sector showed the highest proportion of companies with at least three women on their boards (45%), while the information technology sector remained the sector with the lowest (28%). In all sectors, over 75% of companies had at least one woman on their boards. The industrial sector showed the largest proportion of companies without women on boards (25%), followed by the information technology (22%) and communications services sectors (22%).⁵

Figure IV: Distribution of companies by number of women on their boards, by economic sector: 2019

Source: Compiled by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), Statistics Division, based on Morgan Stanley Capital International, "Women on Boards: 2019 Progress Report".

Note: Numbers in parentheses indicate the total number of companies in each economic sector.

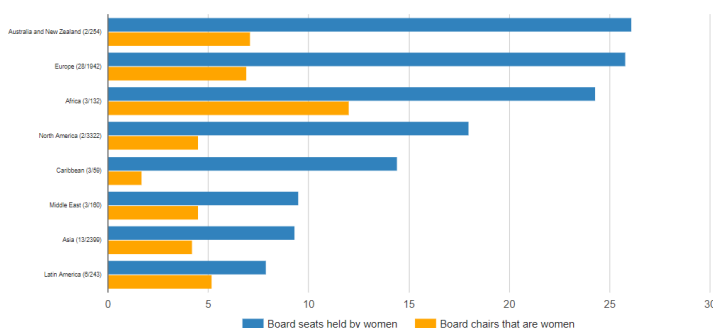
The "glass wall" phenomenon: women are more likely to be non-executive directors on supervisory boards rather than executives on management boards

As highlighted in the 2019 report of the International Labour Organization (ILO),⁶ while companies have been making efforts to place more women on boards, the roles of women on boards have not been emphasized enough and the "glass wall" phenomenon, which restricts women to support management positions rather than strategic management functions, is evident still at the board level. This is particularly apparent in companies with a two-tier board structure. Some countries have a mandatory two-tier structure: a management board and a supervisory board. The executive directors on the management board decide about the company's objectives and implement the necessary measures, while the non-executive directors on the supervisory board monitor those decisions.⁷ Evidence presented in the above-mentioned report of ILO reveals that women are more likely to be non-executive than executive directors and on supervisory rather than management boards in countries with two-tier board systems (for example, in France and Germany).

Women as board chairs: gender equality remains elusive

While the share of female participation on corporate boards has increased, boards in all the regions remain largely chaired by men. As noted in the above-mentioned ILO report, in 2018, over 76% of companies reported having a man as the chair of the board (among surveyed companies that have a board), and, when further investigating the presence of women as board chairs of large listed companies in selected countries, the report noted that the share is generally less than 10%. Data compiled by the Deloitte Global Center for Corporate Governance in 2018, covering nearly 7,000 companies in 66 countries, show that the proportion of female board chairs is less than 10% in almost all regions. Even in Europe, where the majority of legislative quotas on female board members have been implemented, only 6.9% of board chairs are women (see figure V).⁸

Figure V : Female representation on boards by region: 2018



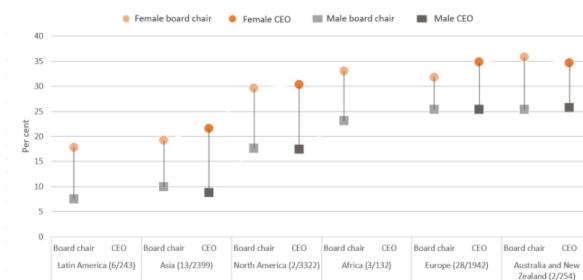
Source: Deloitte Global Center for Corporate Governance, Women in the boardroom: A global perspective, sixth edition, 2019.

Note: Numbers in parentheses indicate: first the total number of countries and second the total number of companies (countries/companies) in the region (regional groupings are different from those used under the Sustainable Development Goals). Since the number of countries for selected regions is small, the results presented above should be interpreted with caution.

Interrelationships between corporate leadership and board diversity

Data from 2018 show that, across regions, companies with female rather than male board chairs have a significantly higher number of women serving on boards. For example, in Asia, the percentage of women on boards was 19.2% when the chair was a woman compared to 9.9% when the chair was a man. The same phenomenon was found in companies with a female Chief Executive Officer. The largest difference was seen in North America, where 30.9% of board members were female when a woman was Chief Executive Officer, compared to only 17.4% when the Chief Executive Officer was a man (see figure VI).⁹ Furthermore, recent evidence showed that, when there is gender balance on boards, companies are more likely to have **women in senior management and in top executive positions**.¹⁰

Figure VI: Share of women serving on corporate boards, by sex of board chair and Chief Executive Officer: 2018



Source: Deloitte Global Center for Corporate Governance, Women in the boardroom: A global perspective, sixth edition, 2019.

Note: Numbers in parentheses indicate the total number of countries and companies in the region: (regional groupings are different from those used under the Sustainable Development Goals).

About the data

Coverage

Women's representation on the boards of: the largest publicly listed companies in the 28 States members of the European Union;¹¹ large-cap and mid-cap companies across 23 developed market and 26 emerging market countries;¹² and companies in 66 countries and territories in regions worldwide.¹³

Definitions

- Percentage of board seats held by women is calculated by dividing the number of board seats held by women by the total number of board seats.
- Percentage of women chairs of corporate boards is calculated by dividing the number of board chair positions held by women by the total number of board chair seats.

Footnotes

1. [30% Club: Growth through diversity.](#)
2. [Morgan Stanley Capital International, "Women on Boards: 2019 Progress Report"](#).
3. The Morgan Stanley Capital International "[All Country World Index](#)" is comprised of the [MSCI World Index](#), which captures 23 developed economies, and the [MSCI Emerging Market Index](#), which covers 26 emerging economies. Developed-market countries include: Australia; Austria; Belgium; Canada; Denmark; Finland; France; Germany; Hong Kong, China; Ireland; Israel; Italy; Japan; the Netherlands; New Zealand; Norway; Portugal; Singapore; Spain; Sweden; Switzerland; the United Kingdom; and the United States. Emerging-market countries include: Argentina; Brazil; Chile; China; Colombia; Czechia; Egypt; Greece; Hungary; India; Indonesia; Malaysia; Mexico; Pakistan; Peru; the Philippines; Poland; Qatar; the Republic of Korea; the Russian Federation; Saudi Arabia; South Africa; Taiwan Province of China; Thailand; Turkey; and the United Arab Emirates.
4. [Deloitte Global Center for Corporate Governance, Women in the boardroom: A global perspective, sixth edition, 2019.](#)
5. [Morgan Stanley Capital International, "Women on Boards: 2019 Progress Report"](#).
6. [International Labour Organization \(ILO\), Women in business and management: The business case for change, Geneva, 2019.](#)
7. [University of Pennsylvania, Carey Law School, Block, D. and Gerstner, A.L., "One-Tier vs. Two-Tier Board Structure: A Comparison Between the United States and Germany United States and Germany"](#)
8. [Deloitte Global Center for Corporate Governance, Women in the boardroom: A global perspective, sixth edition, 2019.](#)
9. [Deloitte Global Center for Corporate Governance, Women in the boardroom: A global perspective, sixth edition, 2019.](#) ([back to text](#))
10. [International Labour Organization \(ILO\), Women in business and management: The business case for change, Geneva, 2019.](#)
11. [European Union, 2019 Report on equality between women and men in the EU, Luxembourg, 2019.](#)
12. [Morgan Stanley Capital International, All Country World Index, 2019](#)
13. [Deloitte Global Center for Corporate Governance, Women in the boardroom: A global perspective, sixth edition, 2019;](#) the 66 countries and territories profiled in the report are: Argentina; Australia; Austria; Belgium; Bermuda; Brazil; Canada; Cayman Islands; Chile; China; Colombia; Croatia; Czechia; Denmark; Egypt; Estonia; Finland; France; Germany; Greece; Hong Kong, China; Hungary; Iceland; India; Indonesia; Ireland; Israel; Italy; Japan; Jordan; Kazakhstan; Kenya; Latvia; Lebanon; Lithuania; Luxembourg; Malaysia; Mexico; Morocco; the Netherlands; Nigeria; Norway; Peru; the Philippines; Poland; Portugal; Qatar; the Republic of Korea; Romania; the Russian Federation; Saudi Arabia; Singapore; Slovakia; South Africa; Spain; Sweden; Switzerland; Taiwan Province of China; Trinidad and Tobago; Turkey; Thailand; the United Arab Emirates; the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland; the United States of America; Viet Nam; and New Zealand.

Power and decision making

Women in national parliaments



Key points

- In 2020, women are free under the law to participate in political activity in all countries worldwide, although significant obstacles to their effective access to parliament remain, including: gender stereotypes; unequal access to resources and education; unequal social and legal status; and violence and harassment perpetrated against women in politics and women aspirants to political office.
- Despite these challenges, there has been a continuous improvement in women's access to parliament, with slow but steady progress in representation over the past 25 years. From 1995 to 2020, the proportion of parliamentary seats held by women rose from 11.3% to 24.9%. Improvement appears to have slowed down, however, since 2015 – and currently, in 2020, women hold at least 50% of the seats in only four national parliaments.
- From the regional perspective, major milestones have been achieved in recent years in Australia and New Zealand, Latin America and the Caribbean and Europe and Northern America. However, Oceania, excluding Australia and New Zealand, continues to lag behind, with only 6% of parliamentary seats being held by women.
- To a large extent such progress is the result of the introduction of targeted policy and legal measures to increase women's representation in national parliaments. Of the 20 countries with the highest percentages of women in parliament, 16 apply some type of gender quota.
- Few women in politics reach the higher echelons of parliamentary hierarchies, particularly at the top levels as president or speaker of the house. Although the percentage of female presiding officers of parliament almost doubled, from 10.5% in 1995 to 20.5% in 2020, it is still too low to influence policymaking effectively.
- Women continue to be underrepresented in key decision-making positions in parliaments, with the exception of gender equality committees, 73% of which are chaired by women.

Background

Women's representation in national parliaments and in key decision-making positions in parliament is an essential aspect of their participation in political and public life: their representation is a human right and a prerequisite for genuine democracy,¹ sustainable development and peace.² The inclusion of the perspectives and interests of women contributes to good governance and gender equality in society.

A stronger presence of women in parliament and in parliamentary leadership allows for the prominent placement of their concern on political agendas, and for the introduction of fresh priorities through the adoption and implementation of policies and laws relevant to women's issues.³ The full political participation of women requires that they occupy key positions of influence, as envisioned by the Plan of Action for Gender-sensitive Parliaments adopted by the Inter-Parliamentary Union in 2012.⁴

Current situation

In 2020, women are free under the law to participate in political activity in all countries worldwide, although significant obstacles to their effective access to parliament remain.

Women face discrimination within the family, the economy and society, as well as under the law. A male-dominated political culture, persisting gender stereotypes that confine women to the private sphere, unequal access to resources and education, unequal social and legal status and violence and harassment perpetrated against women in politics and as aspirants to political office need to be tackled in order to ensure that women have the same opportunities as men to access political office.⁵

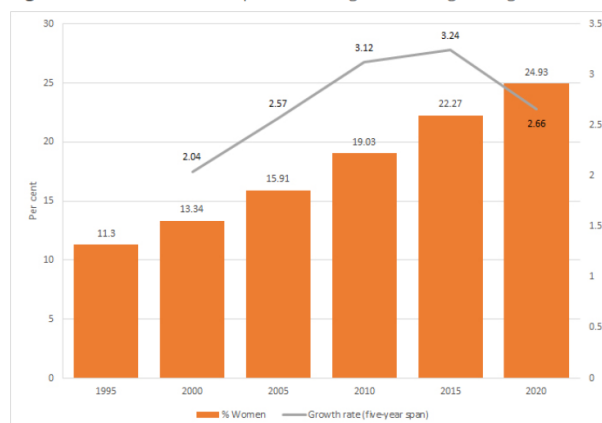
As emphasized by the Inter-Parliamentary Union, increasing attention has been paid to instances of sexism, harassment and

gender-based violence against women parliamentarians that may dissuade other women from pursuing a political career and undermine the full participation of women elected to parliament in decision-making processes.⁶

Despite these challenges, there has been a continuous improvement in women's access to parliament, with slow but steady progress in representation over the past 25 years.

From 1995 to 2020, the proportion of parliamentary seats held by women rose from 11.3% to 24.9%, and up until 2015, progress in women's representation was continuous over each successive 5-year span, reaching a growth rate of 3.2% between 2010 and 2015. However, from 2015 and 2020, the rate of increase slowed down to 2.7% (see figure I).

Figure I: Women in national parliaments, global average and growth rate: 1995 to 2020



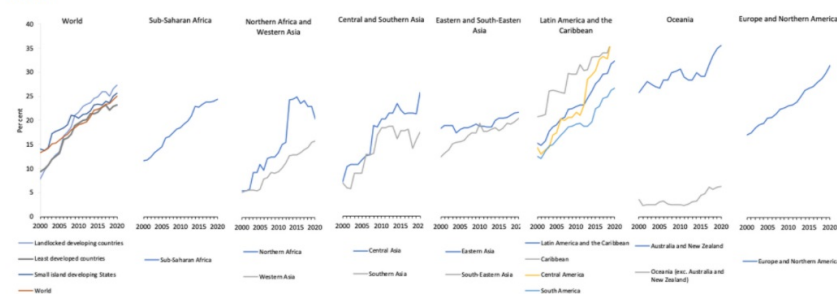
Source: Compiled by the United Nations Statistics Division based on data provided by IPU for single and lower houses.

Note: Data as of 1 February each year, except for 1995 (1 July).

From the regional perspective, major milestones have been achieved in recent years in Australia and New Zealand, Latin America and the Caribbean and Europe and Northern America. In 2017, Australia and New Zealand surpassed the 30% mark in the proportion of parliamentary seats held by women for the second time, after first reaching that threshold in 2010. In 2019, Latin America and the Caribbean became the second region to surpass the 30% mark, followed by the Europe and Northern America region in 2020.

In 2020, the share of women in national parliaments was the highest in Australia and New Zealand (35.1%), followed by Latin America and the Caribbean (32.1%), Europe and Northern America (31%) and Central Asia (25.4%). The other regions were below the global average, significantly so in Western Asia (15.6%), Southern Asia (17.3%), South-Eastern Asia (20.4%) and Eastern Asia (21.6%). Moreover, although minor improvements have been noted over time, the lowest share of women in parliament, 6.2%, continues to be in the Oceania region, excluding Australia and New Zealand.

Figure II: Proportion of seats held by women in single or lower houses of parliament, by region: 2000–2020



Source: Compiled and calculated by the United Nations Statistics Division based on data obtained from the Sustainable Development Goals database (<https://unstats.un.org/sdgs>) (last accessed 10 July 2020).

To a large extent such progress is the result of the introduction of targeted policy and legal measures to increase women's representation in national parliaments. Countries that have adopted special measures generally have higher numbers of women in parliament. While in 1995 only two countries had adopted legislation ensuring gender quotas⁷ for parliamentary elections (Argentina and Nepal), by 2020 over 80 countries had done so.⁸

In 2019, overall, women won 25.8% of seats in 68 parliamentary chambers up for renewal in 55 countries.⁹ In the 40 chambers that applied quotas – either legislated or voluntarily applied by political parties – women gained, on average, 30.3% of seats. In the remaining 28 chambers, which did not apply any form of quota, only 17.9% of seats were won by women.

Other key factors include policies to promote women's recruitment by political parties, strong women's movements, including women's youth groups, awareness-raising efforts and a more gender-sensitive political culture.

Over the past 25 years, the top countries in terms of women's participation in parliament have become a much more diverse group. In 1995, 8 out of the 10 top-ranking countries were located in Europe (the other two being in Africa and Latin America). In 2020, the group included five countries from the Latin America and the Caribbean region, two European countries, two countries from sub-Saharan Africa and one country from the Northern Africa and Western Asia region (see table 1).

In 2020, only four countries have thus far reached or surpassed the parity line of 50% representation by women in parliament: Rwanda (61.3%), Cuba (53.2%), Bolivia (Plurinational State of) (53.1%) and the United Arab Emirates (50.0%). Women's representation in eight countries followed closely: Mexico (48.2%), Nicaragua (47.3%), Sweden (47.0%), Grenada (46.7%), Andorra (46.4%), South Africa (46.3%), Finland (46.0%) and Costa Rica (45.6%).¹⁰

Table 1: Top 10 countries in terms of women's participation in single and lower houses of parliament: 1995 and 2020 (Percentage)

1995		2020	
Country		Country	
Sweden	40.4	Rwanda	61.3
Norway	39.4	Cuba	53.2
Denmark	33.5	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	53.1
Finland	33.5	United Arab Emirates	50.0
Netherlands	32.7	Mexico	48.2
Seychelles	27.3	Nicaragua	47.3
Austria	26.8	Sweden	47.0
Germany	26.3	Grenada	46.7
Iceland	25.4	Andorra	46.4
Argentina	25.3	South Africa	46.4

Source: IPU, Women in Parliament: 1995-2020.

Few women in politics reach the higher echelons of parliamentary hierarchies, particularly at the top levels as president or speaker of the house. Once elected, women parliamentarians need to hold positions of power and authority and participate in committee work if they are to influence policy direction. They also need to be positive role models for other women, work to change parliamentary procedures and, ultimately, support women's rights and pursue gender equality (see table 2).

Table 2: Countries with a woman presiding over the lower or single house of parliament or upper house or senate by region: as at 1 January 2020

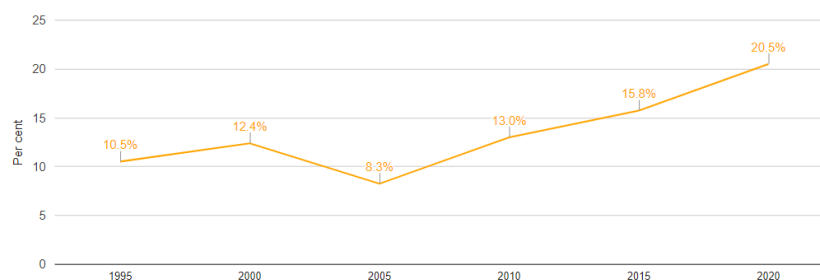
Sub-Saharan Africa		
Democratic Republic of the Congo	Equatorial Guinea	Eswatini
Ethiopia	Gabon	Lesotho
Liberia	Madagascar	Malawi
Mozambique	Republic of the Gambia	Rwanda
South Africa	Suriname	Togo
Uganda	Zimbabwe	
Northern Africa and Western Asia		
Bahrain		
Central and Southern Asia		
Bangladesh	Kazakhstan	Turkmenistan
Uzbekistan		
Eastern and South-Eastern Asia		
Indonesia	Japan	Lao People's Democratic Republic
Viet Nam		
Latin America and the Caribbean		
Antigua and Barbuda	Argentina	Bahamas
Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Trinidad and Tobago (2 chambers)	Uruguay (2 chambers)
Europe and Northern America		
Andorra	Belarus	Belgium
Belize	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Bulgaria
Dominica	Italy	Latvia
Mexico (2 chambers)	Netherlands	Norway
Poland	Republic of Moldova	Russian Federation
Saint Lucia	San Marino	Serbia
Spain (2 chambers)	Switzerland	United States of America

Source: IPU and UN-Women, "Women in Politics: 2020".

Note: Out of a total of 271 parliamentary chambers, two chambers have two additional speakers and three chambers have one additional speaker, for a total of 278 speakers.

Between 1995 and 2020, the percentage of female presiding officers of parliament almost doubled, from 10.5% to 20.5%, although this level of representation is still too low to influence policy-making effectively (figure III).

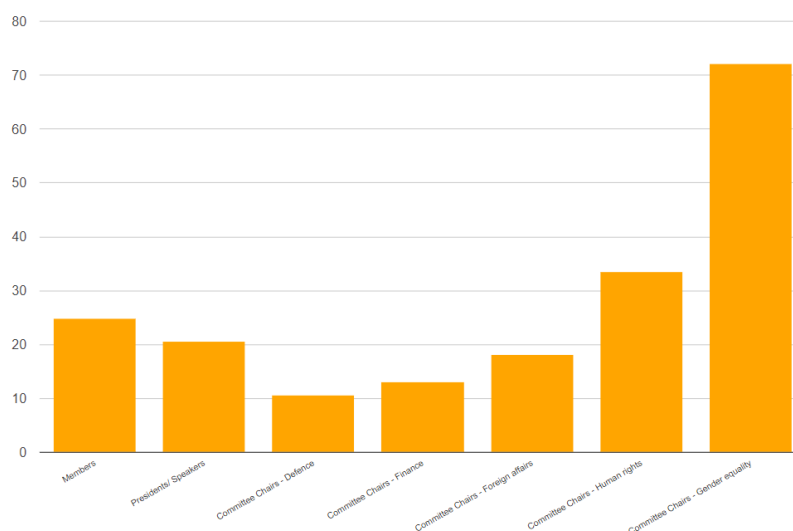
Figure III: Progress in the percentage of women among presiding officers in parliament: 1995 to 2020



Source: IPU data file.

Women are acutely underrepresented in key decision-making positions in parliaments in relation to their overall share of nearly 25% of parliamentary seats. Available data for 2020 shows a contrasting picture of women's leadership of parliamentary committees. Women currently chair 26% of foreign affairs, defence, finance, human rights and gender equality committees combined, but their share varies significantly by committee type, from 73% of gender equality committees to just over 10% of defence committees. Data for the reporting period show that women chair approximately 33% of human rights committees, 20% of foreign affairs committees and 13% of finance committees (see figure IV).

Figure IV: Percentage of women occupying key decision-making positions in parliament: as at 1 January 2020



Source: Compiled and calculated by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), Statistics Division, based on data provided by IPU.

Note: Data on members, presidents, speakers and committee chairs cover both upper and lower houses

Legislative environment

Article 25 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights recognizes "the right and opportunity, without distinction of any kind such as (...) sex (...) to take part in the conduct of public affairs, directly or through freely chosen representatives".

Article 7 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women provides that "States Parties shall (...) ensure to women, on equal terms with men, the right: (a) To vote in all elections and public referenda and to be eligible for election to all publicly elected bodies; (b) To participate in the formulation of government policy and the implementation thereof and to hold public office and perform all public functions at all levels of government."

Countries in focus

Over the last 25-year span, from 1995 to 2020, the most significant progress in the achievement of women's equal representation in parliament has been made in Rwanda (+ 57%), the United Arab Emirates (+50%), Andorra (+ 42.8%) and the Plurinational State of Bolivia (+42.3%), respectively, in their lower or single houses. In 1995, the top country (Sweden) had 40% of seats held by women in parliament. In 2020, in the top country (Rwanda), over 60% of seats in the lower house are held by women.

About the data

Coverage

Sustainable Development Goal indicator 5.5.1a covers the single chamber in unicameral parliaments and the lower chamber in bicameral parliaments. It does not cover the upper chamber of bicameral parliaments. Data on the proportion of seats held by women and of female speakers/presiding officers of parliament are available for the period 1995–2020.

Availability

Data on female chairs of parliamentary committees is only available for 2020.

As at 1 January 2020, data on the proportion of parliamentary seats held by women were available for 191 countries; data on female presiding officers were available for 192 countries; and data on female chairs of parliamentary committees in the above five areas were available for 127 countries.

Oceania (excl) refers to Oceania excluding Australia and New Zealand throughout the publication.

Definitions

- Proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments is calculated as the total number of seats occupied by women divided by the total number of seats in parliament. Seats refer to the number of members of parliament (Sustainable Development Goal indicator 5.5.1a).
- Proportion of women in key decision-making positions in national parliaments, all chambers combined, is calculated as the total number of positions held by women as presiding officers/speakers and chairs of parliamentary committees in the following five areas: foreign affairs, defence, finance, gender equality, and human rights. (Sustainable Development Goal indicator 16.7.1a)

References

- Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), 2008, Equality in Politics: A Survey of Women and Men in Parliaments ([link](#)).
- IPU, 2010, Is Parliament Open to Women? ([link](#)).
- IPU, 2011, Gender-Sensitive Parliaments. A Global Review of Good Practice ([link](#)).

Sustainable Development Goals metadata

- [Indicator 5.5.1a](#) [Indicator 16.7.1a](#)

Web addresses

- <https://data.ipu.org/women-ranking>
- <https://data.ipu.org/women-averages>
- <https://data.ipu.org/speakers>
- <https://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/gender-quotas/database>

Footnotes

1. Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), 1997, Universal Declaration on Democracy, article 4.
2. Mary Caprioli, "Gendered Conflict", Journal of Peace Research, vol. 37, Issue. 1 (2000).
3. Astghik Mavisakalyan and Yashar Tarverdi, "Gender and climate change: Do female parliamentarians make difference?", European Journal of Political Economy, vol. 56 (2019).
4. IPU, 2012, Plan of Action for Gender-Sensitive Parliaments.
5. IPU, 2016, Sexism, harassment and violence against women in parliament, Issues brief; and IPU, 2019, Guidelines for the elimination of sexism, harassment and violence against women in parliament.
6. IPU and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, 2018, "Sexism, harassment and violence against women in parliaments in Europe", Issues Brief.
7. Gender quotas, which aim to reverse discrimination in law and practice and to level the playing field for women in politics, are numerical targets that stipulate the number or percentage of women that must be included in a candidate list or the number of seats to be allocated to women in a legislature. Gender quotas may be mandated in the constitution, stipulated in national legislation or formulated in a political party statute.
8. IPU, Women in Parliament: 1990–2020–25 years in review.
9. Ibid., data includes parliamentary chambers in both lower and upper houses.
10. IPU and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) 2020, "Women in Politics: 2020".

Women in politics and decision-making positions in Africa [ECA]



Key points

- The proportion of seats held by women in parliaments in Africa varies across subregions: Southern Africa (35.5%) and Eastern Africa (30.9%) are the two subregions with representation higher than the 30% minimum target recommended in the Beijing Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995.¹
- In 2020, in 12 countries in Africa at least 30% of parliamentarians were women in the lower houses of parliament. African Union member States such as Rwanda, Namibia, South Africa and Senegal are among the countries in the world with the highest level of women's representation in their parliaments. Rwanda occupies the first position globally as a country with the highest proportion of women in parliament (61%).
- Countries in Africa that have surpassed the 30% minimum target in representation of women in parliaments have adopted gender quotas.
- Based on data for 33 African countries, the quota systems used include: legislated candidate quotas (39%); reserved seats (39%); and voluntary political party quotas (24%).
- The proportion of women among government ministers in countries in Africa is on the rise. In Ethiopia, women's political representation in the executive branch increased from 6% of women ministers in 2005 to 48% in 2018. Ethiopia also elected its first female president in 2018.
- Overall, the level of women's representation in managerial level positions remains low in Africa.
- Gender stereotypes that view women as having policy expertise in education, gender, health care and social affairs means that women managers are, in general, concentrated in those areas rather than in defence, foreign policy or economics, where men predominate.

Background

Women's representation in political and public life, especially in high visibility and high-profile positions of power, ensures that a gendered perspective is embraced at the highest levels of decision-making. The enhanced representation of women in positions of authority promotes their rights, voice and agency and is critical for achieving gender equality.

The main obstacles preventing women from engaging in political life are structural barriers and discriminatory attitudes and practices, which reinforce each other and support patriarchal values and stereotypes that promote a negative view of women's roles in all areas of decision-making, including female political leadership; such attitudes may also contribute to the spread of violence against women in the political arena. Furthermore, in some countries unequal laws and institutions and capacity gaps continue to restrict women's ability to run for office. Because of these barriers, women are less likely than men to have the requisite education, opportunities, contacts and resources to attain political power and become effective leaders.

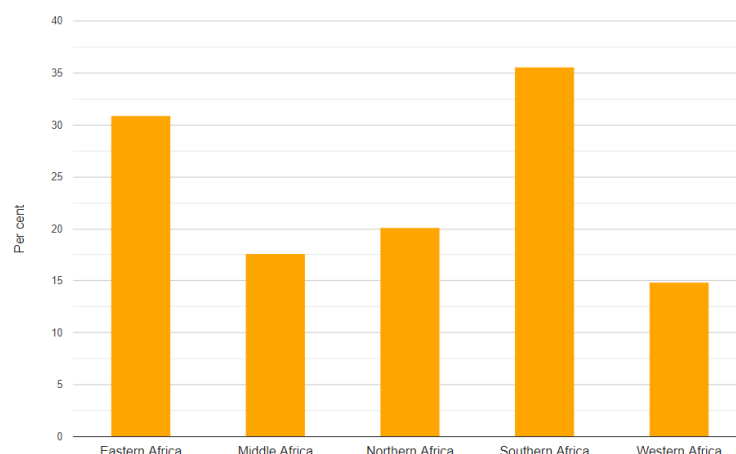
Women in national parliaments: gender gaps in national parliaments remain significant worldwide despite reductions observed over the period 2000–2020

There has been a steady improvement in women's [representation in parliaments worldwide](#), from 13.3% in 2000 to 24.9% in 2020. Women's representation in parliaments has also increased since 2000 in sub-Saharan Africa (from 11.5% to 23.9%) and in North Africa and Western Asia (from 5.3% to 18.7%).

In countries in Africa, women's representation in parliaments varies by subregion

In 2020, levels of women's representation in parliaments in Africa differ widely between subregions (see figure I). Southern Africa has the highest representation, with 35.5% of parliamentary seats held by women, followed by Eastern Africa, with women's representation at 30.9%. In Central, Western and Northern Africa, women's representation in parliament is comparatively lower, on average, and is below the 30% minimum threshold recommended in the Beijing Platform for Action.

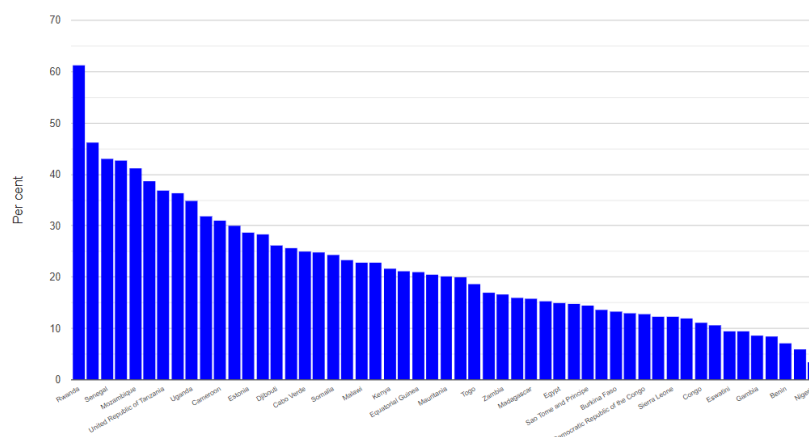
Figure I: Proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments in Africa by subregion: 2020 (Percentage)



Source: UNDESA, Statistics Division, Global SDG Indicators Database (<https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/database/>).

Women's representation in parliaments in Africa varies between countries: in 2020, 12 African countries had at least 30% of women parliamentarians in the lower houses of parliament

An African Union report issued in 2019 on the "Status of Gender and Development in Africa"² shows that countries have made considerable progress in implementing commitments towards gender equality and women's empowerment. Member States of the African Union, including Namibia, Rwanda, Senegal and South Africa, are among the countries in the world with the highest levels of women's representation in parliament. As of 2020, Rwanda has the highest proportion of women in parliament (61%) worldwide, and globally Rwanda has had the highest number of women in its national assembly for more than a decade (with a proportion of 63.8% during the period 2013–2016 and 61.3% in 2020). Countries such as Namibia, Senegal and South Africa have also performed well in 2020, with at least 42% of women in their national parliaments (see figure II).

Figure II: Proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments in Africa: 2020 (Percentage)

Source: UNDESA, Statistics Division, Global SDG Indicators Database (<https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/database/>).

Gender quotas contribute to a higher proportion of women in national parliaments

Affirmative action measures to ensure gender equality and women's empowerment, including **quotas**, have contributed to progress in women's representation in parliaments in Africa. Countries that have reached or surpassed the 30% minimum target in representation of women in parliament have all adopted gender quotas: Namibia, Rwanda, Senegal, South Africa and Zimbabwe, all countries with more than 30% of parliamentary seats held by women, have quotas and proportional representation as part of their electoral systems.³

The quota system differs from one country to another. The main systems used in the continent include legislated candidate quotas, reserved seats and voluntary political party quotas. An assessment made by the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA)⁴ in 33 African countries shows that approximately 40% adopted legislated candidate quota, about 40% reserved seats and just over 24% adopted voluntary political party quotas.

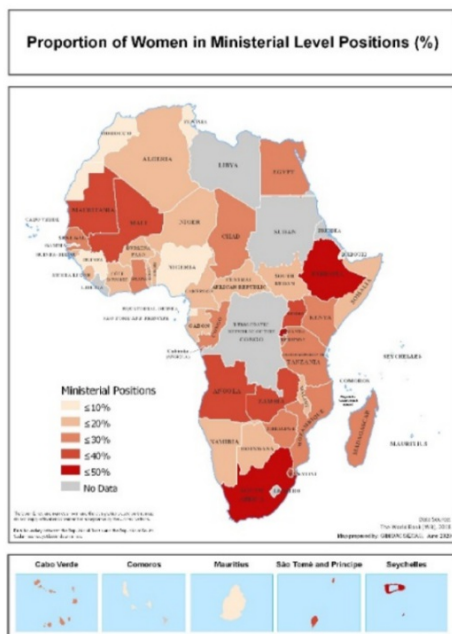
Rwanda, for example, has statutory provisions reserving 30% of seats for women in its bicameral legislature, while South Africa's municipal structures require that political parties ensure "that 50% of the candidates on the party list are women" and that "women must be fairly represented in a constituency committee." However, having a gender quota is no guarantee of an increase in the representation of women in parliaments. Other conditions are necessary. In the Niger, after the adoption of a quota system to ensure the representation of women in elected offices, the Government and public administration, there was a significant increase in the presence of women in parliament (from 12% in 1999 to 17% in the 2016 elections); this was not the case, however, in terms of women's representation in local governance. Women's representation in local governing bodies remains below the quotas set by law (25% for the cabinet and senior positions in the public service and 15% for both sexes in parliament for legislative and local elections).⁵

The proportion of African women among ministers is on the rise

Overall, women's representation as cabinet ministers has increased in Africa over the period 2005–2018. In 2018, the share of **women in ministerial positions** reached or exceeded 30% in the following countries: Rwanda (52%), South Africa (49%), Ethiopia (48%), Seychelles (46%), Angola (34%), Sao Tome and Principe (33%), Uganda (33.3%), Zambia (30%), Mali (34%), Eswatini (32%) and Mauritania (32%) (see figure III). The country with the lowest share of women in ministerial positions is Morocco (6%). Other countries with less than 10% of women cabinet ministers were Equatorial Guinea (7%) and Nigeria (8%). There is a major increase

in women's political representation in the executive branch of Government in Ethiopia, from 6% of women ministers in 2005 to 48% in 2018, and the country elected its first female president in 2018.

Figure III: Proportion of women in ministerial level positions, 2005-2018 (latest available)

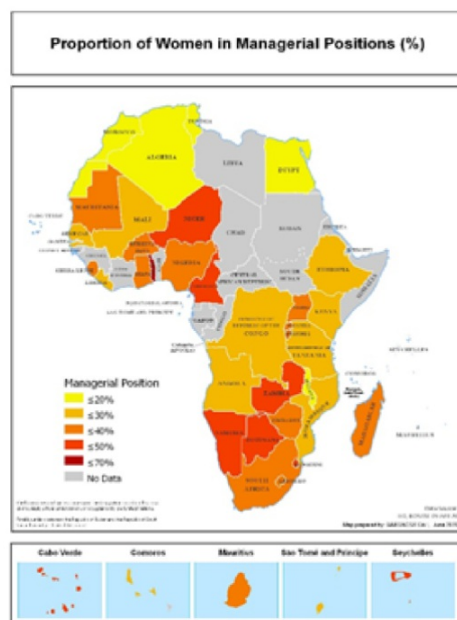


Source: World Bank, Data Catalog, Proportion of Women in Ministerial Level Positions (updated September 2020) ([https://datacatalog.worldbank.org/search?search_api_views_fulltext_op=AND&query=Proportion of women in ministerial level positions \(%\)&nid=&sort_by=search_api_relevance&sort_order=DESC](https://datacatalog.worldbank.org/search?search_api_views_fulltext_op=AND&query=Proportion of women in ministerial level positions (%)&nid=&sort_by=search_api_relevance&sort_order=DESC)).

Women's representation in managerial positions remains low in countries in Africa

The persistence of data gaps on women's representation in **managerial positions** in Africa makes it difficult to assess progress under this indicator. A review of the situation in Member States during the period 2014–2019 shows that, apart from Togo, where the proportion of women in managerial positions was 70% in 2017, women's representation remains generally low in most countries across Africa (see figure IV). Increased representation of women has been observed, however, in some countries, including Cameroon (49.3% in 2014), the Niger (49.3% in 2017), Seychelles (47.8% in 2018), Namibia (43.6% in 2018), Cape Verde (43.4% in 2018), Eswatini (43.4% in 2016) and Zambia (40.5 in 2018). The gender gap in women's representation is affected by cultural and societal factors, including illiteracy, the burden of unpaid care work on women and discriminatory attitudes and practices that reinforce patriarchal notions about the undesirability of having women in leadership roles.⁶ Moreover, gender stereotypes that view women as having policy expertise in fields such as education, gender, health care and social affairs means that women managers are, in general, concentrated in those areas and not in defence, foreign policy and economics where men predominate in managerial roles.⁷

Figure IV: Proportion of women in managerial positions, 2014-2019 (latest available)



Source: International Labour Organization (ILO), Sustainable Development Goal indicator 5.5.2 - Female share of employment in managerial positions (%) – Annual (https://www.ilo.org/shinyapps/bulkexplorer30/?lang=en&segment=indicator&id=SDG_0552_OC_RT_A).

Sources

- Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), Measuring Gender Equality & Women's Empowerment in Africa: African Gender and Development Index 2018 Regional Synthesis Report III, 2018, Addis Ababa, 2018
- United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), Statistics Division, Global indicator framework for the Sustainable Development Goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
- International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA), Gender Quotas Database
- UNDESA, Statistics Division, Global SDG Indicators Database
- World Bank, Data Catalog, Proportion of Women in Ministerial Level Positions (updated September 2020)

About the data

Definitions

- **Proportion of seats held by women in national parliament:** Calculated as the total number of seats occupied by women divided by the total number of seats. (SDG indicator 5.5.1.a). Seats refer to the number of parliamentary mandates, also known as the number of members of parliament. While seats are usually won by members in general parliamentary elections, they may also be filled by nomination, appointment, indirect election, rotation of members and through by-election.
- **Proportion of women in managerial positions:** Percentage of women in management positions as a measure of total employment in management. Managerial positions correspond to major group 1 of the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO-88 or ISCO-08).⁸ (SDG indicator 5.5.2)

Availability

- **Proportion of seats held by women in national parliament:** Time-series data are available for all countries in Africa: information is available for all countries where a national legislature exists and therefore does not include parliaments that have been dissolved or suspended for an indefinite period.
- **Proportion of women in managerial positions:** Data as of 2000 are available in the Global Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Indicators Database;⁹ time-series data going back several decades are available through ILOSTAT, the database of the Department of Statistics of the International Labour Organization (ILO).¹⁰

Footnotes

1. Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4–15 September 1995 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II .
2. African Union, "Status of Gender and Development in Africa": the report was prepared and presented to the African Union Assembly of Heads of State and Government in February 2020, by Nana Akufo-Addo, President of Ghana and the African Union Leader on Gender and Development Issues in Africa .
3. Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), Measuring Gender Equality & Women's Empowerment in Africa: African Gender and Development Index 2018 Regional Synthesis Report III, 2018, Addis Ababa, 2018 .
4. International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA), Gender Quotas Database.
5. Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), Measuring Gender Equality & Women's Empowerment in Africa: African Gender and Development Index 2018 Regional Synthesis Report III, 2018, Addis Ababa, 2018 .
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. International Labour Organization, International Standard Classification of Occupations .
9. United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), Statistics Division, Global Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Indicators Database .
10. ILO, Department of Statistics (ILOSTAT) database .

Women in local government [UN Women]



Background

Women's access to local government positions is a right and a necessary condition for ensuring the inclusion of women's interests and perspectives in local decision-making

Women's rights to political participation on equal terms with men and to shared power between women and men in decision-making bodies at all levels of government have been recognized in international normative frameworks¹ and emphasized in the Beijing Platform for Action.²

While the majority of research and global data collection on women's representation in decision-making positions has been focused on national parliaments, the inclusion of women in local governments positions in the SDG monitoring framework acknowledges the importance of a whole-of-government approach to sustainable development and of women's voices and leadership at the local as well as the national levels of government.

Women in local government decision-making positions represent a much more numerous and diverse group, and research shows that they redefine local priorities by being more inclusive,³ prioritizing family-friendly policies⁴ and, in some contexts, contributing to increased gender equality in terms of policymaking on income, employment and parental leave.⁵

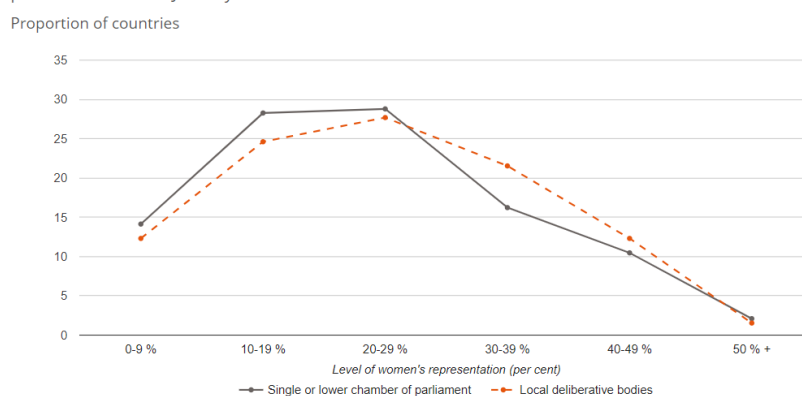
Current situation

Women's representation in local deliberative bodies is higher than in national parliaments, but still not on equal terms with men

As at 1 January 2020, as shown in the data available for 133 countries and areas worldwide, women held 36% of elected seats in local deliberative bodies. While women's representation at the local level was higher than in national parliaments (25%),⁶ it was not yet close to parity.

Women's representation in local deliberative bodies was at 40% or above in only a minority of countries (15%). In the majority of countries (53%), levels of women's representation were reported at levels between 10% and 30%, and in 12% of countries women's representation was less than 10%, a distribution similar to that observed for women's representation in national parliaments (see figure I).

Figure I: Proportion of countries by level of women's representation in local deliberative bodies and parliaments: as at 1 January 2020



Source: UN-Women, data on women's representation in parliament is based on, "Women in National Parliaments", the statistical archive of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (<http://archive.ipu.org/wmn-e/world-arc.htm>).

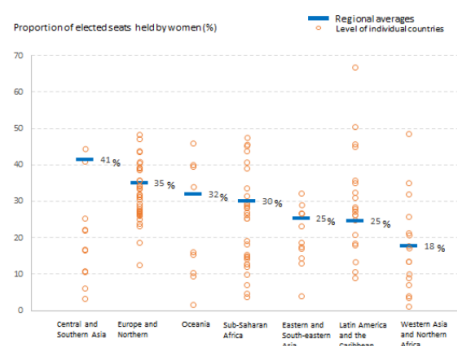
Women's representation in local deliberative bodies varies widely across and within regions

Women's representation is highest in countries in the Central and Southern Asia (41%) and Europe and Northern America (35%) regions, driven, in particular, by high levels of women's representation in countries with large numbers of councillors, such as France and India, while lowest in countries in the Northern Africa and Western Asia (18%) region (see figure II).

Nevertheless, there are countries with gender-balanced local deliberative bodies in almost all regions. Women's representation is over 40%, for example, in: Antigua and Barbuda (67%) and Bolivia (Plurinational State of) (50%) in Latin America and the Caribbean; Belarus (48%) and Iceland (47%) in Europe; Uganda (46%) in Africa; New Caledonia (46%) in Oceania; and India (44%) in Central and Southern Asia.

Figure II: Proportion of elected seats held by women in local deliberative bodies by region and country: as at 1 January 2020

Proportion of countries



Source: UN-Women

Note: Each circle represents a country; regional averages (weighted by number of local government members) are represented with a blue line.

High levels of women's representation have been reached, in the majority of cases, by means of legislated quotas

The use of legislated gender quotas has increased women's representation in local governments, particularly in developing regions. Legislated gender quotas are temporary special measures provided for in national legal frameworks for the purpose of correcting historical trends in numerical gender imbalance and fast tracking the increased representation of women.

Worldwide, countries with legislated quotas have higher levels of women's representation in local government (by 7% on average) compared to those without quotas.⁷ Increases resulting from the adoption of quotas are higher in countries in developing regions (11%), particularly in countries in sub-Saharan Africa (16%) and Northern Africa and Western Asia (13%).

About the data

Coverage

The indicator uses official data on elections results produced by national electoral management bodies and reported to the United Nations Entity on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) by national statistical offices. As at 1 January 2020, data were available for 133 countries and areas, including three quarters of all countries with elected local deliberative bodies.⁸

Definitions

- Proportion of women in local government is measured as the percentage of elected seats held by women in deliberative bodies of local governments (Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5, indicator 5.5.1(b))⁹. The indicator complements SDG indicator 5.5.1(a) on women's representation in national legislative bodies (specifically in the single or lower chambers of parliaments) by focusing on women's representation among the millions of members of local deliberative bodies with decision-making power around the world.
- Local government represents a decentralization of legislative, executive and administrative powers from the national to local levels, which enables improved governance on local matters and the more direct and inclusive participation of different groups of the population in local decision-making.

Related stories and further reading

- [Women in national parliaments](#)
- [Women in national parliaments and local governments in Mexico](#)
- [Women in politics and decision-making positions in Africa](#)
- See also: United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), "Women in local government: A data brief" (UN-Women policy brief series (forthcoming)).

Footnotes

1. Convention on the Political Rights of Women (1953), General Assembly resolution 640 (VII), art. II and III; International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966), General Assembly resolution 2200 (XXI), art.2 and 25; and Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979), General Assembly resolution 34/180, art. 3 and 7.
2. [Beijing Platform for Action, strategic objectives G.1 and G.2.](#)
3. Kathlene, L., "Power and influence in state legislative policy-making: The interaction of gender and position in committee hearing debates", *American Political Science Review*, vol. 88, No. 3, 1994; Tilly, L.A. and Gurin, P. (eds.), *Women, Politics and Change*, New York, Russell Sage Foundation, 1992; Weikart, L.A., Chen, G., Williams, D.W. and Hromic, H., "The Democratic Sex: Gender Differences and the Exercise of Power", *Journal of Women, Politics & Policy*, vol. 28, Issue 1, 2006..
4. Chattopadhyay, R. and Duflo, E., "Women as policy makers: Evidence from a randomized policy experiment in India", *Econometrica*, vol. 72, No.5, 2004; Bratton, K. and Ray, L., "Descriptive Representation, Policy Outcomes, and Municipal Day-Care coverage in Norway", *American Journal of Political Science*, vol. 46, No.2, 2002; Holman, M. R., "Sex and the city: Female leaders and spending on social welfare programs in U.S. municipalities", *Journal of Urban Affairs*, vol. 36, Issue 4, 2013; Smith, A., "Cities Where Women Rule: Female Political Incorporation and the Allocation of Community Development Block Grant Funding", *Politics & Gender*, vol. 10, Issue 3, 2014; Svaleryd, H., "Women's representation and public spending", *European Journal of Political Economy*, vol. 25, Issue 2, 2009; Funk, K.D. and Philips, A.Q., "Representative Budgeting: Women Mayors and the Composition of Spending in Local Governments", *Political Research Quarterly*, vol. 72, Issue 1, 2018.
5. Wangnerud, L. and Sundell, A., "Do Politics Matter? Women in Swedish Local Elected Assemblies 1970–2010 and Gender Equality in Outcomes", *European Political Science Review*, vol. 4, Issue 1, 2012.
6. [Inter-Parliamentary Union, "Women in National Parliaments", statistical archive.](#)
7. Unweighted averages.
8. [Metadata on indicator 5.5.1 \(b\).](#)
9. [United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs \(UNDESA\), Statistics Division, "Global SDG Indicators Database".](#)

Chapter 6

Violence against women and the girl child

Introduction

Violence against women and the girl child remains a global issue

Women throughout the world are subjected to physical, sexual, psychological and economic violence, regardless of their income, age or education, oftentimes leading to long-term physical, mental and emotional health problems. Around one third of women worldwide have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner; and 18% have experienced such violence in the past 12 months.

Intimate partner violence is the most common form of violence, peaking during women's reproductive years in both developed and developing countries. The prevalence of such violence declines with age but persists among older women, who are at greater risk of experiencing violence at the hands of their grown children while still at risk of violence from their domestic partners. In addition to intimate partner violence, women and girls are subjected to sexual harassment and other forms of sexual violence by non-partners, including people known to them. In the most extreme cases, violence against women can lead to death: globally, an estimated 137 women are killed by a member of their own family every day.

There has been progress in the fight to eliminate all forms of violence against women: attitudes are changing and intimate partner violence is becoming less acceptable. During the 8-year period from 2012 to 2019, women's acceptance of being beaten by their partners decreased in almost 75% of countries with trend data. A handful of countries with trend data have recorded a decrease in intimate partner violence since 2005 and female genital mutilation is becoming less common in some countries and subregions where the practice is prevalent.

Laws to address domestic violence are not yet universally available (153 countries have such laws); gaps are the largest in Northern Africa, Western Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, where less than 50% of countries have passed such laws. Fewer countries have laws on sexual harassment (103 countries) and fewer still have laws directly covering marital rape (43 countries).

In 2017, with 40% of judges being female worldwide, it is clear that gradual progress has been made towards parity in the number of judges to apply laws addressing domestic violence. However, if recent trends continue, the share of female judges will reach parity only by 2035. The situation among police officers is less positive, with women accounting for only 13% of all officers and recorded progress towards parity reported at a much slower rate, increasing by only 3 percentage points over the past 13 years.

At least 200 million girls and women alive today have been subjected to female genital mutilation in countries across Africa and the Middle East where this specific form of violence against women and girls is concentrated. Despite recent progress in some countries, the prevalence of the practice remains extremely high in parts of Northern Africa, Eastern Africa and West Africa. In six countries, at least 75% of adolescent girls aged 15–19 have undergone female genital mutilation.

Alarmingly, 58% of women intentionally killed in 2017 were killed by an intimate partner or a family member, that is, someone they would usually have trusted. While, overall, men are four times more likely to be murdered than women, women are four times more likely to be murdered by their intimate partners.

The periods of lockdown imposed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic have isolated people, disrupted social connections, including access to support programmes for women and girls, and have aggravated mental health problems in all sectors of the population. Many women and girls have been isolated in unsafe environments where they are at heightened risk of experiencing intimate partner violence.

Kazakhstan: intimate partner violence



Key points

- In 2015, 17% of ever-partnered women in Kazakhstan reported having experienced at least one act of physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence in their lifetimes, and about 5% had experienced this form of violence in the previous 12 months.
- Women are likely to experience severe forms of physical partner violence, such as punching, kicking or having objects thrown at them.
- Women are more likely to report experiencing frequent violence; data from 2015 show that 57% of women who experienced intimate partner violence reported having frequently experienced violence in the past 12 months.
- Around half (51%) of women in 2015 reported that they had never told anyone about their experience of intimate partner violence. Among those who had told someone, only 8% told the police about their partner's behaviour, and only 3% told a doctor or other medical worker.
- Current laws do not specifically criminalize domestic violence, which promotes impunity and sends a message that domestic violence is tolerated.

Background

In article 1 of the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women, adopted by the General Assembly in 1993, violence against women is defined as "any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life".¹

Violence against women constitutes a violation of women's fundamental human rights, including the rights to health and to physical integrity. Gender-based violence is a form of discrimination that seriously inhibits women's ability to enjoy rights and freedoms on a basis of equality with men (Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, general recommendation 19).²

The economic and social costs of violence against women are significant. Data from countries all over the world show that violence undermines development at various levels, leading to the devaluation of physical, human and social capital.

Kazakhstan, like many other States Members of the United Nations, is party to major international commitments in the field of gender equality, including those contained in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action,³ as well as those set out in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) contained in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,⁴ target 5.2 of which specifically calls for the elimination of all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres.⁵

Current situation

According to the results of the 2015 survey on violence against women in Kazakhstan,⁶ approximately 17% of ever-partnered women reported having experienced at least one act of physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence in their lifetimes, and about 5% had experienced intimate partner violence in the past 12 months (see figure I).

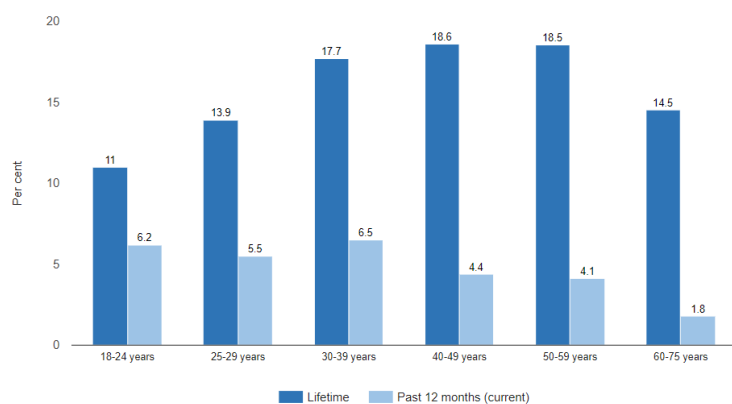
Figure I Lifetime and current prevalence of intimate partner violence among ever-partnered women aged 18-75 by form of violence, 2015 (Percentage)



Source: Final report of the sample survey on violence against women in Kazakhstan (2015), Astana, 2017 (https://kazakhstan.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/Kazakhstan%20VAW%20report_final%2031-10-2017.pdf)

Analysing the ages of women who have been subjected to violence, it is noted that the level of physical and/or sexual violence (in the past 12 months) by an intimate partner is highest among youth: women aged 18–39 are at higher risk of partner violence (see figure II).

Figure II Breakdown of physical/sexual intimate partner violence by age group and by time period, 2015 (Percentage)

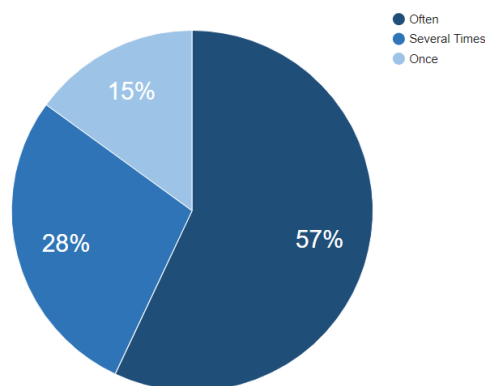


Source: Final report of the sample survey on violence against women in Kazakhstan (2015), Astana, 2017 (https://kazakhstan.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/Kazakhstan%20VAW%20report_final%2031-10-2017.pdf)

Moreover, women are likely to experience severe forms of physical partner violence, such as punching, kicking or having objects thrown at them.

Women were also more likely to report experiencing frequent violence; 57% of women who experienced intimate partner violence reported frequently experiencing violence in the past 12 months (see figure III).

Figure III: Frequency of intimate partner violence among women who experienced any physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence: 2015 (Percentage)



Source: Final report of the sample survey on violence against women in Kazakhstan (2015), Astana, 2017 (https://kazakhstan.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/Kazakhstan%20VAW%20report_final%2031-10-2017.pdf).

The study also found that women who reported that their mother had experienced physical or psychological abuse were significantly more likely to report experiencing physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence themselves.

Factors that contribute to the likelihood of intimate partner violence include: personality profiles and current behaviours of the partners in a relationship; specific dynamics of the relationship, including levels of conflict, communication styles and power dynamics; household and community structures in which the relationship is embedded; and the macro-level and global-level forces that shape prevailing norms, access to resources and the relative standing of women versus men.

In Kazakhstan intimate partner violence is also driven by a range of factors at all levels of society. According to available data, in addition to the main underlying issue, gender inequality, other contributing factors include, inter alia:

1. Men's control over women in intimate relationships: one in three women reported that they had experienced at least one act of controlling behaviour by a partner in their lifetime;
2. Current laws do not specifically criminalize domestic violence, which promotes impunity and sends a message that domestic violence is tolerated;
3. Children witnessing intimate partner violence may be traumatized and or become accustomed to a learned pattern of behaviour and accept violence as normal.

Women who reported ever having experienced any physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence in their lifetimes were asked follow-up questions about seeking support in response to their current or former partner's behavior, for example, if they had ever told anyone about it. Overall, around half (51%) of the respondents said that they had never told anyone, which means that, for many women, the study interviewer was the first person that they had ever talked to about their experiences.

Among women who had told someone about their experience of intimate partner violence, most had told their own parents (23%), their partner's parents (21%), their friends (14%) or other relatives (10%). Very few women said that they had talked to people in positions of authority — only 8% of women who experienced intimate partner violence had told the police about their partner's behaviour, and only 3% had told a doctor or other medical worker.

Addressing violence against women remains challenging: women are often ashamed to share their experiences with others and face a range of social prejudices, and moreover they may be unaware of their rights and lack information about existing support centres. Many women who shared their stories with interviewers were grateful for the opportunity to voice their concerns and ease their minds, as well as to obtain information about existing laws and institutions that support women living with the daily risk of violence in the home.

The way forward

In 2016, the results of the survey on violence against women in Kazakhstan were presented to a wide range of stakeholders, including politicians and high-level deputies. In response, in the same year, the Government of Kazakhstan, taking into account the main principles and objectives of the SDGs, adopted a new strategic document in the field of gender equality, the "concept of family and gender policy until 2030", which aims to reduce the incidence of violence against women and children.

Furthermore, in 2017, the Government initiated a national strategy for the prevention and response to domestic violence within the framework of a pilot project entitled "Kazakhstan without domestic violence".

In 2018, in cooperation with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the Government initiated a comprehensive programme to achieve gender equality and eliminate violence against women in Kazakhstan through the implementation of international commitments, in particular the recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the Human Rights Committee, including the commitments under the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and those set out in the Sustainable Development Goals.

The national strategy to address violence against women includes: the harmonization of national legislation in accordance with international standards; the adoption and implementation of policies to eliminate violence against women; the strengthening of the national and the inter-agency response to gender-based violence; and the promotion of the rights of vulnerable women, in accordance with the promise of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, "Leaving no one behind".

Sources

- United Nations, General Assembly, resolution 48/104, 20 December 1993, Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women .
- Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, Eleventh session, 1992, general recommendation No. 19, Violence against women .
- United Nations, General Assembly, resolution 70/1, 25 September 2015, "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development", Sustainable Development Goals .
- Concept of family and gender policy in the Republic of Kazakhstan until 2030, 2016.
- Final report of the sample survey on violence against women in Kazakhstan (2015), Astana, 2017 .

About the data

Definition

Proportion of ever-partnered women and girls aged 15 and older who have been subjected to physical, sexual or psychological violence by a current or former intimate partner in the previous 12 months, by form of violence and by age.

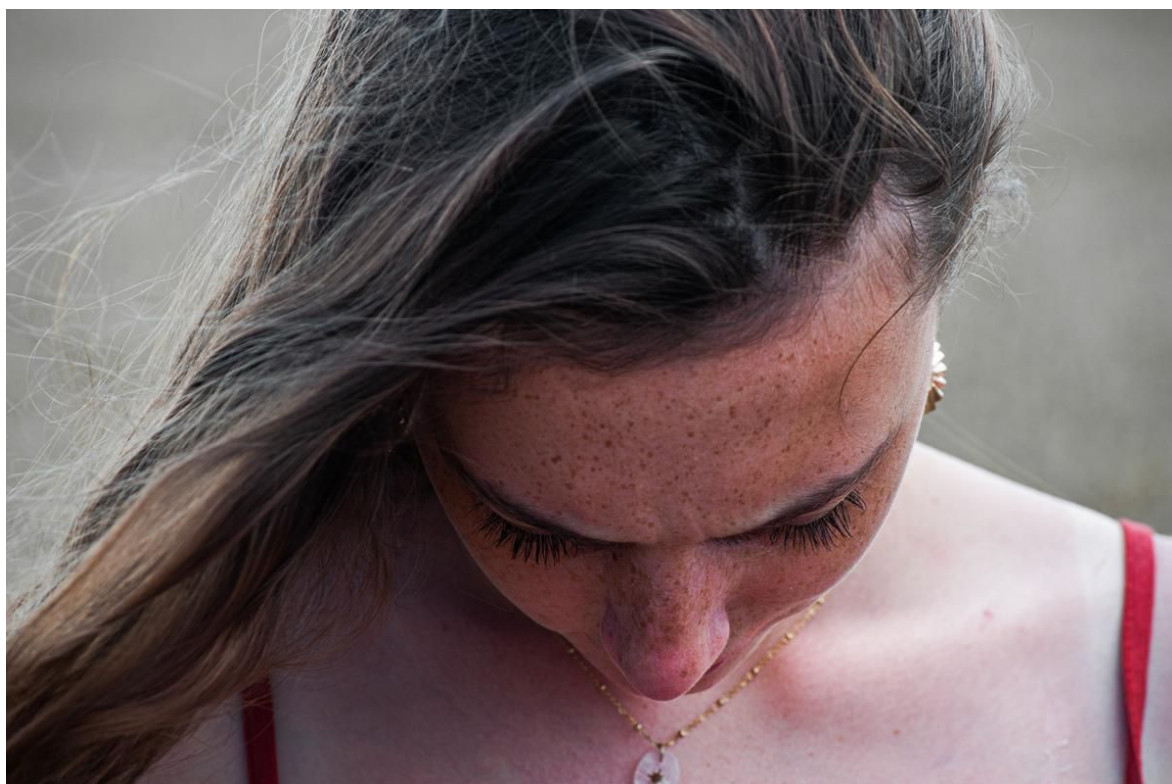
Coverage

Data from the survey on violence against women in Kazakhstan⁷ covers women aged 18–75 by educational level and employment and at the rural, urban, national and subnational level.

Footnotes

1. United Nations, General Assembly, resolution 48/104, 20 December 1993, Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women .
2. Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, Eleventh session, 1992, general recommendation No. 19, Violence against women .
3. Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4–15 September 1995 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annexes I and II .
4. United Nations, General Assembly, resolution 70/1, "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development", 25 September 2015 .
5. Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) indicator 5.2.1 measures the percentage of ever-partnered women and girls who have experienced physical, sexual or psychological violence by a current or former intimate partner in the previous 12 months.
6. Final report of the sample survey on violence against women in Kazakhstan (2015), Astana, 2017 .
7. See final report of the sample survey on violence against women in Kazakhstan (2015), Astana, 2017 . ([back to text](#))

Sexual violence in childhood



Key points

- In more than 1 in 4 countries with comparable data, at least 5% of young women aged 18–29 reported experiences of sexual violence in childhood.
- While children of both sexes can be the target of sexual violence, girls are at a heightened risk. Girls are 4 to 5 times more likely than boys to experience sexual violence.
- There is a strong correlation between childhood sexual abuse and sexual abuse after age 15, which may suggest that among children, adolescent girls are at higher risk of experiencing sexual violence.

Background

Experiences of sexual violence in childhood hinder all aspects of development, physical, psychological/emotional and social. Apart from the physical injuries that can result from sexual violence, researchers have consistently found that sexual abuse of children is associated with a wide array of mental health consequences and adverse behavioural outcomes in adulthood.¹ The psychological impact of sexual violence can be severe due to the intense shame, secrecy and stigma that tend to accompany it.²

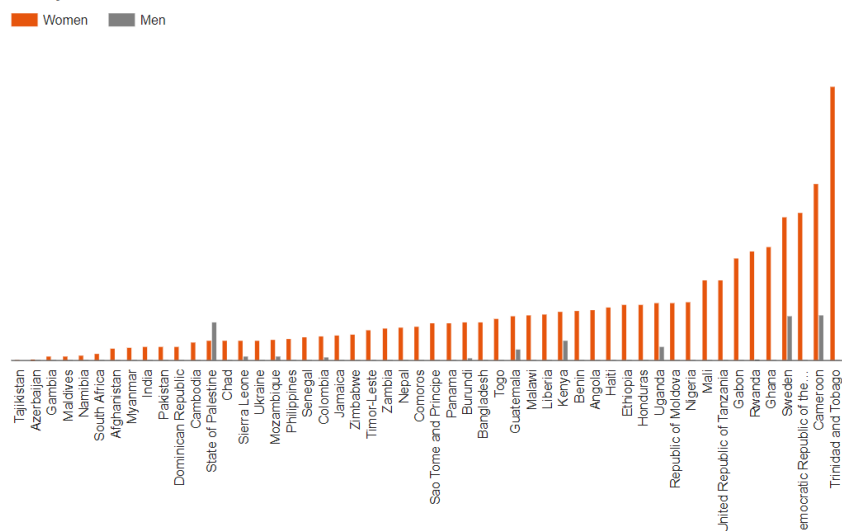
Current situation

Sexual violence against children, which occurs in all countries at all levels of income and development, can affect children at all ages and in different settings. While both sexes can be victimized, data suggest that girls are generally at heightened risk, although there is a lack of data documenting the experiences of sexual violence among boys. The absence of such data may have led to the erroneous perception that boys are relatively immune from this form of violence.

In slightly more than 1 in 4 countries with comparable data at least 5% of women aged 18–29 reported experiencing sexual violence in childhood. In five countries (Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ghana, Sweden and Trinidad and Tobago), more than 10% of women reported experiencing sexual violence during childhood.

Comparable data on sexual violence in childhood among men aged 18–29 are available for only 11 countries, and figures are lower than those reported among women in 10 of those countries, with reported rates of sexual violence perpetrated against boys under 18 years old, on average, between 4 and 5 times lower than that experienced by girls under 18 (see figure I). Care should be used when interpreting these gender differences due to the differing types of stigma faced by young women and men when reporting childhood sexual violence.³

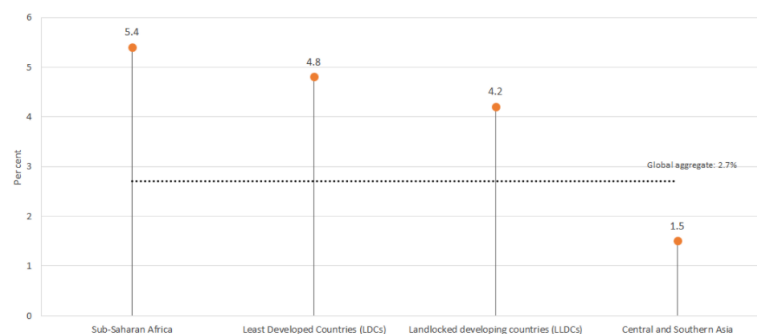
Figure I Percentage of women and men aged 18 - 29 who experienced sexual violence by age 18, by country: 2005 - 2019 (latest available)



Source: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), Statistics Division, Global SDG Indicators Database (<https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/database/>) (accessed July 2020).

Regional averages for the proportion of young women aged 18–29 who experienced sexual violence by age 18 are available only for countries in sub-Saharan Africa and Central and Southern Asia: data show a higher prevalence of sexual violence against young women in countries in sub-Saharan Africa. Estimates are also available for the least developed countries and landlocked developing countries (see figure II).⁴ Based on data collected up to 2019, the global estimate of sexual violence in childhood for women aged 18 to 29 is 2.7%,⁵ although great care should be taken when interpreting this figure as there are significant data gaps for countries in many regions of the world.

Figure II: Proportion of women and girls aged 15–49 who experienced intimate partner physical or sexual violence in the previous 12 months: 2005 - 2018 (latest available)

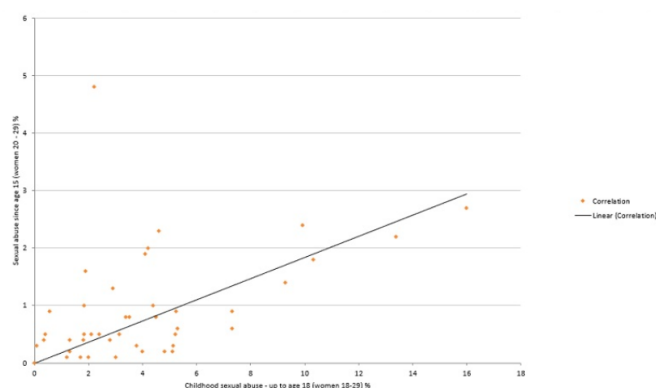


Source: UNDESA, Statistics Division, Global SDG Indicators Database (<https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/database/>) (accessed July 2020).

There is a correlation between the rates of childhood sexual abuse and sexual abuse among young women

There is a strong correlation between the proportion of women aged 18-29 who have experienced sexual violence by age 18 (SDG indicator 16.2.3) and the proportion of women aged 20 – 29 who have experienced sexual abuse since age 15. While there is some overlap between the age groups used in these two indicators,⁶ the correlation suggests that in countries where there is a higher risk of childhood sexual abuse, young women also face an increased risk of sexual abuse after the age of 15. In addition, the correlation suggests that girls aged 15–18 are more likely to be victims of childhood sexual abuse than during earlier stages of childhood, thus confirming that the highest risk of sexual abuse is among adolescents. Figure III shows this correlation among the 43 countries with data for both indicators.

Figure III: Correlation between sexual violence in childhood and sexual abuse since age 15, 2005-2019 (latest available)



Source: Based on analysis by UNDESA, Statistics Division, of SDG indicator 16.2.3 and the proportion of women aged 20 - 29 who have experienced sexual abuse since age 15.

Vulnerable groups

Although children of every age can be affected, adolescence is a period of pronounced vulnerability, especially for girls.

Country in focus: Cameroon

Around 1 in 6 young women compared to 1 in 25 young men reported childhood experiences of sexual violence in Cameroon.

Sources

- United Nations Department for Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), Statistics Division, Global SDG Indicators Database (accessed July 2020).
- United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), latest data (2012 – 2019)
- UNICEF, Together for Girls: Sexual Violence Fact Sheet, July 2012

About the data

Definitions

- **Proportion of young women and men aged 18–29 who experienced sexual violence by age 18 (Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) indicator 16.2.3):** Sexual violence during childhood is often used as an umbrella term to cover all types of sexual victimization. According to general comment No. 13 of the Committee on the Rights of the Child,⁷ sexual violence against children "comprises any sexual activities imposed by an adult on a child against which the child is entitled to protection by criminal law". In the absence of comparable and available data, a more narrow operational definition, which refers to sexual intercourse or any other sexual acts that were forced, physically or in any other way, is used herein for purposes of reporting on this indicator.

Availability

The availability of comparable data remains a serious challenge in this area: study methodologies and designs, definitions of sexual violence and the samples and questions used to elicit information have not been consistent across data collection efforts. Nationally representative and comparable data are currently available for women from 52 countries and for men from 11 countries.

Footnotes

1. Brown, J., et al., "Child Abuse and Neglect: Specificity of Effects on Adolescent and Young Adult Depression and Suicidality", *Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*, vol. 38, Issue 12, December 1999; Dinwiddie, S., et al., "Early sexual abuse and lifetime psychopathology: A co-twin-control study", *Psychological Medicine*, vol. 30, Issue 1, January 2000; Widom, Cathy Spatz, "Childhood Victimization: Early adversity, later psychopathology", *National Institute of Justice Journal*, January 2000
2. Pinheiro, Paulo Sérgio, *World Report on Violence against Children*, United Nations, Geneva, 2006; United Nations study on violence against children (General Assembly document A/61/299).
3. Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN), Barriers for men reporting childhood sexual violence (see <https://www.rainn.org/articles/sexual-assault-men-and-boys>).
4. Where enough data in a region is available, the regional average is applied to those countries within the region with missing values for the purposes of calculating regional aggregates only, but these are not published as country-level estimates. Regional aggregates are only produced when at least 50% of the regional population is covered by the available data.
5. United Nations Department of Economic and Social Development (UNDESA), Statistics Division, *Global SDG Indicators Database*.
6. The two measures are not independent of each other, for example, a 25-year-old woman who experienced sexual abuse at age 16 would be covered under both measures.
7. Committee on the Rights of the Child, general comment No. 13, *The right of the child to freedom from all forms of violence* (CRC/C/GC/13).

Femicide in Latin America and the Caribbean [ECLAC]



Femicide, the most extreme expression of violence against women

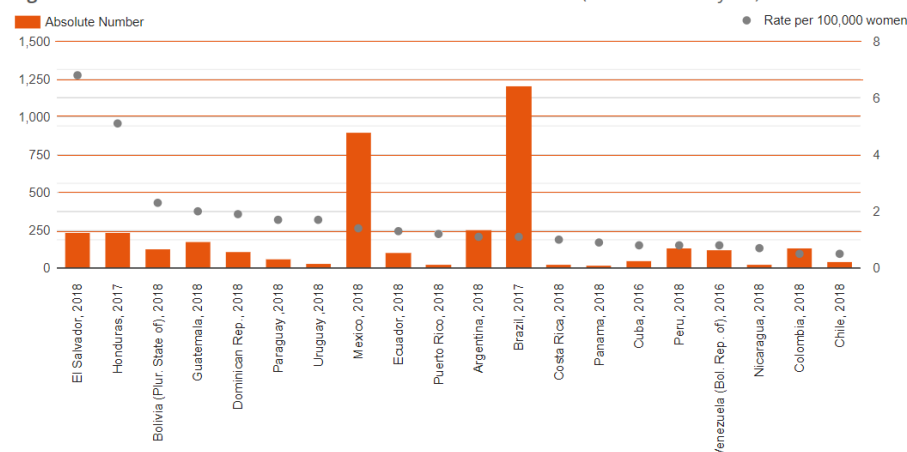
Structural discriminatory, violent and patriarchal cultural patterns sustain gender inequality in the Latin America and the Caribbean region. Despite progress over recent decades, gender-based discrimination and violence against women remains a serious problem, which manifests itself in various areas and in multiple forms. **Femicide¹**, described as the most dramatic and extreme form of violence against women, represents an attack on women and their human rights on a daily or exceptional basis in two settings: (a) violence in relationships, whether in a union or not (intimate femicide); and (b) violence inflicted by other persons, whether relatives, people from a woman's social environment or strangers, which may derive from situations of social conflict or crime.

Current situation

Progress made in countries in Latin America and the Caribbean regarding the codification of femicide as a criminal offence and its statistical visibility have not been effective in reducing this expression of extreme violence against women. According to the information for the most recent year, as provided by 33 countries in the region to the Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean,² more than 3,800 women were killed because of their gender.

The incidence of femicide in some countries in Central America remains an acute and worrying problem (see figure I). In 2018, four of the five highest rates of femicide were recorded in Central America: in El Salvador (6.8 femicides per 100,000 women); Honduras (5.1 femicides per 100,000 women); Guatemala (2.0 femicides per 100,000 women); and the Dominican Republic (1.9 femicides per 100,000 women).

Figure I Total number and rates of femicide in Latin America: 2018 (latest available year)



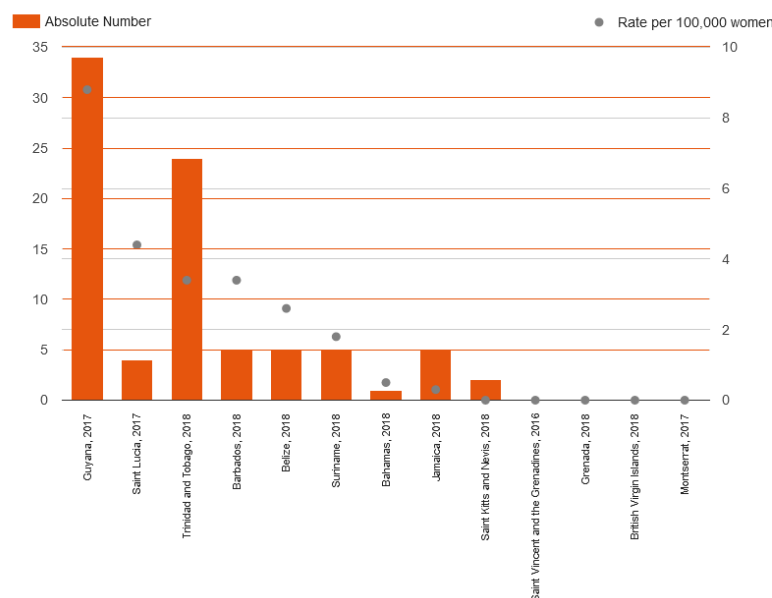
Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean (<https://oig.cepal.org/en>). Data are available for 20 countries.

Note: Data refer to femicide, except in the case of the Colombia, Chile, Cuba, Nicaragua, and Puerto Rico, which only report on cases of intimate femicide (committed by a current or former partner).

In the Caribbean, Guyana and Saint Lucia both recorded at least 4 deaths per 100,000 women according to the data

provided for the latest available year (see figure II).

Figure II Total number and rates of femicide in the Caribbean: 2018 (latest available year)



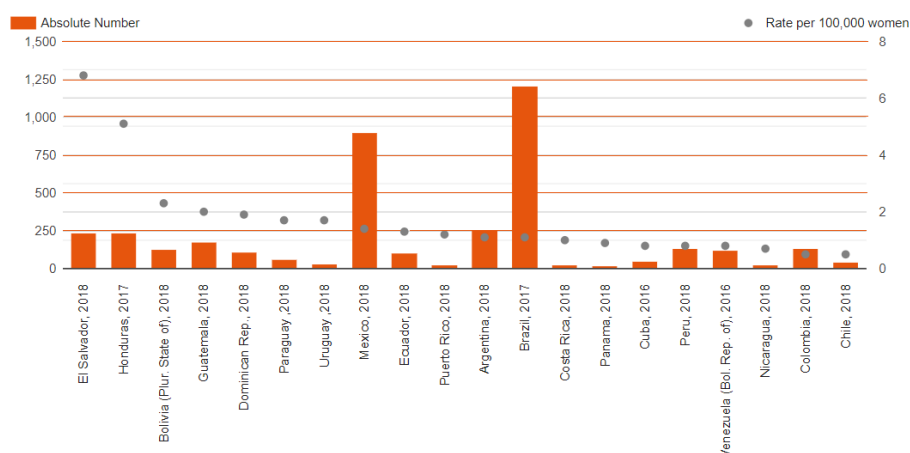
Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean (<https://oig.cepal.org/en>). Data are available for 13 countries.

Note: Data refer to femicide, except in the case of the Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Suriname, which only report on cases of intimate femicide (committed by a current or former partner).

The calculation of the rate per 100,000 women for the British Virgin Islands, Montserrat and Saint Kitts and Nevis is not possible owing to the lack of population estimates. The British Virgin Islands and Montserrat reported no femicides in the most recent years for which data are available (2017 and 2018); Saint Kitts and Nevis recorded two femicides in 2018.

In some countries of the region, in the majority of instances, the murders of women are cases of femicide. For example, in El Salvador, three out of five murders of women were recorded as femicides in 2018 – in other words, 60% involved a component of “hate or contempt for women”, as codified in article 45 of the comprehensive Law for a Life Free of Violence against Women passed by the legislature in 2011.

In most countries of the region, 25% to 33% of women have experienced an episode of physical or sexual violence inflicted by a partner. Those figures are higher in certain countries, such as the Bolivia (Plurinational State of) (58.5%), Colombia (33.3%), Costa Rica (35.8%) and Ecuador (35.5%), where data show that more than one third of women have been subjected to **physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner**.

Figure I Total number and rates of femicide in Latin America: 2018 (latest available year)

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean (<https://oig.cepal.org/en>). Data are available for 20 countries.

Note: Data refer to femicide, except in the case of the Colombia, Chile, Cuba, Nicaragua, and Puerto Rico, which only report on cases of intimate femicide (committed by a current or former partner).

In the past few years, social demands relating to ending violence against women and girls have come to the fore. Across Latin America, several countries have experienced a resurgence of social and feminist movements against old and new forms of violence against women.

This indicates the need to link femicide with other forms of violence that are still not included among policy priorities. These various forms of violence persist because they are based on social, political and economic structures that are marked by discriminatory and violent patriarchal patterns in countries in Latin American and the Caribbean.

About the data

Coverage

Data covers the murder of women (femicide) in 33 countries in the Latin America and the Caribbean region.

Definitions

- Femicide rate: Quantification of the murder of women killed because they are women, expressed in absolute numbers at a rate per 100,000 women. Under national laws, this type of murder is called femicide or aggravated homicide due to gender.

Footnotes

1. Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, Regional progress report on the Montevideo Strategy for Implementation of the Regional Gender Agenda within the Sustainable Development Framework by 2030 (United Nations publication, LC/CRM.14/5), Santiago, 2019.
2. Gender Equality Observatory for Latin American and the Caribbean.

Violence against women and the girl child

Women in the police



Key points

- Women still account for a small percentage of police officers. Between 2004 and 2017, the share of women police officers worldwide increased from 10.1% to 12.9%.
- The largest percentage of women police officers in 2017 was reported in Australia and New Zealand (31.5%); in countries in the Northern Africa and Western Asia region the reported percentage was the lowest (4.1%).

Background

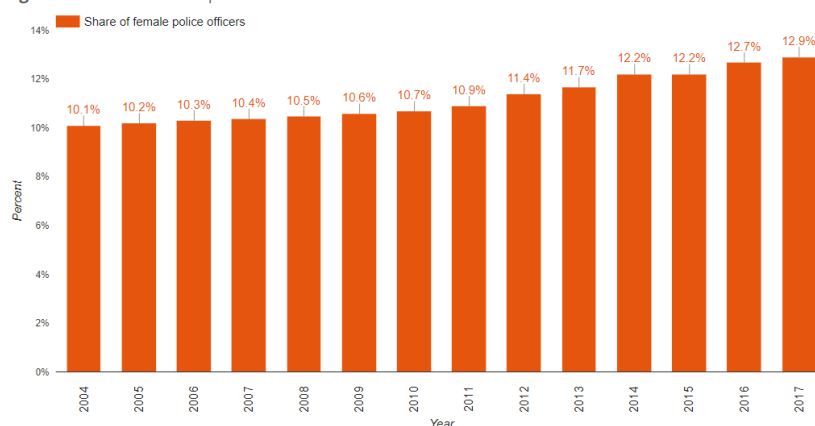
Women play a vital role in policing and contribute, as much as their male colleagues, to providing safe and inclusive communities. Female police officers act as role models for gender equality, inspiring women and girls to advocate for their own rights and to pursue careers in law enforcement. Moreover, female police officers provide a greater sense of security to women and children and improve access and support from law enforcement agencies to all members of the community.

Women police officers utilize a style of policing that relies less on physical force, are better at defusing potentially violent confrontations, are less likely to become involved in the use of excessive force and are more likely to respond effectively to violence against women.¹

Current situation

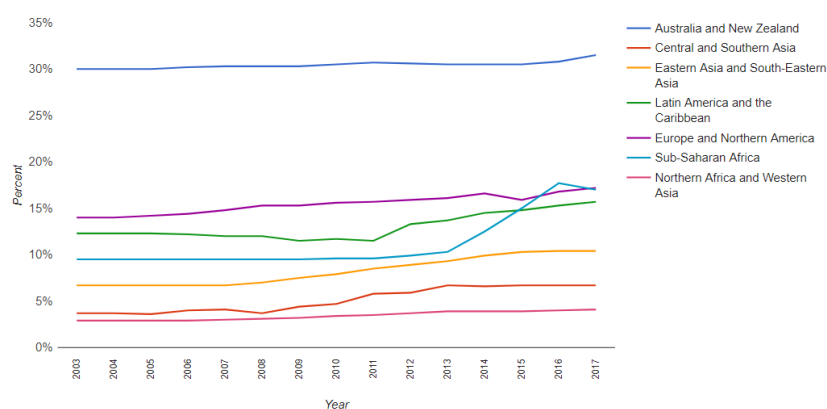
There has been a slow evolution in the gender composition of police forces around the world towards the inclusion of female officers: globally the share of women police officers increased from 10.1% in 2004 to 12.9% in 2017 (see figure I).

Figure I Share of women police officers: 2004 to 2017



Source: Data provided by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (correspondence on 21 May 2020)

Since the beginning of the century, the percentage of women police officers has increased globally (see figure II). In 2017, the largest percentage of women police officers was reported in Australia and New Zealand (31.5%), followed by countries in the Europe and North America (17.2%), Latin America and the Caribbean (15.7%), Sub-Saharan Africa (17.0%), Eastern and South-Eastern Asia (10.4%), Central and Southern Asia (6.7%) and Northern Africa and Western Asia regions (4.1%).

Figure II Share of women police officers by region: 2004 to 2017

Source: Data provided by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (correspondence on 21 May 2020).

Based on the latest available data, in 2017 in five European countries the share of women police officer was greater than 30% (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands and Sweden). Although the proportion of women police officers in those countries is higher than in other countries, there are still challenges in ensuring that women are represented at higher levels of management. The Nordic-Baltic Network of Policewomen continues to ask the question: why are women underrepresented in the top and middle management positions and in operational positions in the police force?²

The United Nations Department of Safety and Security has made increased efforts to mainstream gender into its policies and programmes, working with the partners of the Inter-Agency Security Management Network to develop and improve gender sensitivity and responsiveness in all aspects of the United Nations Security Management System and its security risk management processes.³

As a result of these efforts, the number of female police officers deployed with the United Nations increased from about 900 (7% of 12,000 police) in 2009 to 1,300 officers (10% of 13,000) in 2016. More needs to be done, however, to address the gender imbalance, as reaffirmed by the Security Council in its resolution 2242 (2015), in which it mandated that the Organization double the numbers of women in military and police contingents of United Nations peacekeeping operations by 2020.⁴

About the data

Coverage

Female police officers worldwide.

Availability

Trend data on police personnel by sex are available for 98 countries, covering over half of the world's population. The capacity of countries to supply such data is generally considered adequate.

Oceania (excl) refers to Oceania excluding Australia and New Zealand throughout the publication.

Definition

- Proportion of women among police personnel. Police personnel comprise workers in public agencies whose principal functions are the prevention, detection and investigation of crime and the apprehension of alleged offenders.

Sources

- United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime database.
- United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), Statistical Division, Minimum Set of Gender Indicators.
- United Inclusive Security, "Breaking the Brass Ceiling: Policewomen Around the World", 2014.
- United Nations Police, UN Police Gender Initiatives.
- Nordic-Baltic Network of Policewomen, website.

Footnotes

1. According to the [National Center for Women & Policing](#) (a Division of the Feminist Majority Foundation, Los Angeles, United States of America).
2. [Nordic Council of Ministers, "Women in the Police – Changes and Challenges", Nordic-Baltic Seminar, 31 May–6 June 2017, Riga.](#)
3. [United Nations Department of Safety and Security, "Gender & Security"](#) .
4. [United United Nations Police, "Police Gender Initiatives"](#) .

Violence against women and the girl child

Mexico: intimate partner violence



Key points

- Violence against women by their intimate partners is rooted in the structural inequality that affects women.
- Violence against women, which has implications for their health, also affects the community and the State.
- Younger women are more likely to be subjected to intimate partner violence.
- Among the three types of violence against women, physical, sexual or psychological, the most common type is psychological violence.
- Almost one in four women suffered at least one occurrence of physical, sexual or psychological violence during the 12 months prior to the survey.

Background

Violence against women represents a serious problem in countries throughout the world, with long-lasting consequences for women and for society at large. Violence against women by their intimate partners impacts their physical, sexual and psychological health, and has repercussions in terms of family and community development. The risk for women, together with the costs associated with health care, keeps this issue at the top of the national policy and social agenda.

Violence against women, which is rooted in the unequal power relationship between the sexes, is based on gender norms that establish socially acceptable roles for women and men and that may be used by men as a social justification for violence against women, in particular their intimate partners.

The collection of statistical information allows professionals to measure, characterize and determine the prevalence of violence against women, which is fundamental in the design of public policies that aim to prevent, address and eliminate it. In Mexico, information on violence against women is collected through the National Survey on the Dynamics of Household Relationships, which has been conducted four times (2003, 2006, 2011 and 2016).

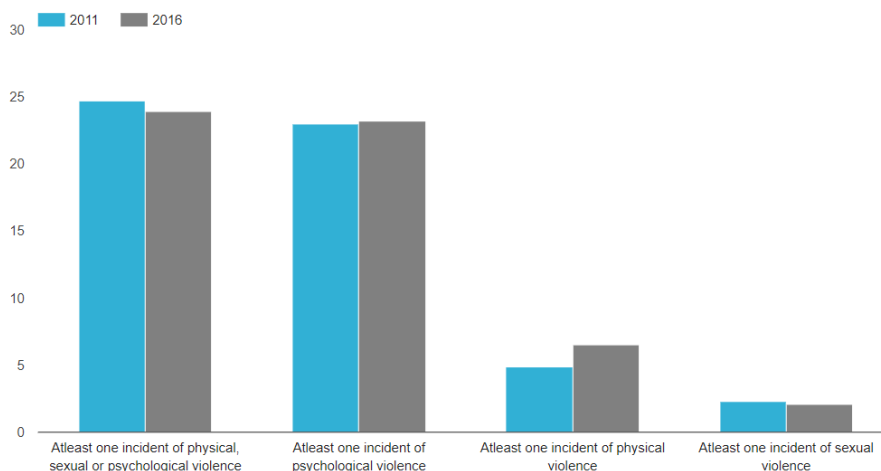
Since the very first survey in 2003, one of its main objectives has been to ascertain the level of violence against women in the context of intimate relationships, where the highest prevalence of violence has been reported. Women are at the greatest risk of being victims of violence in intimate partnerships, given the private nature and complex dynamics between couples.

Current situation

In the course of the 2016 National Survey on the Dynamics of Household Relationships in Mexico,¹ almost one in four women (23.9%) aged 15 and older reported having suffered at least one occurrence of physical, sexual, or psychological violence during the 12 months prior to the survey. There was no significant change with respect to the results of the 2011 survey, when the prevalence of intimate partner violence was estimated at 24.7% (see figure I).

Among the three types of violence against women, the most common was psychological violence, measured at 23.2% in 2016, a level that was very close to that recorded in 2011. The level of physical violence increased from 2011 to 2016, from 4.9% to 6.5%, although it is possible that the increase may be due to a better measurement of the two types of violence in the 2016 survey. Sexual violence, reported at 2.1% in 2016, was the least prevalent, although far from the least critical, among the three types of violence against women.

Figure I Proportion of Mexican women aged 15 and older who experienced physical, sexual or psychological violence by a current or former intimate partner in the last 12 months by type of violence: 2011 and 2016

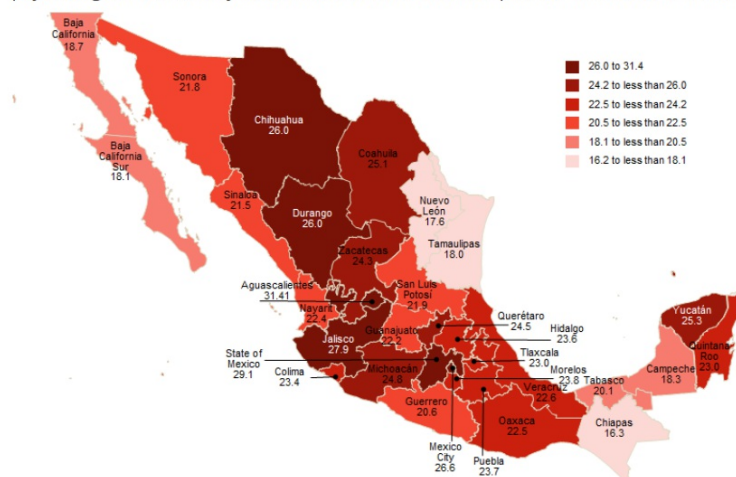


Source: National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI), National Survey on the Dynamics of Household Relationships (2011 and 2016).

Note: The indicator includes women aged 15 and older who have or have had an intimate partner relationship.

At the subnational level, the highest proportions of women who reported that they had suffered at least one type of violence were in the north-centre states (Chihuahua and Durango), in the capital (Mexico City) and in some of the central states (Mexico, Jalisco and Aguascalientes), with levels from 26.0% to 31.4%, above the national average (see figure II). On the other side of the spectrum, the states of Baja California Sur, Tamaulipas, Nuevo León and Chiapas registered the lowest prevalence, ranging from 16.2% to 18.1%, with levels below the national average.

Figure II Proportion of Mexican women aged 15 and older who experienced physical, sexual or psychological violence by a current or former intimate partner in the last 12 months by state: 2016



Source: INEGI, National Survey on the Dynamics of Household Relationships, 2016 (<https://en.www.inegi.org.mx/programas/endireh/2016/>).

Note: The indicator includes women aged 15 and older who have or have had an intimate partner relationship. The reference period corresponds to the last 12 months prior to the conduct of the survey, that is from October 2015 up to the time of the interview for the survey.

It is important to make use of statistical data on violence against women to promote the design of prevention and service programmes to address this critical issue. Among the many costs associated with violence against women are those linked to health, including unwanted and high-risk pregnancies, maternal mortality, sexually transmitted diseases (such as HIV/AIDS), physical and psychological injuries, suicide and femicide.

Violence against women has costs for the community and the State as such violence: reduces the ability of victims/survivors to make productive contributions to family, economy and public life; absorbs the resources of social services, the judicial system and health-care institutions; and reduces overall educational achievements, mobility and the potential of victims, their children and even those who have committed such acts of violence.

Younger women are more likely to be subjected to intimate partner violence

The proportion of women in Mexico who reported at least one occurrence of physical, sexual or psychological violence inflicted by a current or former intimate partner in the last 12 months was higher among young women aged 18–19 (30.9%).²

Legal framework

Progress has been made to address violence against women in the national legal framework, including, notably, the General Law on Women's Access to a Life Free from Violence,³ and the inclusion of violent acts, such as femicide, into the national and subnational penal codes.

Related stories and further reading

- [Intimate partner violence](#)

About the data

Definitions

Percentage of women and girls aged 15 and older who report having experienced at least one occurrence of physical, sexual or psychological violence by a current or former intimate partner during the 12 months previous to the survey.⁴

Coverage

Women in Mexico aged 15 and older who have ever had an intimate partner: reporting at both the federal and state levels.

Availability

Information necessary for the computation of this indicator is available at the webpage of the National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI).⁵

Footnotes

1. INEGI, National Survey on the Dynamics of Household Relationships, 2016.
2. INEGI, National Survey on the Dynamics of Household Relationships, 2016.
3. General Law on Women's Access to a Life Free of Violence, 2008.
4. National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI), National Survey on the Dynamics of Household Relationships, 2016.
5. INEGI website.

Violence against women and the girl child

Intimate partner violence



Key points

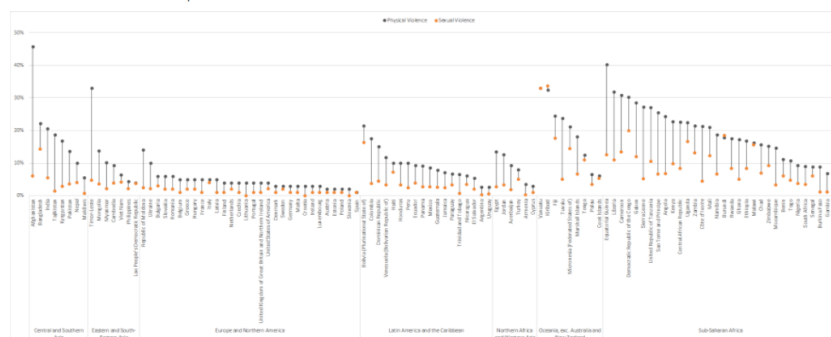
- Women across the world, regardless of income, age or education, are subjected to physical and sexual violence perpetrated by current or former intimate partners.
- One in three women will experience physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner at some point in her life.
- 18% of women and girls have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by a current or former intimate partner in the previous 12 months.
- The prevalence of intimate partner violence in the previous 12 months varies widely between countries, from 2% to 46%.
- Regional differences in the rates of intimate partner violence also persist, with women in Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand), Southern Asia and sub-Saharan Africa regions at greatest risk.
- Younger women (aged 15–29) are also at increased risk of experiencing intimate partner violence.
- In terms of trend analysis, 58% of countries have recorded a decrease in intimate partner violence since 2005.
- The periods of lockdown called for in response to the COVID-19 pandemic have put women and girls at increased risk of experiencing intimate partner violence.
- Forthcoming international estimates accounting for methodological differences between studies will improve the cross-country comparability of data on violence against women perpetrated by intimate partners.
- As at 2020, at least 153 countries have passed laws on domestic violence.

Background

Violence against women and girls is an extreme manifestation of gender inequality and intimate partner violence, is one of the most common form of violence faced by women and girls worldwide. One in three women will experience physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner at some point in her life.¹ Given prevailing social norms that sanction male dominance over women, violence between intimate partners is often perceived as an ordinary and/or normal element of relationships, particularly in the context of marriage or other unions.

Based on the latest available data for 112 countries during the period from 2005 to 2018, it is estimated that, worldwide, 18% of ever-partnered women and girls aged 15–49 have experienced physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence during the previous 12 months. Based on data from 112 countries, 14% of women have experienced physical violence and 6% of women have experienced sexual violence at the hands of intimate partners during the previous 12 months. As shown in figure I, this proportion varies widely across regions and countries.

Figure I: Proportion of women and girls aged 15-49 who experienced intimate partner physical or sexual violence in the previous 12 months: 2005 - 2018 (latest available)



Source: Compiled by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), Statistics Division, from various sources, including national surveys and demographic and health surveys.

Regional differences in the rates of intimate partner violence persist, with women in the Pacific, Southern Asia and sub-Saharan Africa regions at greatest risk. In Oceania, excluding Australia and New Zealand, the average 12-month prevalence rate for intimate partner violence was 35%. The rates of intimate partner violence in Southern Asia (23%) and sub-Saharan Africa (22%) were above the global average of 18%. In contrast, the prevalence rate of recent intimate partner violence is lower, in Latin America and the Caribbean, at an average of 12%, and lower still in Europe, where the 12-month prevalence rate is 6%.

Focusing on Latin America and the Caribbean, population-based evidence confirms that intimate partner violence against women remains a widespread public health and human rights problem, with a reported prevalence of physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence during the previous 12 months across countries ranging from 3% to 27% of women and girls.

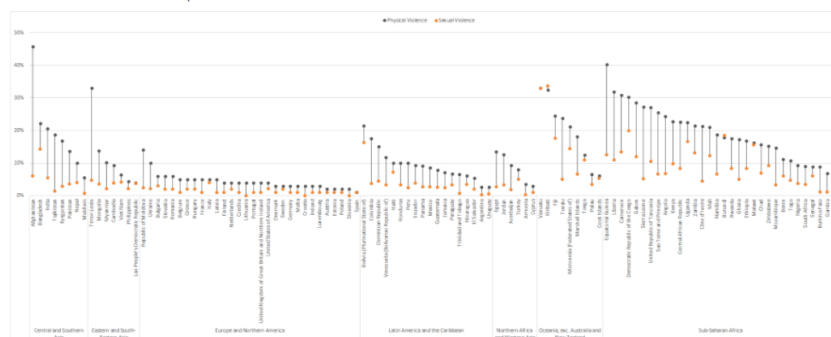
A survey carried out in Europe in 2019, led by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and covering seven countries in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, found that 6.7%² of women had been subjected to physical and/or sexual violence by a current or former intimate partner in the previous 12 months. Prevalence rates over the 12-month period ranged from 3.1% in Republic of North Macedonia to 9.4% in the Republic of Moldova.

Although many countries collect information on violence against women, direct comparisons are often difficult to make because of differences in data collection methodology.³ In particular, some developed countries regularly publish statistics on intimate partner violence based on victimization surveys and complement these statistics with the number of cases reported to the police in order to measure prevalence of violence as well as coverage of reported cases. While these sources provide valuable information, they can not be used to produce comparable prevalence rates.

Since 2010, among countries with comparable data (47 countries),⁴ the proportion of women and girls experiencing intimate partner physical and/or sexual violence in the past 12 months ranged from 3.5% in Armenia (2015–2016) to 46.1% in Afghanistan (2015).

Some issues with comparability persisting to the absence of agreed international definitions in historical data, as well as inconsistent age ranges used in different surveys. Putting these differences to one side, available data for the 112 countries up to 2018 show that the proportion of women experiencing intimate partner physical or sexual violence in the past 12 months ranged from 2.0% in Spain (2012) and Slovenia (2012) to a rate of 46.1% in Afghanistan (2015).

Figure I: Proportion of women and girls aged 15-49 who experienced intimate partner physical or sexual violence in the previous 12 months: 2005 - 2018 (latest available)

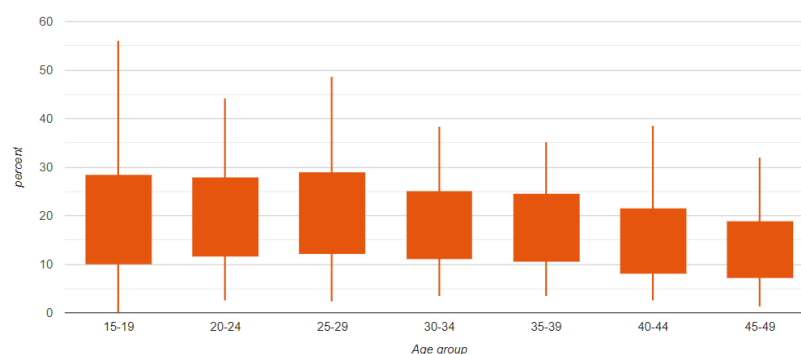


Source: Compiled by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), Statistics Division, from various sources, including national surveys and demographic and health surveys.

Survey data from 63 countries indicate that the prevalence of intimate partner violence generally decreases with age. Based on available data disaggregated by 5-year-age groups, younger women (aged 15–19, 20–24 and 25–29) are at the greatest risk of experiencing intimate partner violence, although rates of intimate partner violence by broad age group vary widely across countries (see figure II).

Between 2005 and 2017, 36 countries conducted more than one survey to measure the prevalence of intimate partner violence in the 12 months prior to the survey. Evidence of the magnitude of change in the level of intimate partner violence is mixed, with 21 countries (58%) recording decreases in intimate partner violence and 10 countries (28%) recording increases. The trend was unclear in five countries (14%).

Figure II Proportion of women and girls who experienced intimate partner physical or sexual violence in the previous 12 months, by age: 2005 - 2017 (latest available)



Source: : Source: SDGs database (<https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/database/>) (accessed in July 2020).

COVID-19

The lockdowns resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic have confined many women and girls to their homes, sometimes with abusive partners, putting them at greater risk of domestic violence. Reports from several countries reveal an increase in reported cases of domestic violence to helplines, women's shelters and the police. In some countries, however, there has been a decrease in the number of reported incidents of domestic violence, possibly owing to the fact that women and girls confined in the home with an abusive partner have limited privacy and may lack access to mobile phones or to the Internet, making it difficult for them to reach out for help.

While as yet there is no solid evidence on the impact of COVID-19 on the percentage of women and girls subjected to intimate partner violence, past evidence has shown that violence is more severe and frequent for those already in abusive relationships when intimate partners spend more time at home (for example, during the holidays). While robust statistics on the impact of COVID-19 are still being produced, there are reasons to believe that the pandemic is likely to increase the risk that women may experience different forms of violence, specifically intimate partner domestic violence: 15 years of survey data show that the great majority of women survivors of violence never report it to the police, helplines or other service providers.

Laws on domestic violence

As of 2020, at least 153 countries have passed laws on domestic violence. Developed countries, including countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, Eastern and South-Eastern Asia and Oceania, have the highest coverage, with over 90% of countries in these regions having laws on domestic violence: this stands in stark contrast to the situation in countries in sub-Saharan Africa and Northern and Western Asia, less than 65% of which have specifically criminalized domestic violence.

Vulnerable groups

Rates of domestic violence against indigenous women are often significantly higher than the rest of the population. Surveys to measure violence against women must include these populations in order to ensure no one is left behind. In 2016, in analysis carried out by the Domestic Violence Resource Centre in the Australian state of Victoria⁵ it was reported that Aboriginal women are 34 times more likely to be hospitalized from family violence⁶ and almost 11 times more likely to be killed as a result of violent assault.

Older women are also at risk of family violence⁷ and are often not included in the population covered by surveys on the topic. One country that reports on violence against senior women is Canada, where risk of being the victim of a violent crime generally decreases with age. As a reflection of this overall pattern, seniors had the lowest rates of police-reported violent crime, regardless of whether violence was perpetrated by a family member or someone outside the family network. However, senior victims of family violence are more likely to sustain injuries than other victims of family violence.⁸ The Canadian data suggest that, as women age, they are at greater risk of experiencing violence at the hands of their grown children while still at risk of violence from their domestic partners. In 2010, 36% of perpetrators of violence against seniors aged 65–69 were their grown children, followed by their spouses (30%).

Data on the prevalence of violence against women and girls is often still lacking for women and girls with disabilities, ethnic minorities, migrant workers and older women. Even where such data exist, comparability between countries and within countries remains challenging.

Countries in focus

Intimate partner violence is often unreported. In [Kazakhstan](#), 51% of women who have experienced physical or sexual violence have never shared the information with anyone.

Based on data from 2016, intimate partner violence in [Mexico](#) remains a significant issue, with almost one out of four women 15 and older (23.9%) reporting having experienced violence in the previous 12 months (a slight reduction from 24.7% in 2011).

About the data

Coverage

Women and girls aged 15–49.

Availability

Data on the proportion of women and girls who have experienced physical or sexual violence in the previous 12 months (2005–2018) is available for 112 countries (31 developed countries and 81 developing countries), including 36 countries with multiple data points, allowing for trend analysis.

Oceania (excl) refers to Oceania excluding Australia and New Zealand throughout the publication.

Definitions

- Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) indicator 5.2.1.⁹ measures the percentage of ever-partnered women and girls who have experienced physical, sexual or psychological violence by a current or former intimate partner in the previous 12 months. While physical and sexual intimate partner violence are generally well defined and measured, this is not the case with psychological partner violence, which may be conceptualized differently across cultures and in different contexts. Therefore, this indicator currently reports on the global level of physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence only. A majority of data come from demographic and health surveys, which typically sample only women and girls aged 15–49. There is a lack of consistency in the age range of sample populations across country surveys: in the case of surveys that interview a sample of women and girls from a different age group, the prevalence for data on the 15–49 age group is often published or can be calculated from available data. The global indicator therefore currently reports violence experienced by ever-partnered women and girls 15–49 years of age.
- Physical violence consists of acts aimed at physically hurting the victim and include, but are not limited to, pushing, grabbing, twisting the arm, pulling the hair, slapping, kicking, biting or hitting with the fist or object, trying to strangle or suffocate, burning or scalding on purpose and/or threatening or attacking with some sort of weapon, gun or knife.
- Sexual violence is defined as any sort of harmful or unwanted sexual behaviour that is imposed on someone. It includes acts of abusive sexual contact, forced engagement in sexual acts, attempted or completed sexual acts without consent, incest and/or sexual harassment. In intimate partner relationships, sexual violence is commonly defined as being forced to have sexual intercourse, having sexual intercourse out of fear for what the partner might do and/or being forced to do something sexual that the woman or girl considers humiliating or degrading.

Sources

- [United States Agency for International Development \(USAID\), Demographic and Health Surveys program, STATcompiler](#) (last accessed 15 August 2019).
- [European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, Survey on violence against women in the European Union, 2012.](#)
- [Pan American Health Organization/World Health Organization, Intimate Partner Violence in the Americas: Data and Action.](#)
- [Sustainable Development Goals database](#) (last accessed July 2020).
- [Organization for Security and Cooperation \(OSCE\), OSCE-led Survey on Violence Against Women, 2019 .](#)
- [United Nations Department of Economic and Social Development \(UNDESA\), Statistics Division, master file on violence against women surveys.](#)

Footnotes

1. [World Health Organization \(WHO\), Global and regional estimates of violence against women](#) .
2. Including psychological violence, the rate is 20%: psychological violence, which is defined as acts which cause psychological harm to an individual, can take many forms, including coercion, defamation, verbal insult and/or harassment.
3. [Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\) metadata for indicator 5.2.1](#).
4. Demographic and health surveys.
5. Australian Productivity Commission, *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Indicators 2014*, Canberra, 2014.
6. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, *Family Violence Among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples*, Canberra, 2006.
7. Family violence refers to violence committed by spouses, children, siblings and members of the extended family.
8. [Statistics Canada, 2012, "Family violence against seniors"](#) .
9. Proportion of ever-partnered women and girls aged 15-49 years subjected to physical and/or sexual violence by a current or former intimate partner in the previous 12 months, by form of violence and by age (Sustainable Development Goal indicator 5.2.1).

Violence against women and the girl child

Laws on domestic violence



Key points

- Over one-third of countries in Northern Africa and Western Asia (43%) and sub-Saharan Africa (35%) do not have laws on domestic violence.
- The majority of developed countries (96%) as well as countries in Latin America and the Caribbean (97%), Eastern and South-Eastern Asia (93%) and Oceania (90%) have laws on domestic violence.
- Although domestic violence laws are almost universal in countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, fewer countries in the region (64%) have laws on sexual harassment.
- Few countries (27%) have laws explicitly criminalizing marital rape: even in the case of developed countries and countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, less than half have explicitly criminalized marital rape.
- As at 2020, 153 countries have laws on domestic violence; 106 countries have laws on sexual harassment; and 45 countries have laws on marital rape.

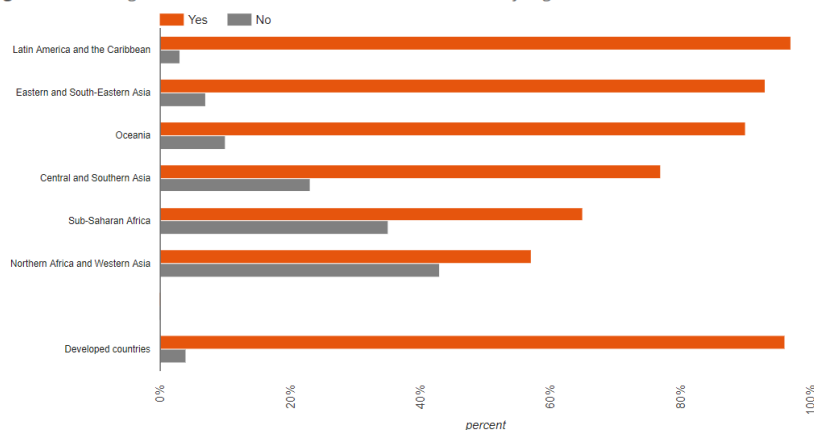
Background

Not all countries have laws criminalizing or containing provisions on violence against women, and when such laws are in place, authorities are often more focused on responding to cases of domestic violence through criminal justice processes rather than on ways of preventing its occurrence by providing support and resources to women at risk of abuse. Furthermore, even when domestic violence laws exist, they are not necessarily implemented, or implemented in a form that helps the victims in substantive ways.

In many cases, victims and survivors of domestic violence are economically dependent on their intimate partners and the conviction and/or imprisonment of perpetrators often leaves victims deprived of their one source of economic support. In the light of these factors, domestic violence laws need to be implemented in tandem with measures for the economic empowerment of women, including, in particular, appropriate social support mechanisms for those who take the difficult step of seeking legal recourse.

Laws on domestic violence

As of 2020, at least 153 countries have passed laws on **domestic violence**, 106 have laws on sexual harassment and 45 have laws on marital rape. As shown in figure I, developed countries as well as countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, Eastern and South-Eastern Asia and Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand) have the highest coverage; over 90% of countries in those regions have laws on domestic violence. This is in stark contrast to the situation in countries in sub-Saharan Africa and Northern Africa and Western Asia, where less than 65% have laws specifically criminalizing domestic violence.

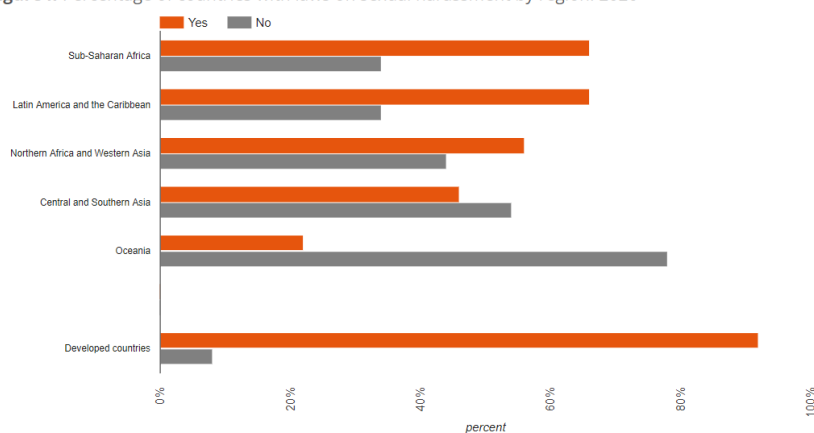
Figure I Percentage of countries with laws on domestic violence by region: 2020

Source: Compiled by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), Statistics Division, based on data in the [United Nations Minimum Set of Gender Indicators](#) (accessed July 2020) and data from the World Bank (<https://databank.worldbank.org/reports.aspx?source=283&series=SG.LEG.DVAW>) (accessed July 2020).

Note: The "No" category includes countries where data is not available or where contradictory data sources exist.

Laws on sexual harassment

As of 2020, 106 countries have passed laws on sexual harassment, and the regional distribution is broadly similar to that observed with respect to laws on domestic violence (see figure II). However, there is one noticeable difference: in the Latin America and the Caribbean region, while the majority of countries have laws on domestic violence (97%), far fewer have laws on sexual harassment (64%).

Figure II Percentage of countries with laws on sexual harassment by region: 2020

Source: [United Nations Minimum Set of Gender Indicators](#) (accessed July 2020).

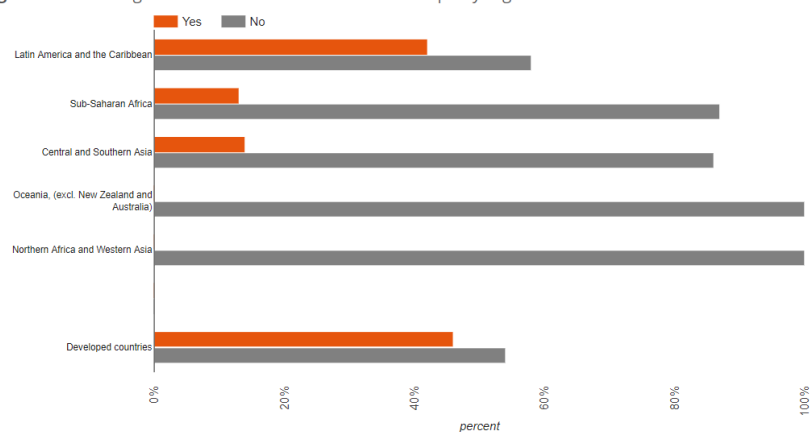
Note: The "No" category includes countries where data is not available or where contradictory data sources exist.

Laws on marital rape

In many parts of the world legislation does not adequately protect women from marital rape. As of 2020, only 45 countries have adopted laws on marital rape; only 46% of developed countries have laws on marital rape; and fewer than 14% of developing countries in sub-Saharan Africa, Central and Southern Asia, Northern Africa and Western Asia and Oceania (excluding Australia

and New Zealand) have such laws (figure III).

Figure III Percentage of countries with laws on marital rape by region: 2020



Source: [United Nations Minimum Set of Gender Indicators](#) (accessed July 2020).

Note: The "No" category includes countries where data is not available or where contradictory data sources exist.

Sources

- [United Nations Minimum Set of Gender Indicators: Human rights of women and girl children; Existence of laws on domestic violence.](#)
- [World Bank, databank on gender statistics.](#)

About the data

Coverage

Adult and adolescent women worldwide.

Availability

As of 2020, the United Nations Minimum Set of Gender Indicators contains data on the existence of: laws on domestic violence from 187 countries; laws on sexual harassment from 153 countries; and laws on marital rape from 166 countries.

Oceania (excl) refers to Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand) throughout the publication.

Definitions

Existence of laws in countries in relation to broad categories of violence against women, including domestic violence, sexual harassment and marital rape (United Nations Minimum Set of Gender Indicators).

- Domestic violence:** Includes a range of sexually, psychologically and physically coercive acts used against adult and adolescent women by a current or former intimate partner, without her consent.¹ Data refer to instances where domestic violence is specifically criminalized or where provisions for protection orders are in place.
- Sexual harassment** is defined as any unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature that might reasonably be expected or be perceived to cause offense or humiliation, when such conduct interferes with work, is made a condition of employment or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment. Sexual harassment may occur in the workplace or in connection with work. While typically involving a pattern of conduct, sexual harassment may take the form of a single incident. In assessing the reasonableness of expectations or perceptions, the perspective of the person who is the target of the conduct shall be considered.² Data refer to whether countries have laws in place that prohibit sexual harassment: voluntary guidelines or policies are not counted.
- Marital rape:** Also called spousal rape, is non-consensual sex where the perpetrator is the victim's spouse.³

Footnotes

1. General Assembly document A/61/122/Add.1, para. 113.

2. [UN system model policy on sexual harassment](#), 2018.

3. In general, while rape laws (except where the exemption of a spouse is explicitly stated) do not preclude a spouse from being prosecuted, data refer to instances where laws explicitly criminalize marital rape without qualifications, for example, by providing that sexual assault provisions apply irrespective of the nature of the relationship between the perpetrator and complainant, or that no marriage or other relationship shall constitute a defense against a charge of sexual assault under the law. In other instances, a marital (or equivalent) relationship may be explicitly cited in the law as an aggravating factor. Explicit criminalization of marital rape is recommended as best practice by, among other bodies, the Council of Europe.

Violence against women and the girl child

Female genital mutilation



Key points

- According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Health Organization (WHO), at least 200 million girls and women have undergone FGM based on recent data from 31 countries.^{1, 2}
- FGM is slowly declining in some countries and subregions where the practice is prevalent.
- Despite recent progress, the prevalence of FGM remains alarmingly high in parts of Northern Africa, Eastern Africa and West Africa.³
- Because COVID-19 is interrupting programmes to end FGM, progress may be threatened.
- Progress in the elimination of FGM is not universal, and where it is taking place it is not fast enough.⁴ Even in countries where the practice has become less common, progress would need to be at least 10 times faster to meet the global target of its elimination by 2030.
- Based on the latest available data, in six countries⁵ at least 3 out of every 4 women and adolescent girls aged 15–19 have undergone FGM.

Background

Female genital mutilation is a violation of the human rights of girls and women that affects girls and women worldwide. There is a large body of literature documenting the adverse health consequences of female genital mutilation over both the short and long term: the practice is a direct manifestation of gender inequality, which "constitutes irreparable, irreversible harm and is an act of violence against women and girls".⁶

While the practice is most concentrated in countries in Africa, from the Atlantic coast across to the Horn of Africa, it is also practiced in countries in the Middle East, such as Iraq and Yemen, in some countries in Asia, and also in some communities in Australia, Europe and Northern America.⁷

Female genital mutilation is condemned in international treaties and conventions, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women and the Cairo Declaration for the Elimination of Female Genital Mutilation.

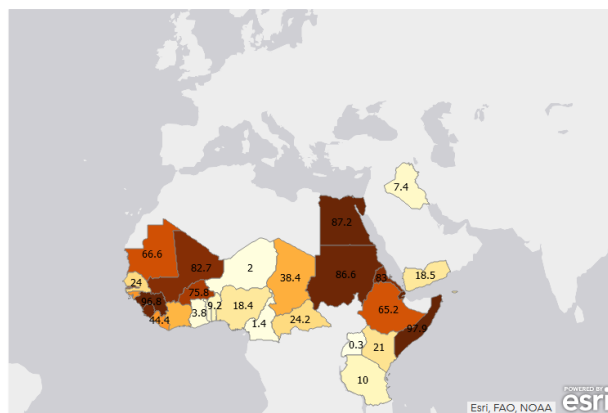
Furthermore, since FGM is regarded as a traditional practice prejudicial to the health of children and is, in most cases, performed on minors, it violates the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In many countries national legislation includes an explicit ban on the practice.

Current Situation

With its inclusion under Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) target 5.3, which is aimed at the elimination of this harmful practice by 2030, FGM holds a prominent position on the global development agenda. Although the practice has persisted for centuries, it is becoming less common, with a marked decline reported in countries such as Egypt where it was once universal, as well as in countries such as Kenya, where the practice is restricted to specific ethnic communities.

Prevalence rates of FGM vary significantly by country. The latest available data on the proportion of adolescent girls aged 15–49 years who have undergone FGM or cutting are shown by country in figure I, which highlights the fact that, despite recent progress, the prevalence of FGM remains alarmingly high in parts of Northern Africa and West Africa.⁸ Moreover, the onset of COVID-19 has interrupted programmes to end FGM, which could threaten progress towards the elimination of the practice.

Figure I Proportion of adolescent girls and women who have undergone female genital mutilation or cutting in selected countries: 2010-2018 (latest available)



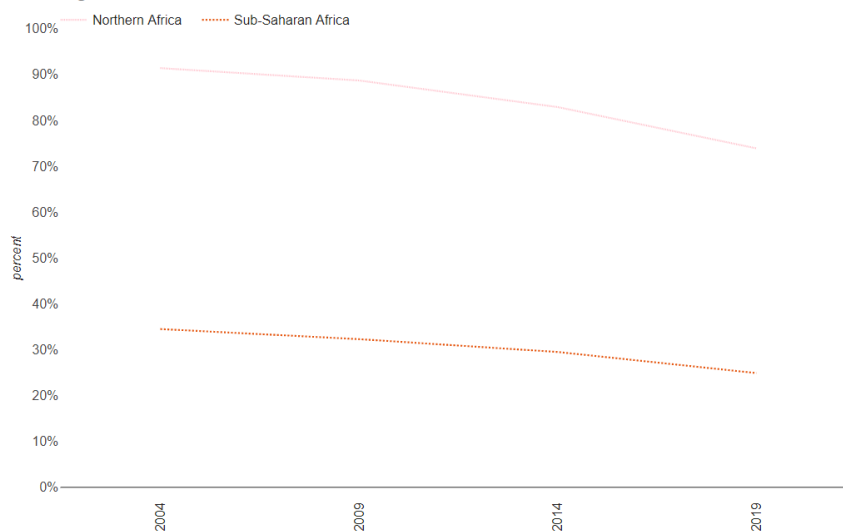
Source: SDG indicator 5.3.2, SDG database (accessed July 2020).

Note: Latest available data between 2010 and 2018, with the exception of Cameroon (2004), Djibouti (2006) and Somalia (2006).

The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this and other maps throughout this publication do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

Such declines at the country level have contributed to a reduction in regional rates over the past 15 years. In Northern Africa, the proportion of adolescent girls aged 15–19 years who have undergone FGM or cutting decreased by 17.5%, from 91.4% in 2004 to 73.9% in 2019. In sub-Saharan Africa, its prevalence decreased by 9.6%, from 34.5% to 24.9%, over the same time period (see figure II).

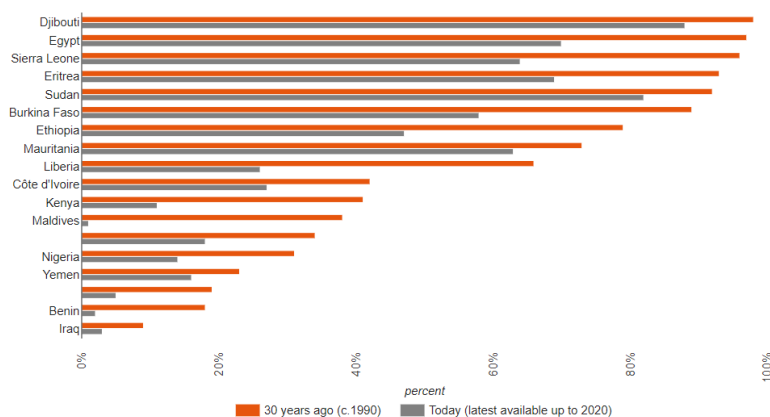
Figure II Proportion of adolescent girls aged 15-19 years who have undergone female genital mutilation or cutting: 2004 to 2019



Source: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), Statistics Division, statistical annex to the report of the Secretary-General on progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (E/2020/57) (<https://unstats.un.org/sdgs>); and UNICEF global databases, 2020.

Figure III shows data for the 18 countries with a decline in the percentage of adolescent girls who have undergone FGM over the course of the past 30 years.

Figure III Percentage of adolescent girls aged 15-19 years who have undergone FGM in countries with a declining prevalence: 1990 and 2020

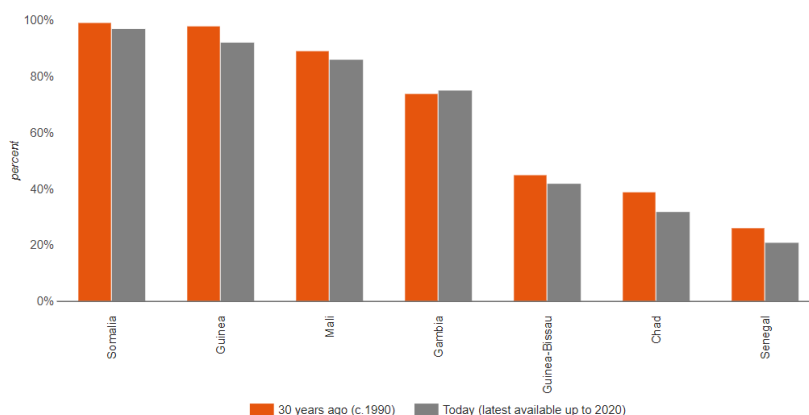


Note: Countries included in this chart have a significantly lower prevalence of FGM today compared to 30 years ago. The chart excludes countries with a national prevalence below 5%. Trend data are not available for Indonesia.

Source: UNICEF, Female Genital Mutilation: A New Generation Calls for Ending an Old Practice, New York, 2020.

Figure IV highlights the seven countries where the prevalence of FGM either remains persistently high or where no significant decline has been observed over the same time period.

Figure IV Percentage of adolescent girls aged 15-19 years who have undergone FGM in countries with a universal prevalence and/or without a significant decline: 1990 and 2020



Note: Figure IV includes countries without a significant decline in prevalence, and those for which prevalence among the cohort aged 15-19 years is 90% or higher. This chart excludes countries with a national prevalence below 5%.

Source: UNICEF, Female Genital Mutilation: A New Generation Calls for Ending an Old Practice, New York, 2020.

Progress has been extremely slow in Guinea and Somalia, where the practice remains almost universal and where at least 9 in 10 women and adolescent girls aged 15-19 years have been cut. Based on the latest available data, in six countries⁹ at least 3 out of every 4 women and adolescent girls aged 15-19 have undergone FGM.

Progress in the elimination of FGM is not universal, and where there is progress it is not fast enough. Even in countries where the practice has become less common, progress would need to be at least 10 times faster to meet the global target of its elimination by 2030.¹⁰

Legislative environment

FGM is widely condemned in both international treaties and conventions as well as under national legislation in many countries.

Vulnerable groups

The risk faced by women and adolescent girls aged 15–19 of undergoing FGM is highly dependent on context, with ethnicity playing a particularly strong role in determining whether they will be cut.¹¹

Country in focus

In Kenya, where the practice has been banned under law since 2011, 4 in 10 women and adolescent girls have undergone FGM, although the variation across ethnic groups is dramatic; the practice is still prevalent among some ethnicities (for example, among the Somali population, where it is estimated to be 94%), but almost non-existent among others (including both the Luhya and Luo ethnicities, where it is less than 1%).

About the data

Coverage

Girls and women aged 15–49.

Availability

Global reporting covers 31 countries in which the practice is concentrated and which have data on national prevalence.

Definitions

- Proportion of girls and women aged 15–49 years who have undergone female genital mutilation (FGM) (Sustainable Development Goal indicator 5.3.2) refers to “all procedures involving partial or total removal of the female external genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons”.

Footnotes

1. [United Nations Children's Fund \(UNICEF\), February 2020.](#)
2. [World Health Organization \(WHO\), 2020.](#)
3. [United Nations Population Fund \(UNFPA\), 2020.](#)
4. See report of the Secretary-General on progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (E/2020/57), para. 51.
5. Djibouti, the Gambia, Mali, the Republic of Guinea, Somalia and the Sudan.
6. General Assembly resolution 73/149.
7. UNICEF, Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting: A global concern, New York, 2016.
8. [United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs \(UNDESA\), Statistics Division.](#)
9. Djibouti, the Gambia, Mali, the Republic of Guinea, Somalia and the Sudan.
10. UNICEF, Female Genital Mutilation: A New Generation Calls for Ending an Old Practice, New York, 2020.
11. UNICEF, Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting: A statistical overview and exploration of the dynamics of change, New York, 2013.

Sexual violence by non-intimate partners



Key points

- Worldwide, 7% of women have experienced sexual violence by a non-partner since age 15
- Most sexual violence is perpetrated by a person known by the victim. While 49% of women who have experienced sexual violence since age 15 reported that the perpetrator was their current husband or partner, 6% reported that the perpetrator was a stranger. Friends or acquaintances were reported as perpetrators by 5% of the women.
- In 14 out of 46 countries with data, between 1% and 5% of women aged 20-29 reported experiencing sexual violence perpetrated by a non-partner since age 15. In the remaining countries the rate was less than 1%.
- International estimates on non-partner violence "in the previous 12 months" are being produced for the first time. Recent national estimates point to a risk of sexual violence by non-partners as being between 0.1 and 3.1%.

Lifetime prevalence

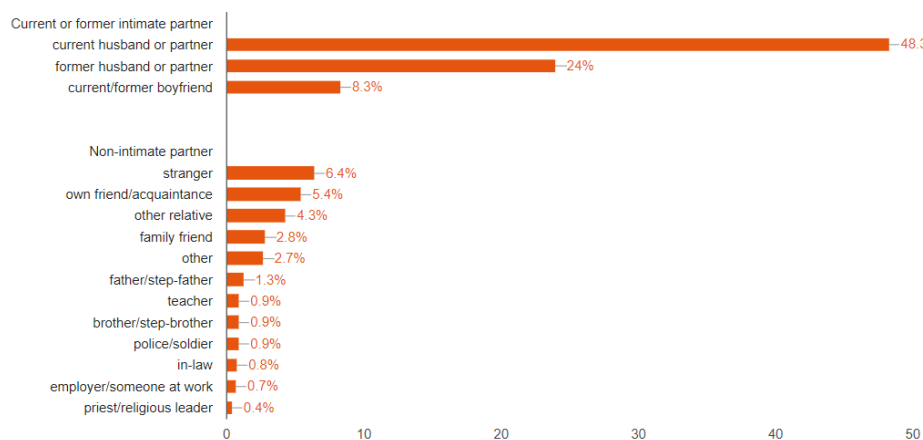
Sexual violence can be perpetrated by **women's intimate partners** or by others. According to WHO estimates in 2013,¹ worldwide, 7.2% of women have experienced sexual violence by a non-partner since age 15.

The majority of sexual violence is committed by intimate partners or someone known to the victim (see figure I). Based on data between 2005 and 2018, of those women who were subjected to sexual violence during their lifetime, almost half (48.6%) were victims of their current husband or partner; almost a quarter (24.2%) experienced violence at the hands of a former husband or partner; and 8.2% were victims of their current or former boyfriend. **This suggests that 8 out of 10 victims were subjected to sexual violence by a current or former intimate partner or boyfriend.**

On average, over 90%² of women subjected to sexual violence knew the perpetrator (see figure I), including 5.3% who reported that the perpetrator was a friend or acquaintance. Conversely, around 10% of women subjected to sexual violence did not know the perpetrator, including 6.3% who explicitly reported that the perpetrator was a stranger.

Even after excluding current and former intimate partners from the analysis, the majority of women subjected to sexual violence knew their perpetrator. At least 62%³ of non-partner sexual violence is committed by a person known to the victim, while 23%⁴ of sexual violence is committed by a complete stranger.

Figure I: Share of women 15 and older who have been subjected to sexual violence since age 15, by type of perpetrator: 2005 - 2018 (latest available) (Percentage)



Source: Calculated by UNDESA, Statistics Division, based on data from Demographic and Health Surveys for 46 countries (accessed in March 2020)

Prevalence in the past 12 months in selected countries

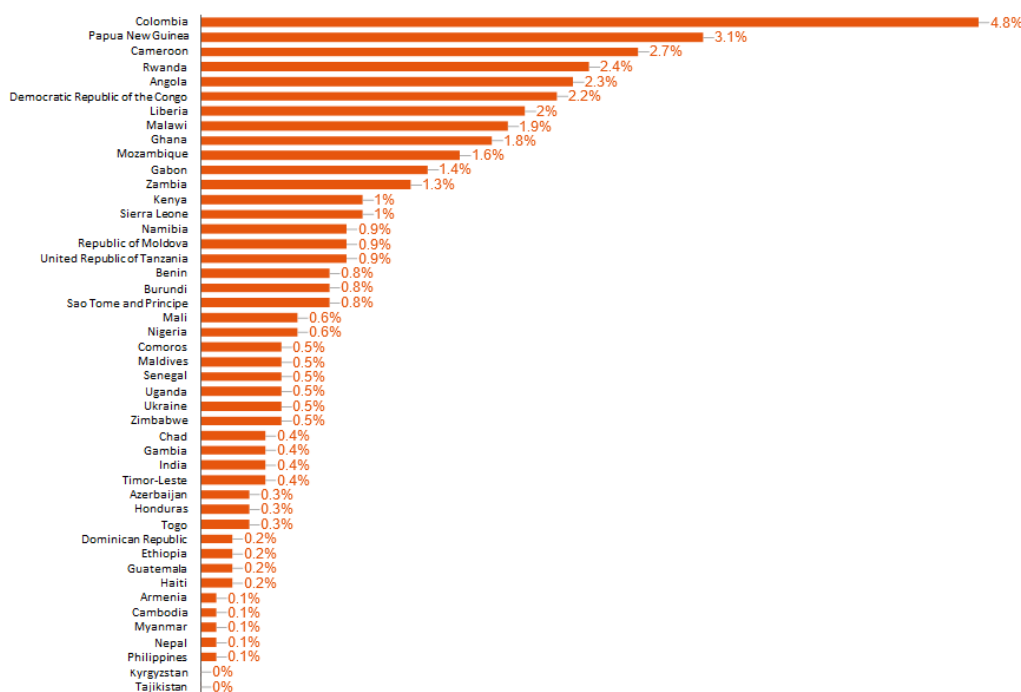
In reporting on sexual violence in the previous 12 months in eight countries in Eastern and South Eastern Europe participating in the 2019 Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe OSCE-led Survey on Violence against Women,⁵ 0.8% of women reported sexual violence by a non-partner during the previous 12 months. Country estimates ranged from 0.1% in North Macedonia to 1.0% in Ukraine.⁶

In general, data availability on sexual violence is higher for dedicated studies on intimate partner violence. However, in recent years, several national statistical offices⁷ have conducted surveys of violence against women and produced estimated rates of sexual violence perpetrated by non-partners. For example, results from a personal safety survey carried out in Australia in 2016 found that 1.8% of women had experienced sexual violence by a non-partner in the past 12 months, and the 2017 national study on gender-based violence in Mongolia pointed to a proportion of 3.1%.

When looking at sexual violence by age group it is clear that younger women face a greater risk of sexual assault. According to data from justice systems and rape crisis centres in Chile, Malaysia, Mexico, Papua New Guinea, Peru and the United States of America, the incidence of certain forms of sexual violence is closely associated with the age of the victim, in particular violence taking place in schools and colleges.⁸ The proportion of women aged 20–29 who have ever experienced sexual violence by a non-partner since age 15 is an important indicator of non-partner sexual violence.

In the 46 countries for which data are available (see figure II), the proportion of women aged 20–29 who have experienced sexual violence perpetrated by someone other than an intimate partner since age 15 ranged from less than 1% in Tajikistan (2014) and Kyrgyzstan (2015) to 4.8% in Colombia (2016).

Figure II Proportion of women aged 20-29 who have ever experienced sexual violence by a non-partner since age 15: 2005-2018 (latest available)



Source: Compiled by UNDESA, Statistics Division, based on data from Demographic and Health Surveys and other sources (last accessed in March 2020).

Data availability and measurement challenges

The availability of data on sexual violence by persons other than an intimate partner is much lower than that for intimate partner violence.

Furthermore, to collect such data, surveys have relied on different methodologies, used different definitions of sexual violence, formulated different questions and sampled diverse age groups. In addition, willingness to discuss experiences of violence and understanding of relevant concepts may also differ according to cultural context, a factor that can affect reported prevalence levels and the overall comparability of international data.

A further challenge is the formulation of the time frame of "previous 12 months" in SDG indicator 5.2.2. This is a problem for two reasons: firstly, far fewer countries have measured non-partner sexual violence in the preceding 12 months compared with sexual violence over the lifetime; secondly, in surveys it is often reported that the rate of past-year sexual violence for an aggregate age group of women aged 15 and older is close to zero. This very low point estimate of prevalence makes the assessment of changes over time difficult, particularly when data are presented disaggregated by age.

These factors make monitoring trends at the country, regional and international levels difficult.

Efforts are ongoing to develop international estimates of sexual violence by non-partners that account for methodological differences between studies, which will improve comparisons between countries, and enable the monitoring of trends and inform policies.

Sources

- World Health Organization (WHO), Global Health Observatory, (data repository), Violence against Women
- USAID, Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) Program, STAT compiler.
- Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), OSCE-led Survey on Violence against Women: Well-Being and Safety of Women, 2019.

About the data

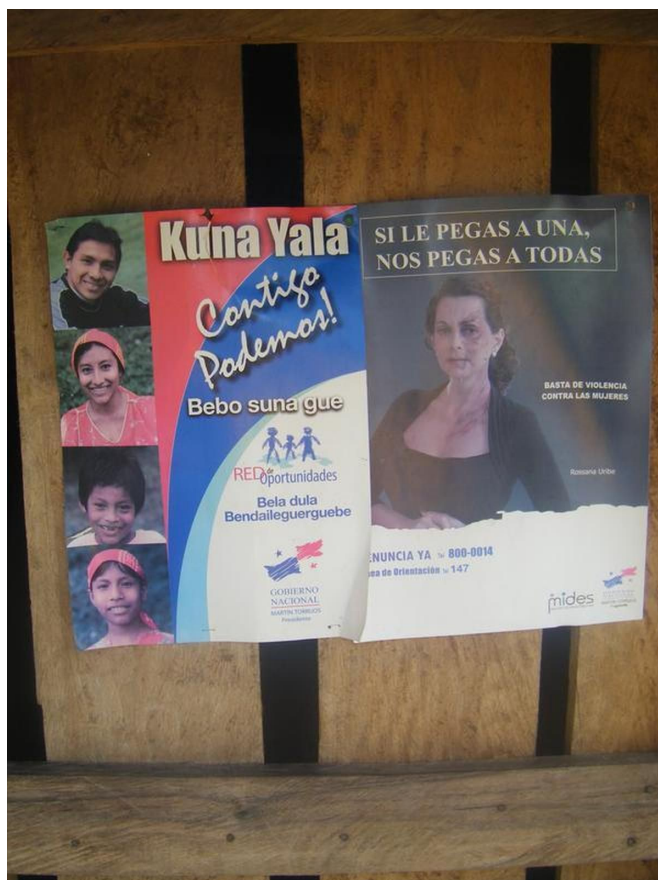
- **Sexual violence:** Any sort of harmful or unwanted sexual behaviour, including acts of abusive sexual contact, forced engagement in sexual acts, attempted or completed sexual acts without consent, incest and sexual harassment.
- **Non-partner sexual violence:** For the purpose of the analysis of non-partner sexual violence, non-partner sexual violence covers violence committed by someone other than current or former husbands, partners or boyfriends. The analysis also focuses on whether or not the perpetrator is known to the victim. Far fewer countries have measured non-partner sexual violence in the preceding 12 months compared with sexual violence since age 15.
- **Prevalence of non-partner violence:** The World Health Organization (WHO) defines the prevalence of non-partner violence as the "percentage of women in a given population who have ever experienced sexual violence by someone other than a partner".⁹
- The Demographic and Health Surveys programme has an indicator on the percentage of women who have ever experienced sexual violence and an additional indicator showing the percentage of women who have experienced sexual violence committed by, inter alia: current husbands or partners; former husbands or partners; current or former boyfriends; fathers or stepfathers; brother or stepbrothers; in-laws; own friends or acquaintances; family friends; an employer or someone at work; a stranger; or other.¹⁰
- For the purpose of the analysis of DHS data on non-partner sexual violence, non-partner sexual violence covers violence committed by someone other than current or former husbands, partners or boyfriends. The analysis also focuses on whether or not the perpetrator is known to the victim.
- Far fewer countries have measured non-partner sexual violence in the preceding 12 months compared with sexual violence since age 15.

Footnotes

1. [WHO, Global Health Observatory \(data repository\), Non-partner sexual violence prevalence](#) and [WHO, Global Health Observatory \(data repository\), Non-partner sexual violence](#).
2. Assuming "priest/religious leader, police/soldier other perpetrator" are unknown to the victim.
3. Includes friends, relatives and in-laws, teachers and/or someone at work.
4. Violence committed by persons other than current husbands/partners, former husbands/partners and/or current/former boyfriends.
5. Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine.
6. [Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe \(OSCE\), OSCE-led Survey on Violence against Women: Well-Being and Safety of Women, annex 6, 2019](#) (accessed on 27 July 2020).
7. Including national statistical offices in Australia (2016), Mongolia (2017), Mexico (2016), Trinidad and Tobago (2017) and the Philippines (2017). Other countries have also produced older estimates of "non-partner sexual violence in the past 12 months" in conjunction with their national statistics offices (including Laos (1.0%, 2014) and Bangladesh (0.8%, 2011)).
8. [WHO, World report on violence and health, chapter six, Geneva, 2002](#).
9. [World Health Organization \(WHO\), Global Health Observatory, \(data repository\), Non-partner sexual violence prevalence](#).
10. [Demographic and Health Surveys \(DHS-7\), Guide to DHS Statistics DHS-7, Persons committing sexual violence](#).

Violence against women and the girl child

Attitudes towards physical violence against women



Key points

- Acceptance of wife-beating is generally higher in countries in Africa, Asia and Oceania, excluding Australia and New Zealand, and lower in countries in Latin America and the Caribbean and Europe.
- Intimate partner violence is becoming less acceptable. During the 8-year period from 2012 to 2019, women's acceptance of physical violence by their partners decreased in almost 75% of countries with trend data.
- Younger men view physical violence against their partners as more acceptable than older men.
- Although it may be assumed that wife-beating is more widely justified by men than women, in the 53 countries with data on the attitudes of women and men, reported acceptance rates were actually lower among men than women in 40 countries.

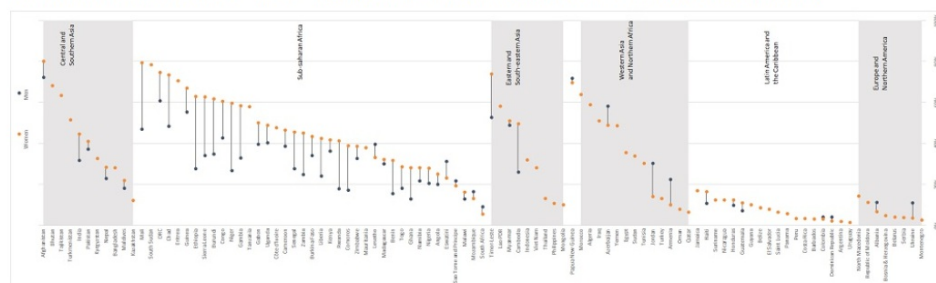
Background

Although it should be universally understood that physical violence is never an acceptable practice, unfortunately, in many parts of the world both men and women still believe that wife-beating is justifiable and/or acceptable under certain circumstances. Specific survey questions on wife-beating¹ are designed to capture the social justification of violence as a disciplinary action when a woman does not comply with certain expected gender roles.

Current situation

In some countries and cultures, wife-beating is seen as justifiable and/or acceptable in a wide range of contexts, a fact that makes it difficult to change behaviour patterns and creates a challenging situation for women victims of domestic violence who want to talk to someone about their experiences and/or to ask for help. Research indicates that perpetration of and victimization by violence is higher among those who accept or justify such abuse than those who do not.²

Figure I: Percentage of women and men who consider that a husband is justified in hitting or beating his wife under at least one of the five specified circumstances: 2012-2019 (latest available)



Source: Compiled by United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), Statistics Division, based on demographic and health surveys (DHS), multiple indicator cluster surveys (MICS), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and national surveys (some surveys have different reasons for justifying wife-beating).

Note: Most data cover the period 2012-2019, with the exception of 16 countries with data prior to 2012. Ranking of countries is for presentation purposes only.

Wife-beating remains acceptable in some countries throughout the world: reported levels of acceptance were generally higher in countries in Africa, Asia and Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand) and lower in countries in Latin America and the Caribbean and Europe. Levels of acceptance among women ranged from 2% in Uruguay (2013) to 80% in Afghanistan (2015). Among men, levels of acceptance ranged from 4% in Colombia (2015) and the Dominican Republic (2013) to 72% in Afghanistan (2015) and Papua New Guinea (2017).

It should be noted that it is difficult to compare reported levels of acceptance of wife-beating across countries and contexts because willingness to talk about violence and attitudes towards it vary, a factor that can affect individual response rates. Although it might be assumed that wife-beating is more widely justified by men than women, in the 53 countries with data on the attitudes of both women and men, reported acceptance levels were actually lower among men than women in 40 countries.

Evidence also suggests that attitudes are changing. In 2019, women generally viewed domestic violence as being less acceptable than they had in 2012. Between 2012 and 2019, 15 countries conducted multiple surveys and provided multiple data points for trend analysis on women's attitudes towards physical violence: in 11 countries levels of acceptance of wife-beating had decreased, while in the other 4 countries levels of acceptance had increased.

Trend data on men's attitudes towards physical violence against women is not widely available, which makes comparable trend analysis challenging. It is possible, however, to look at the differences between the attitudes of adolescents and adult men to see whether attitudes differ across age groups within a given country. Worryingly, data suggest that young men view physical violence against women as more acceptable than older men whereas differences in attitudes by age are less pronounced among women (see table).

Comparing the attitudes of adolescent males with adult men towards physical violence against women reveals higher levels of acceptance among younger males than among older men: reported levels of acceptance are higher in 40 out of 46 countries (87% of countries with data). In contrast, the attitudes of women towards physical

violence against women appear to vary less by age: reported levels are higher among younger women in 45 countries (54% of countries with data) and lower in 38 countries (46% of countries with data).

About the data

Coverage

Women and men aged 15–49 worldwide.

Availability

For the years between 2000 and 2019, 99 countries have data on the attitudes of women towards wife-beating, and just over half of those countries (53) also have data on the attitudes of men. Between the years 2012 and 2019, 83 countries collected data on the subject, and 15 of those countries conducted multiple surveys during that same time period.

Oceania (excl) refers to Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand) throughout the publication.

Definition

- The percentage of women and men aged 15–49 who think a husband is justified in hitting or beating his wife under at least one of the following circumstances: (a) she goes out without telling him; (b) she neglects the children; (c) she argues with him; (d) she refuses to have sex with him; or (e) she burns the food.

Sources

- Demographic and health surveys (DHS)
- Multiple indicator cluster surveys (MICS)
- United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
- National surveys
- World Bank

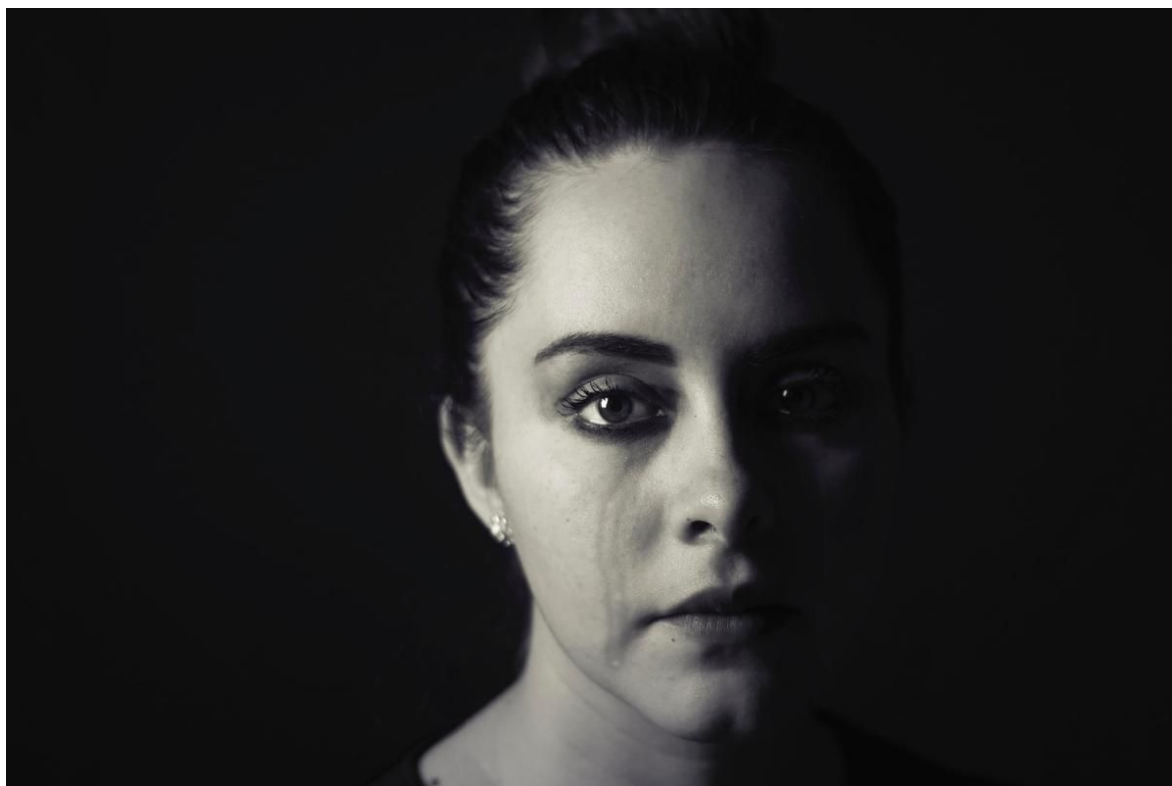
Related stories and further reading

- [Intimate partner physical and/or sexual violence](#)

Footnotes

1. Data from multiple indicator cluster surveys (MICS) and demographic and health surveys (DHS).
2. World Health Organization (WHO), 2005; and Instituto Promundo and the International Center for Research on Women, *Evolving Men: Initial Results from the International Men and Gender Equality Survey*, 2011.

Intimate partner and family-related homicide



Key points

- Worldwide, 137 women are killed by a member of their own family every day.
- In 2017, 87,000 women were intentionally killed. More than half (58%) were killed by intimate partners or family members, an increase over the share (47%) reported in 2012.
- Although women and girls account for a far smaller share of total homicides than men (20%),¹ they bear by far the greatest burden of both intimate partner/family-related homicides and intimate partner homicides (82% of deaths recorded as intimate partner homicides are women).
- Women run the greatest risk of being killed by their intimate partners or by family members in countries in Africa.

Current situation

An estimated 87,000 women were intentionally killed in 2017. More than half of them (58%) were killed by intimate partners or family members, meaning that, worldwide, 137 women were killed every day by intimate partners or members of their own family. More than a third (30,000 or 34%) of the women intentionally killed in 2017 were killed by their current or former intimate partners, that is, someone they would usually have trusted.

These figures translate into: a global female homicide rate of 2.1 women killed for every 100,000 women in the population in 2017; a global female intimate partner/family-related homicide rate of 1.3 per 100,000; and a female intimate partner homicide rate of 0.8 per 100,000.

The estimated number of women killed by intimate partners or family members in 2012 was 48,000 (47% of all female homicide victims), compared with 58% in 2017. From these rising percentages, it appears that the annual number of female deaths worldwide resulting from intimate partner/family-related homicide is on the increase.

Intimate partner/family-related homicide

Worldwide, the largest number of women killed by intimate partners or family members in 2017 was in Asia (20,000), followed by Africa (19,000), the Americas (8,000), Europe (3,000) and Oceania (300).

Adjusting for the population size in each region, data show that women run the greatest risk of being killed by their intimate partners or family members in countries in Africa (3.1 per 100,000 female population), while in Europe (0.7 per 100,000 population) women are least at risk.

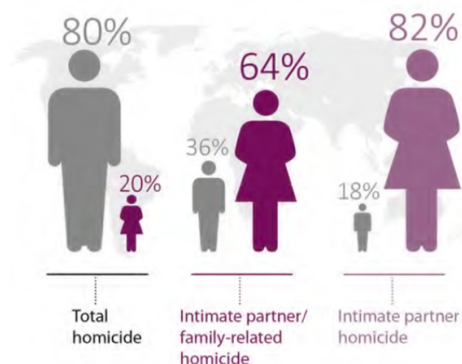
The intimate partner/family-related homicide rate was also high in the Americas in 2017, at 1.6 per 100,000 female population, as well as in Oceania (1.3 per 100,000) and Asia (0.9 per 100,000).

Further insights into gender based killing in countries in Latin America and the Caribbean can be found in the story on [femicide](#) produced by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean,² which highlights that the risk women face varies significantly by country. In El Salvador and Guyana the rate of femicide in 2017 was very high (6.8 and 8.8 per 100,000 women) compared to rates reported in 14 other countries and territories³ in the region (less than 1 per 100,000 women).

In 2017, more than two thirds (69%) of all women killed in Africa and more than a third (38%) of those killed in Europe were killed by intimate partners or family members.

Figure I: Share of women victims among total homicides, intimate partner/family related homicides and intimate partner homicides: 2017

Although women and girls account for a far smaller share of total homicides than men, they bear by far the greatest burden of intimate partner/family-related homicide, and intimate partner homicide.



Source: Source: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Global study on homicide: Gender-related killing of women and girls, Vienna, 2018 (https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/GSH2018/GSH18_Gender-related_killing_of_women_and_girls.pdf).

Intimate partner homicide

When looking solely at the proportion of women killed by intimate partners (not including other family members) in 2017, the regions with the largest shares were Asia and Africa (11,000 each), followed by the Americas (6,000), Europe (2,000) and Oceania (200).

In 2017, Africa was also the region with the highest rate of females killed by intimate partners in 2017 (1.7 per 100,000 female population). The Americas had the second-highest rate per 100,000 female population (1.2), followed by Oceania (0.9), Europe (0.6) and Asia (0.5).

Oceania was the region with the highest share of female homicides attributable to a woman's intimate partner, at 42%, while Europe reported a lower yet still significant share of 29%, compared to a global average of more than a third (34%).

Total homicides, intimate partner / family-related homicides and intimate partner homicides

Only one out of every five victims (20%) of homicide at the global level is a woman,⁴ yet women and girls make up the majority of homicides by intimate partners and family members (64%). Women also bear the greatest burden in terms of intimate partner violence. The disparity between male and female victims of homicide perpetrated exclusively by an intimate partner is even larger: roughly 82% female victims versus 18% male victims.

Country in focus / vulnerable groups

Data from Canada show that aboriginal and indigenous women and girls experience much higher levels of violence than non-aboriginal women, both in terms of victimization and lethal violence. In 2014, the rate of homicide among indigenous females was six times higher than the rate among non-aboriginal people (3.64 per 100,000 versus 0.65 per 100,000).⁵

Related stories

- Intimate partner physical and/or sexual violence against women and girls

Sources

- United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Global study on homicide: Gender-related killing of women and girls, Vienna 2018
- United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Statistics Division, Global SDG Indicators Database, indicator 16.1.1 (Number of victims of intentional homicide per 100,000 population, by sex and age)

About the data

Definitions

- **Total estimated number and rate of intentional homicides perpetrated by intimate partners/family-members, disaggregated by sex:** Latest statistics on different measures of intentional homicides perpetrated by intimate partners or family members that have been considered in the context of the gender-related killing of women or "femicide".
- **Femicide:** The term "femicide" was coined several decades ago to define the gender-related motivation associated with the killing of women and girls. Although the term has attracted attention to the extent that it is now used by some Governments and a wide range of stakeholders, at the global level there is no commonly agreed definition as to what constitutes "femicide". What is observable, however, is a plurality of definitions stemming from different legal and sociological approaches, which indicate the elements that may contribute to labelling a crime "femicide".

Availability

Data from 2017 on intentional homicide by sex is available for 93 countries.⁶ Data availability on male and female rates of intimate partner homicide is very limited across regions; the highest rate of coverage is reported in Europe and Latin America and the Caribbean.⁷ There are serious limitations in terms of data availability for male and female rates of intimate partner/family-related homicide, and, when reported, such figures may indicate an under recording of victims.⁸

Footnotes

1. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Global study on homicide: Gender-related killing of women and girls, Vienna, 2019.
2. Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), "At Least 2,795 Women Were Victims of Femicide in 23 Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean in 2017", press release, November 2018.
3. Bahamas, British Virgin Islands, Chile, Colombia, Cuba, Grenada, Jamaica, Montserrat, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of).
4. In 2017, global rate of female intentional homicide was 2.14 per 100,000 females, compared with the male intentional homicide rate of 9.70 per 100,000 men (Global SDG Indicators Database, indicator 16.1.1).
5. Statistics Canada, Victimization of Aboriginal people in Canada, 2014, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, 2016.
6. United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), Statistics Division, Global SDG Indicators Database (indicator 16.1.1) (accessed on 25 August 2020).
7. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Global study on homicide: Gender-related killing of women and girls, Vienna, 2019.
8. Ibid.

Women judges



Key points

- In 2017, the proportion of women among judges was estimated to be 40%, up from 35% in 2008.
- If recent trends continue, the share of female judges will reach parity by 2035.
- The region with the largest proportion of women judges is Europe and Northern America (57%), while in some countries in Oceania, excluding Australia and New Zealand, less than 5% of judges are women.

Background

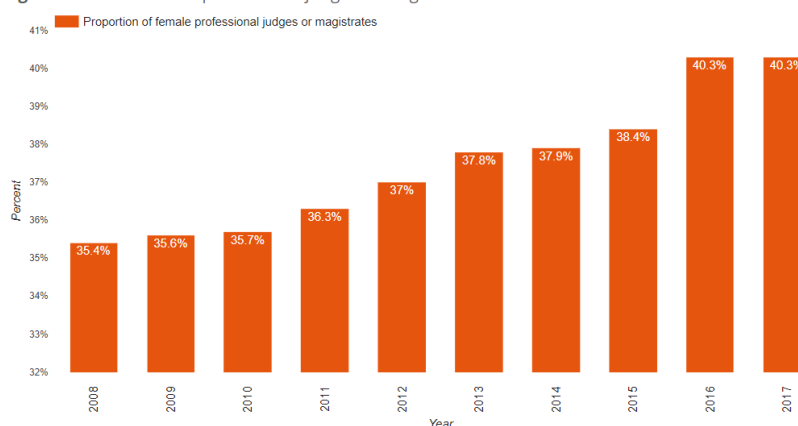
The entry of women judges into judiciary positions from which they have historically been excluded has been a positive step in ensuring that judiciaries are perceived as being more inclusive and representative of the people whose lives they serve and affect. By their mere presence, women judges enhance the legitimacy of courts, sending a powerful signal that they are open and accessible to those who seek recourse to justice.

Women judges contribute much more than improving gender balance within the judiciary, they also contribute significantly to the quality of decision-making, and thus to the quality of justice itself.¹

Current situation

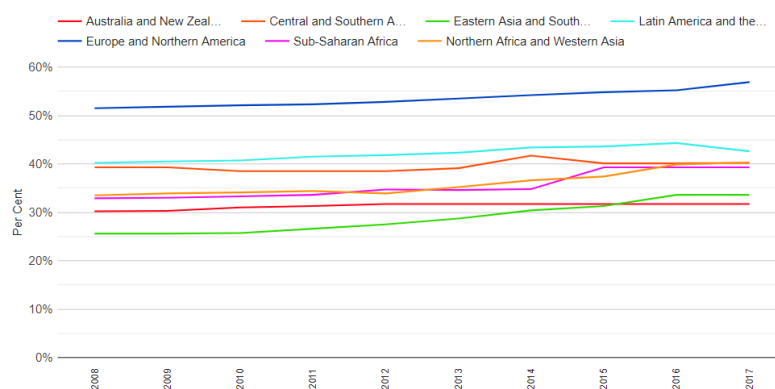
Data on judges and magistrates are collected in the United Nations Survey of Crime Trends and Operations of Criminal Justice Systems, which is issued every second year by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. Over the past decade, the proportion of women judges or magistrates has increased steadily year after year, at an average of approximately half a percentage point (0.54%). In 2017, the share of women judges was estimated to be 40%, up from 35% in 2008 (figure I). If recent trends continue, the share of female judges will reach parity (50%) by 2035.

Figure I Share of female professional judges or magistrates: 2008-2017



Source: Data provided by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (correspondence on 21 May 2020).

As evidenced from data at the regional level, there is a significant variation in the share of women professional judges or magistrates in different parts of the world (figure II), although the overall share of women judges and magistrates increased in all regions during the period from 2008 to 2017.

Figure II Share of female professional judges or magistrates: 2008-2017

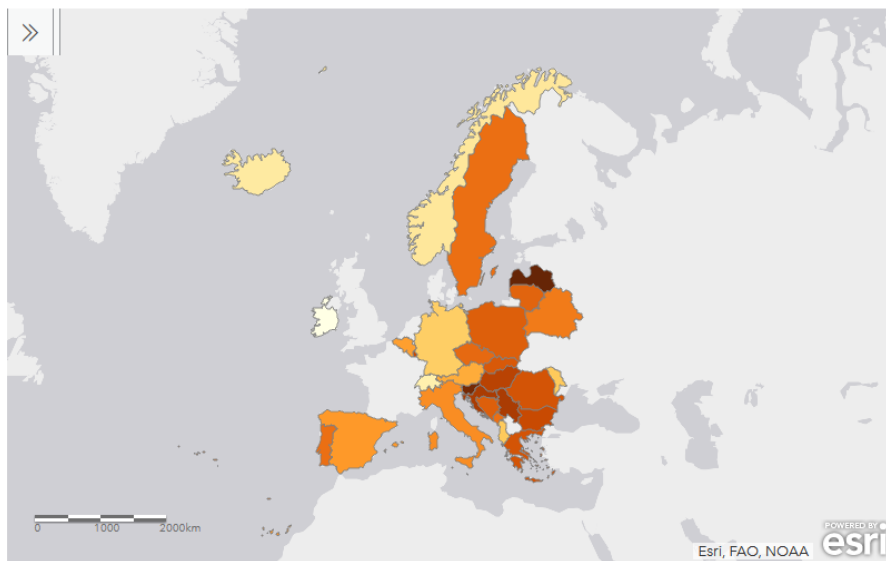
Source: Data provided by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (correspondence on 21 May 2020).

Based on available data up to 2017, the region with the largest percentage of women judges is Europe and Northern America (57%), largely owing to the fact that the proportion of women in the judiciary in countries in Eastern and Southern Europe has already reached and/or surpassed parity in 16 out of 21 countries.²

In Latin America and the Caribbean, women make up 43% of the judiciary, followed by 40% in sub-Saharan Africa, 40% in Central and Southern Asia, 40% in Northern Africa and Western Asia, 34% in Eastern and South-Eastern Asia and 32% in Australia and New Zealand.

In its 2015 report on gender equality, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, while acknowledging the general lack of quantitative data for countries in the Pacific, reported that in some countries in Oceania, excluding Australia and New Zealand, less than 5% of judges are women.³

Figure III Share of female professional judges or magistrates in European countries: 2019 (Percentage)



Source: [United Nations Minimum Set of Gender Indicators](#) (last accessed in July 2020).

The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this and other maps throughout this publication do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

About the data

Coverage

Women professional judges and magistrates worldwide.

Availability

Trend data on professional judges or magistrates by sex are globally available for 85 countries, covering almost half of the world population. In general, it is considered that national capacity to supply such data is adequate.

Oceania (excl) refers to Oceania excluding Australia and New Zealand throughout the publication.

Definitions

- Share of female judges is the proportion of women among all judges.
- Professional judges or magistrates means both full-time and part-time officials authorized to hear civil criminal and other cases, including in appeal courts, and to make dispositions in a court of law. It may also include authorized associate judges and magistrates. Data refer to "female professional judges or magistrates at the national level".

References

- [United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, regional estimates: data portal.](#)
- [United Nations Minimum Set of Gender Indicators](#) (last accessed July 2020).
- [United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, "The Role of Women Judges and a Gender Perspective in Ensuring Judicial Independence and Integrity", 2019.](#)
- [United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Asia and the Pacific, Bangkok, 2015.](#)

Footnotes

1. See United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Doha Declaration: Promoting a Culture of Lawfulness*, 2019.
2. *United Nations Minimum Set of Gender Indicators*. (accessed July 2020)
3. United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, *Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Asia and the Pacific*, Bangkok, 2015 .

Chapter 7

Environment

Gender and the environment: an overview of issues and methodologies



Key points

- Women and men face different vulnerabilities and needs in terms of the environmental dimension of development.
- Disaggregated data are crucial to understanding the gender-environment nexus, yet only 9 environment-related indicators in the SDG framework have a measurable gender dimension.
- Mainstreaming gender in environment statistics requires measuring environment-related issues disproportionately affecting or being affected by women or men.
- Some progress in women's participation in decision-making in the environmental sphere has been observed: women made up 39% of national delegations to the twenty-fifth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in 2019, compared to 32% of national delegations to the fifteenth session in 2009;¹ more specifically, 21% of heads of delegations were women in 2019 versus 10% in 2009.

Background

Human populations depend on natural resources and ecosystems for food, shelter, water, culture, leisure and their economic livelihoods. While all people require equitable access to natural resources to address these needs, the particular structural inequalities faced by women in terms of vulnerability to natural disasters, climate change and environmental degradation need to be addressed urgently. Understanding the gender-environment nexus requires data and analysis, in particular, gender-disaggregated data.² In the absence of such data, environmental analyses remain inadequate and partial, and establishing baselines, monitoring progress and assessing outcomes is challenging.³

Data on gender and the environment is critical for environmental policymaking and for developing appropriate solutions and interventions

Mainstreaming gender in environment statistics is not only about producing sex-disaggregated data, it also requires measuring the environment-related issues disproportionately affecting or affected by women or men. To measure the environment-gender nexus comprehensively, indicators must identify socially constructed vulnerabilities and the specific needs, challenges and priorities of women, men, girls and boys in relation to the environment.⁴ While the SDG framework provides a platform for monitoring all aspects of sustainable development, it does not have a specific focus on measuring gender and the environment. Moreover, the current monitoring framework for the United Nations Framework for the Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, lack specific measurable indicators on gender and the environment.⁵ This despite the fact that the Convention on Biological Diversity recognizes "the vital role that women play in the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity and affirms the need for full participation of women at all levels of policymaking and implementation for biological diversity conservation".⁶

Although gender and environment issues are not directly addressed in the SDG framework, it contains a number of Goals, targets and indicators that are related to gender and the environment (see figure I). By identifying indicators that focus on these topics, countries can track the most pressing gender and environment issues they face.⁷ With regard to the absence of specific gender provisions in the Convention on Biological Diversity, efforts are under way.⁸

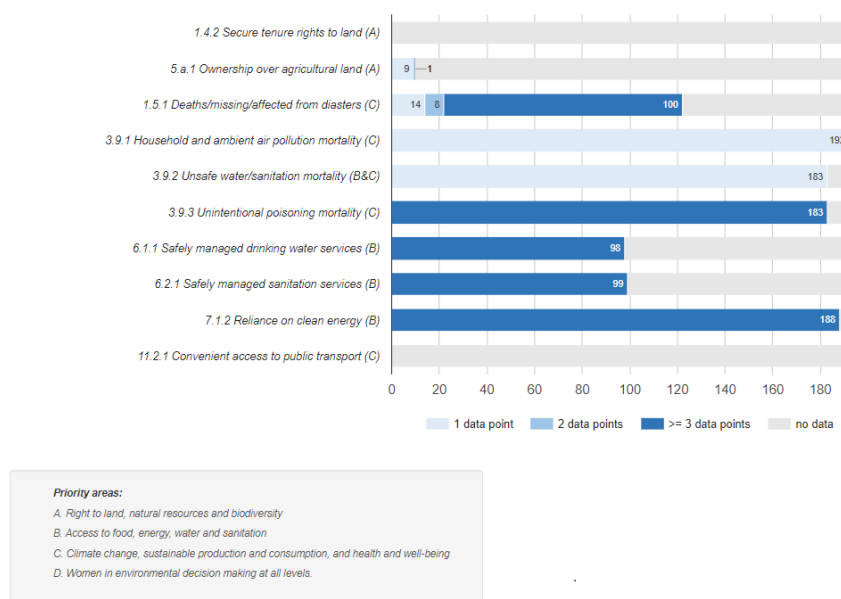
to ensure that gender-based concerns are more prominently addressed in the new 2020 framework to be adopted at the global level to provide an agreed legal framework for measuring biodiversity.

Figure I: Gender and environment priority areas in the Sustainable Development Goals

Priority Area	Relevant SDGs
A. Right to land, natural resources and biodiversity	   
B. Access to food, energy, water and sanitation	   
C. Climate change, sustainable production and consumption and health and well-being	      
D. Women in environmental decision making at all levels	   

Source: United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), Gender and environment statistics: unlocking information for action and measuring the SDGs, Nairobi, March 2019 (<https://www.unenvironment.org/resources/report/gender-and-environment-statistics-unlocking-information-action-and-measuring-sdgs>).

Although there is a gender dimension to many of the environment-related SDGs, only 9 environment-related indicators in the SDG framework have a measurable gender dimension.⁹ Currently, there are sufficient data for 5 of the 9 SDG indicators (see figure II) and disaggregation of data by sex may be possible through additional analysis of the underlying information.

Figure II: Data availability for Sustainable Development Goal indicators related to gender and the environment

Source: See, Serrao, S., Duerto Valero, S., Campbell, J. and Gilligan, M., "Mainstreaming gender in environment statistics for the SDGs and beyond: Identifying priorities in Asia and the Pacific", Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), Working Paper Series, October 2019 (<https://www.unescap.org/resources/working-paper-series-sdwp10october-2019-mainstreaming-gender-environment-statistics-sdgs>).

Gender inequality contributes to power dynamics that determine who makes decisions at all levels

Environmental decision-making occurs at all levels, including through: participation of delegates to multilateral environmental agreements; climate change funding mechanisms; national level parliamentarians, environmental ministries and other government bodies; state and local officials; community-based conservation organizations; and household decision-making. In all such arenas, the unique voice and agency of women is a vital part of the decision-making process for the governance of natural resources, in particular in the development of gender-responsive policies. The perspectives of women have often gone unrecognized in decision-making spheres and their needs left out in the shaping of environmental policy.¹⁰ Without their active participation, women's needs, vulnerabilities, strengths and knowledge will be missing from environmental policies, and this is especially true because women and men interact with, rely upon, have access to and manage environmental resources differently, and are differently impacted by the effects of climate change.

Numerous efforts have been made to ensure that gender equality and women's empowerment are central to the decision-making processes relevant to the environment and sustainable development,¹¹ and all three Rio Conventions¹² include provisions addressing the importance of gender equality and women's participation. The Convention on Biological Diversity recommends, inter alia, that States parties take action to measure and monitor women's participation and to include both women and men in capacity-building efforts and the development and dissemination of information on the Convention in ways that are accessible to both sexes.¹³

Although efforts have been made to measure women's participation in environmental decision-making, data gaps remain. Participation in the meetings of the Conferences of the Parties to the Rio Conventions is one of the more

reliably monitored and reported aspects of women's inclusion in decision-making processes in the environmental sphere. In this regard, the Women's Environment & Development Organization (WEDO) found that women made up 39% of national delegations to the United Nations Climate Conference in 2019, and that 21% of the heads of delegations were women. In contrast, at the 2015 Climate Change Conference, women comprised 32% of delegations and only 10% of heads of delegations were women.¹⁴

SDG target 5.5 sets the goal of ensuring women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life,¹⁵ and indicator 5.5.1 addresses how to measure the proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments and local governments. In 2015, in an assessment of the extent of women's leadership in national-level environmental sectors, the International Union for Conservation of Nature found that across 881 national environmental-sector ministries from 193 United Nations Member States, only 12% of ministers were women. In 2020, worldwide, 25% of parliamentarians are women.¹⁶

About the data

Definitions

There is a lack of specific definitions related to the gender dimensions of environmental issues, a situation complicated by the fact that many environmental issues are measured at the household level. While there are 9 environment-related indicators in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) framework¹⁷ that have a potential gender dimension, additional indicators are necessary to capture this aspect of development. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) have identified a set of indicators for consideration by national statistical bodies and international agencies.¹⁸

Availability

Data for the SDG indicators related to gender and the environment are scarce. Currently, only 5 out of the 9 environment-related indicators in the SDG framework with a measurable gender dimension have sufficient data (at least 98 countries with 2 data points).¹⁹

Footnotes

1. Women's Environment & Development Organization (WEDO), "By the numbers: UNFCCC: Progress on achieving gender balance", updated January 2020 .
2. UNEP, 2016: Global Gender and Environment Outlook, Nairobi, 2016 .
3. Ibid.
4. Serrao, S., Duerto Valero, S., Campbell, J. and Gilligan, M., "Mainstreaming gender in environment statistics for the SDGs and beyond: Identifying priorities in Asia and the Pacific", Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), Working Paper Series, October 2019 .
5. Brautigam, C., Collantes, V., Hordosch, S., Van Huyssteen, N., Taylor, S. and Paulose, H., "Towards a Gender-Responsive Implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity", United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), Research Paper, November 2018 .
6. Convention on Biological Diversity, 1992, United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 1760, No. 30619 .
7. UNEP and IUCN, Gender and environment statistics: unlocking information for action and measuring the SDGs, Nairobi, March 2019 .
8. Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, "Towards a gender-responsible post-2020 global biodiversity framework: considerations for gender mainstreaming", note by the Executive Secretary, Nairobi, 2019 .
9. Serrao, S., Duerto Valero, S., Campbell, J., Gilligan, M. Mainstreaming gender in environment statistics for the SDGs and beyond: Identifying priorities in Asia and the Pacific. ESCAP Working Paper Series SD/WP/10/October 2019..
10. UNEP and IUCN, Gender and environment statistics: unlocking information for action and measuring the SDGs, Nairobi, March 2019 .
11. Ibid.
12. The three Rio Conventions are: Convention on Biological Diversity, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification.
13. Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, 2015-2020 Gender Plan of Action, Pocket guide: Summary and Examples, Montreal.
14. WEDO, "By the numbers: UNFCCC: Progress on achieving gender balance", updated January 2020 .
15. UNDESA, Sustainable Development, Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls .
16. IUCN, Environment & Gender Index, "Women's participation in global environmental decision-making", August 2015 .
17. United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), Statistics Division, Global indicator framework for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development .
18. United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), Gender and environment statistics: unlocking information for action and measuring the SDGs, Nairobi, March 2019.
19. Serrao, S., Duerto Valero, S., Campbell, J. and Gilligan, M., "Mainstreaming gender in environment statistics for the SDGs and beyond: Identifying priorities in Asia and the Pacific", Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), Working Paper Series, October 2019 .

Women and the environment in Asia and the Pacific [UN Women]



Key points

- Women are not as prepared as men to cope with disasters and other environment-related challenges as they often own fewer assets and rely more heavily on natural resources for their livelihoods. More than half of the economically active women in 11 countries in the Asia-Pacific region are engaged in agriculture.
- Urban settings offer women economic opportunities but also place many, in particular slum dwellers, at heightened risk of poverty, violence and unsafe living conditions.
- There is a gender gap in the likelihood of women and men becoming slum dwellers: in five countries with available data, men living in urban areas were more likely to live in slums, while in four other countries women were more likely to be slum dwellers.
- Although the majority of people who lack access to basic drinking water sources live in rural areas, the urban poorest are also deprived in this regard. Since women and girls are disproportionately in charge of water collection, they are particularly affected. For example, the poorest women in urban settings are more likely to lack access to basic drinking water sources than men in Indonesia (10% more likely), Tajikistan (11% more likely), Afghanistan (14% more likely) and Myanmar (32% more likely).
- The average amount of time spent on water collection among slum dwellers in the Asia-Pacific region is 15 minutes, although some people spend as long as 6 hours each time they fetch water. In rural areas, people living in the most remote locations may spend up to 15 hours on this task.

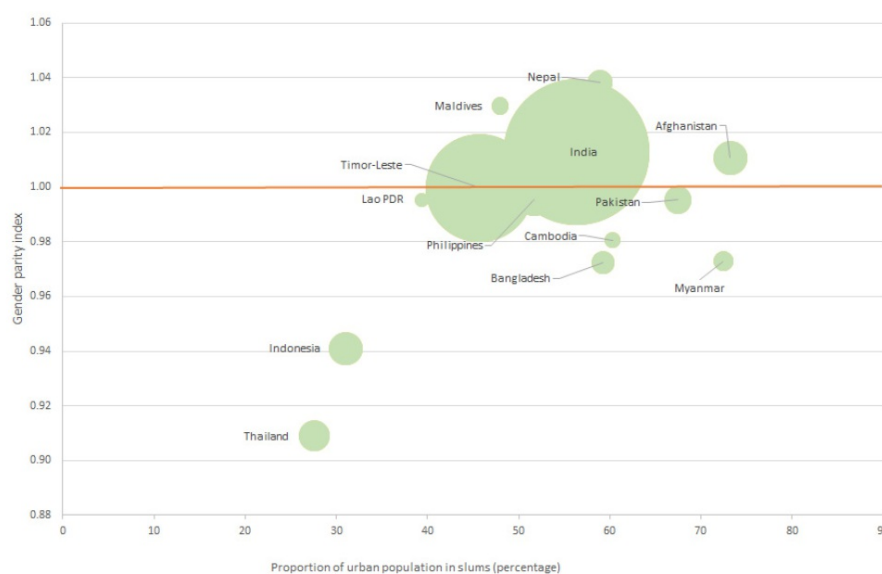
Background

Just as women and men have unequal access to rights, resources and opportunities, they relate to and interact with the natural environment in different ways, face differing vulnerabilities and impacts, and have unique knowledge and adaptive capacity related to climate change, disasters and use of natural resources.¹ The lives of women in countries in the Asia and the Pacific region are intrinsically connected with the environment, with more than 50% of economically active women in 11 countries in the region engaged in agriculture.² Furthermore, because of its many low-lying areas, densely populated coastal cities and frequent natural disasters, the region is highly vulnerable to the effects of climate change. In general, women are less well equipped to cope with disasters and other environment-related challenges as they often own fewer assets and rely more heavily on natural resources for their livelihoods. Moreover, a large share of women also engages in informal employment (56% of women in Eastern and South-Eastern Asia and 88% in Central and Southern Asia),³ which increases their vulnerability to external shocks.

Available data show gender differences in the likelihood of being a slum dweller: in Cambodia, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Myanmar and Thailand, men were more likely to live in slums, while in Afghanistan, India, Maldives and Nepal, women were more likely to be slum dwellers

Seven of 10 of the most populous cities in the world are in Asia.⁴ Although urban settings offer economic opportunities, they also put many women at heightened risk of experiencing poverty, violence and health hazards, particularly in slum settings. An analysis of sex-disaggregated data for 12 Asian countries for the period 2012–2017 indicates that a greater proportion of women than men live in slums (see figure I). While in five of the countries with available data men were more likely to live in slums, meaning that the proportion of men living in slums out of all men living in urban areas was higher than the corresponding figure for women, women were more likely to be slum dwellers in four other countries, Afghanistan, India, Maldives and Nepal.⁵

Figure I: Gender differences in the proportion of urban population living in slums: 2012–2017 (latest available)

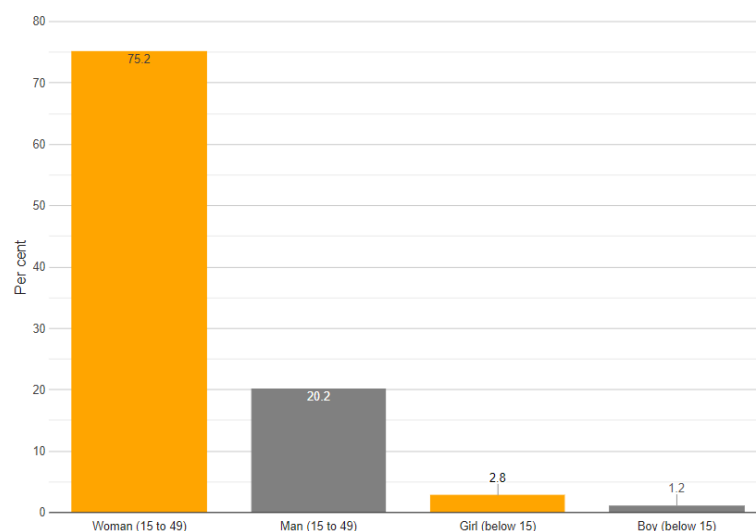


Source: United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), calculations based on Demographic and Health Surveys, Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys and UNdata.

Note: Size of the bubble is proportional to the total urban population living in slums. The gender parity index (GPI) is calculated as the proportion of urban women living in slums, divided by the proportion of urban men living in slums. Values above 1 indicate women are more likely to be slum dwellers, while values below 1 indicate men are more likely to be slum dwellers.

People are classified as slum dwellers if they live in urban settings and lack improved water sources and improved sanitation facilities, live in overcrowded homes or in non-durable housing. An analysis of data for 15 Asian countries⁶ shows that, although the majority of people lacking access to basic⁷ drinking water sources live in rural areas,⁸ the urban poorest are also deprived in this regard. For instance, during the wet season in Cambodia, more than 75% of people living in the poorest urban households lack access to basic⁹ drinking water sources; this figure goes down during the dry season, but still remains above 60%.¹⁰ As women and girls are most often in charge of water collection,¹¹ the lack of basic drinking water sources affects them disproportionately. Among the Asian countries with available data, India alone compiles data on water collection roles,¹² revealing large gender differentials: in 75% of slum dwellings in India, women are responsible for fetching water¹³ (see figure II).

Figure II: Percentages of slum dwellers in India responsible for fetching water by sex and age: 2015—2016



Source: UN-Women, calculations based on Demographic and Health Survey, India, 2015—2016.

There is wide variation across countries in the region in time spent in fetching water

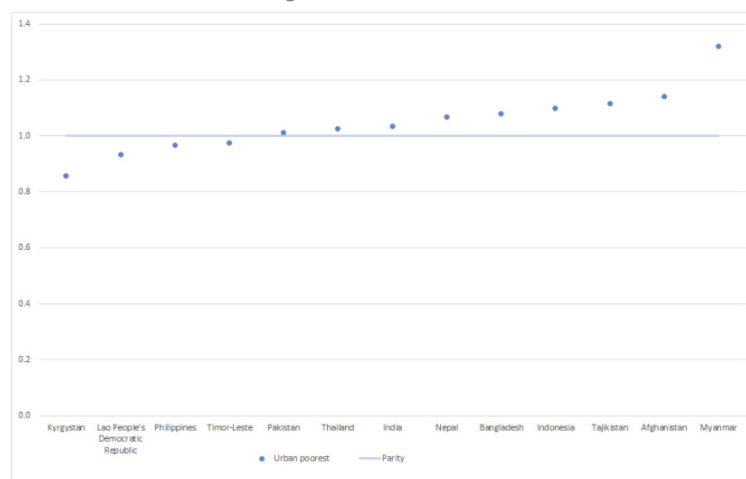
For women living in slums, the long distances that often need to be covered to fetch water adds a substantial burden to their daily workload. There is wide variation across countries in the amount of time taken to fetch water, from an average of less than seven minutes in Indonesia, to 88 minutes (about one hour and a half) in the Philippines. Although the median time for water collection stands at 15 minutes,¹⁴ households located furthest from water sources may spend as long as 6 hours on this essential task.

Gender gaps in access to water in urban and rural areas

There are gender differences in accessing basic drinking water sources among the poorest urban dwellers in many countries in the Asia-Pacific region: while women and girls in slum households are generally responsible for the time-consuming task of collecting water for drinking and cooking, there is not always enough water for their feminine hygiene needs. In Myanmar, for instance, women living in slum households are 10 percentage points¹⁵ likelier than men to live in households that lack basic drinking water; a gender gap in access also exists in Afghanistan.¹⁶ This may lead to a lack of proper sanitation, exposing women to health risks (see figure III).

In rural areas, where piped water is not as common, people often walk very long distances to collect water: in many rural and remote areas, people, most often women, can spend as long as 15 hours travelling to collect water. On average, rural dwellers spend from about 10 minutes in Indonesia in order to fetch water to 39 minutes in Timor-Leste and 38 minutes in Pakistan.

Figure III: Gender parity index among individuals aged 15–49 living in the poorest urban households without access to basic drinking water sources: 2012–2017



Source: UN-Women, calculations based on Demographic and Health Surveys and Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys.

Note: The gender parity index (GPI) is calculated as the proportion of women aged 15–49 who lack access to basic water sources, divided by the proportion of men aged 15–49 who lack access to basic water sources. Values above 1 mean women are more likely lack access to basic water sources, while values below 1 indicate men are more likely to lack access to basic water sources.

About the data

Definitions

- **Proportion of urban population living in slums:** Proportion of the urban population lacking access to at least one of the following: clean water, improved sanitation facilities, durable housing or sufficient living space. ¹⁷
- **Total number of people living in slums:** Proportion of people living in slums (United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) calculations based on Demographic and Health Surveys and Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys) multiplied by the total number of people living in urban areas (UNdata). ¹⁸
- **Gender parity index among slum dwellers:** Proportion of urban women living in slums, divided by the proportion of urban men living in slums. This indicator serves to measure the gender gap in the share of urban women and men living in slums, as well as the gap in their risk or likelihood of being slum dwellers.
- **Gender parity index among individuals aged 15–49 who lack access to basic drinking water sources, by wealth quintile:** Proportion of women aged 15–49 who lack access to basic drinking water sources, divided by the proportion of men aged 15–49 who lack access to basic drinking water sources, disaggregated by wealth quintile.
- **Proportion of slum dwellers in India responsible for fetching water by sex and age:** Proportion of slum dwellers who are primarily responsible for collecting water for their household: data available for women and men aged 15–49 and girls and boys aged 0–14.
- **Total amount of time (in minutes) spent by slum dwellers on fetching water:** Total time taken by slum dwellers for a single round trip to collect water from a drinking source.
- **Total amount of time (in minutes) spent by people living in rural areas on fetching water:** Total time taken by rural dwellers for a single round trip to collect water from a drinking source.

Coverage

Countries covered include all countries with available data from Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys and/or Demographic and Health Surveys covered under the Regional Office of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) for the Asia and the Pacific region.

Footnotes

1. [Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific \(ESCAP\), Work of the Secretariat and partners on mainstreaming gender in environment statistics, July 2020 \(ESCAP/CST/2020/INF/10\)](#) .
2. [Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Nepal, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Tajikistan and Vanuatu; see International Labour Organization \(ILO\), Department of Statistics \(ILOSTAT\) database, Employment in agriculture \(percentage of female employment\) 2019 \(data retrieved in March 2020\)](#) .
3. See [Global Sustainable Development Goals \(SDG\) Indicators Database](#) and proportion of informal employment, by sector and sex (ILO harmonized) 2016 (data retrieved in April 2020).
4. See [United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs \(UNDESA\), The World's Cities in 2018: Data Booklet](#) .
5. These differences are significant at 99% confidence for India and Nepal. For Afghanistan and Maldives they are significant at 90% and 70% confidence, respectively.
6. A total of 15 countries with available Demographic and Health Surveys or Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys were considered for this analysis.
7. For the identification of slum dwellers, the indicator methodology considers "improved water sources" only, however, for Sustainable Development Goal indicator 6.1.1.(proportion of population using safely managed drinking water services), all four criteria must be met. However, because information on availability and faecal contamination often does not exist, in practice "basic" is used instead (see [SDG metadata](#) for details).
8. In Asia, 40.20 % of the rural population, compared to 14.21 % of the urban dwellers: see [Global SDG Indicator Database](#), proportion of population using safely managed drinking water services, by urban and rural, 2017 (data retrieved in April 2020).
9. Drinking water services are classified as basic if the water source is improved and within 30 minutes round-trip collection time.
10. Estimates calculated by UN-Women using 2014 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey data for Cambodia: values stand at 75.74% during the wet season and 63% during the dry season.
11. [UN-Women, Turning Promises into Action: Gender Equality in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, 2018](#) .
12. India is the only country with large enough sample sizes for calculations on the living circumstances of slum dwellers.
13. Estimates calculated by UN-Women using the Demographic and Health Survey, India 2016 (for approximately 67,000 slum households without basic water).
14. For countries included in the analysis (all countries with available data from Demographic and Health Surveys or Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys).
15. Among urban poorest women, 39.95% lack access to basic drinking water, compared to 30.23% of urban poorest men (UN-Women estimates, from data analysis of the 2016 Demographic and Health Study).
16. Among urban poorest women, 43.24% lack access to improved water sources, compared to 37.88% of urban poorest men.
17. [United Nations, Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\) datasets](#) .
18. [UNdata](#) .