

Gender statistics

As we celebrate the 20th anniversary of the historic Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which set out specific principles and goals for achieving gender equality and empowering women, and as we prepare to monitor the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, it is important to reflect on the origin and evolution of gender statistics.

The UN Statistics Division's (UNSD) work programme on gender statistics was initiated in the early 1980s, mid-way into the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace (1976-1985) and in response to the call for more statistics on the status of women. "International Women conferences have been a driving force for our work", Ms. Vanek said at a DESA event on the history and development of gender statistics, organized in New York on 9 October 2015. "They have brought together users of statistics, created a demand for statistics to monitor conferences outcomes, set a political agenda for action to implement agreed outcomes, mobilized resources, and succeeded in having, for the first time, greater involvement of NGOs in United Nations activities."

Of particular relevance to the development of gender statistics is the outcome document of the 4th UN World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995), known as the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA). The BPfA, indeed, recognized the importance of appropriate data for designing policies and assessing progress towards the goal of gender equality, and requested national, regional and international statistical services to "ensure that statistics related to individuals are collected, compiled, analysed and presented by sex and age and reflect problems, issues and questions related to women and men in society".

Over the past 40 years, the UNSD programme on gender statistics has centered on improving the capacity of countries to collect, disseminate and use reliable statistics and indicators to assess the relative situation of women and men in gender-sensitive, policy-relevant areas. The Programme has focused on: (a) developing and promoting methodological guidelines and addressing emerging issues of gender concern; (b) providing technical assistance and training to strengthen national capacity for the production, dissemination and use of gender relevant statistics; (c) compiling gender statistics and facilitating access to data; and (d) improving coherence among existing initiatives on gender statistics through international coordination.

The success of the programme has given the Statistics Division an unparalleled recognition in the field of gender statistics, resulting in strong partnerships with counterpart agencies, coordinated support for the development of gender statistics and a renewed and strengthened mandate from the United Nations Statistical Commission. In 2011, the Commission established the Global Gender Statistics Programme, coordinated by the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Gender Statistics (IAEG-GS) and implemented by the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) and key partner agencies.

The Statistics Division has been disseminating gender statistics and providing an assessment of progress towards the goal of gender equality and women's empowerment since the 1980s, including through the publication *The World's Women: Trends and Statistics*, first published in 1990.

This publication and the three subsequent editions (1995, 2000 and 2010) presented a statistical analysis of the situation of women in comparison to men, highlighting gender gaps in a broad range of areas of concern. In 2005, the issue focused on the progress made in the production of gender statistics and highlighted the wide variations in statistical capacity among countries.

The 2015 issue of *The World's Women: Trends and Statistics* presenting the latest assessment on the status of women compared to men, and progress since Beijing, will be launched on 20 October 2015, at the occasion of the 2nd World Statistics Day.

For more information, please visit <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/gender/default.html>



Ms. Joann Vanek, Director of the Statistics Programme of Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO) and former UNSD staff and co-director for the first three issues of *The World's Women: Trends and Statistics*; Mr. Robert Johnson, former Chief of the Statistical Services Branch of UNSD, and UNSD colleagues. Ms. Vanek was invited to share with DESA staff the history and development of gender statistics as a field of statistics. UNHQ, 9 October 2015.

