

UNITED NATIONS STATISTICS DIVISION
The World's Women 2015: Trends and Statistics
New York: United Nations, 2015. 260 p.

The World's Women reports are prepared by the UN at five-year intervals, starting in 1990. This sixth edition provides the latest statistics and related analyses on the status of women and men at global, regional, and country levels. A key objective is to assess progress toward gender equality over the past two decades. The eight chapters cover several broad policy areas identified in the Platform for Action adopted at the 1995 Beijing International Conference on Women, which provided an international agenda for improving the status of women. These topics include population and families, health, education, work, power and decision-making, violence against women, environment, and poverty. For each theme, a life-cycle approach is used to examine the experiences of women and men during different periods of life—from childhood and the formative years, through the working and reproductive stage, to older ages. The report documents progress in many areas for both women and men and a narrowing of the gender gap. For instance, the gender gap in education has narrowed, particularly at the primary school level, and in many countries women now outnumber men in tertiary education. However, in other areas—for example in labor force participation—the situation is not unlike that of 20 years ago. Women also still lack an equal voice to men in public and private decisionmaking. And in every region of the world, women are still subjected to various forms of violence. Property and inheritance rights also remain biased against women in many countries.

Informative and authoritative, the text is highly accessible with numerous figures and tables. Throughout, indicators for women are compared with those of men, and as a result the contents of this volume are more gender equal than its title suggests. A wide selection of statistics and indicators at the global, regional, and country levels are available in the Statistical Annex of this report on a dedicated website. —J.B.