

Chapter 8

Poverty

Key findings

- Non-partnered women with children in developed and developing regions and older women in one-person households in developed regions have higher poverty rates than men with the same characteristics.
- Women's access to their own cash labour income remains low in developing regions, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa; and the gap between women and men in this regard is large in both urban and rural areas.
- Many women are excluded from economic decision-making within their own households. On average 1 in 3 married women in developing countries have no say about major household purchases, and 1 in 10 are not consulted on how their own cash earnings are spent.
- The use of formal financial services is lower for women than men in all regions of the world; globally, 47 per cent of women have an individual or joint account at a formal financial institution compared to 55 per cent of men, with wider gaps in some countries in the Middle East and North Africa and in Southern Asia.
- The number of countries with unequal property and inheritance rights for women and men overall declined; however, in nearly a third of developing countries, laws do not guarantee the same inheritance rights for women and men, and in an additional half of countries discriminatory customary practices against women persist.

Introduction

A life free from poverty and hunger is a fundamental human right. As stated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948, everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for health and well-being, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services. However, the eradication of poverty - an essential requirement for sustainable development¹ and the central focus of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development - remains one of the greatest challenges facing the world today.

This chapter analyses the economic dimensions of poverty from a gender and life-cycle perspective. The first part takes into account household-level data on poverty. It shows that in both developed and developing countries working-age women are more likely than men to be poor when they have dependent children and no partner to contribute to the household income.

At older ages, women in developed countries are more likely than men to be poor, particularly when living in one-person households. The difference in poverty rates between women and men, including among lone parents with dependent children and among older persons, is narrowing slightly in some countries while persisting in others. In the second part of the chapter, the focus of the analysis shifts to women's economic dependency on men as reflected by individual-level indicators of access to economic resources. It shows that, in developing regions, women's access to own cash labour income and financial services is systematically low. Existing statutory and customary laws continue to restrict women's access to land and other assets, and women's control over household economic resources remains limited.

¹ United Nations, 2012, para 2.

Box 8.1**Gaps in gender statistics on poverty**

Poverty remains one of the most problematic areas of statistics in general, and for gender statistics in particular. Household-level data on poverty, measured traditionally based on either household income or consumption, are absent for more than a third of developing countries.^a This is without taking into account any disaggregation of data from a gender perspective. In addition, the comparability of statistics across countries and over time, continues to be hampered by a lack of harmonization in measurement, including in terms of poverty lines, the calculation of income or consumption aggregates, the equivalent scales to adjust for differences in age and sex composition of households and prices to adjust for differences in the cost of living.^b

Household-level poverty data are underutilized from a gender perspective

Poverty data disaggregated from a gender perspective are not produced regularly by countries around the world and are not systematically compiled at the global level. However, some progress has been made in the availability of statistics on gender and poverty, driven by a few initiatives at the regional level. Data on poverty and gender are estimated or compiled systematically by regional agencies in Europe and in Latin America and the Caribbean. For the other regions, additional data are provided in national poverty reports by a small number of countries, available for ad hoc compilation, as was done for this report. The total number of countries with any poverty statistics disaggregated by sex between 2000 and 2014 and available for use in this report is 78. Among these, 34 are European and other developed countries. Among developing countries with available data, 23 are in Africa, 16 in Latin America and the Caribbean, and 5 in Asia.

Data disaggregated only by the sex of household members or head of household have limited value in capturing the gender dimensions of poverty.^c As shown in this chapter, more detailed disaggregations are needed, including by the sex, age, and other demographic and social characteristics of all household members, and by types of households (or living arrangements), taking into account the composition of those households. However, such expanded disaggregated data remain largely unavailable in sub-Saharan Africa (where poverty is increasingly concentrated), Asia and Oceania.

Generating adequate poverty counts for women and men remains challenging due to unaccounted intra-household inequality

One major limitation of using household-level poverty data from a gender perspective is the lack of information on inequality in the consumption of goods and services among various household members.

The household-level approach assumes that all individual incomes are pooled together, the resources are shared equitably, and all household members enjoy the same level of well-being. Existing data on intra-household sharing of resources suggest that income is most often pooled together within the household, but not always,^d and the allocation of expenditures may reflect a gender dimension. Systematic national statistics are missing on this topic, and some of the statistical evidence on discrimination against women and girls is inconclusive^e and dependent on the statistical methods used.^f Research has shown, however, that in some specific settings, particularly in the context of limited economic resources, inequality in the distribution of resources among girls and boys is evident, especially when it comes to private education, time devoted to child care, and access to health services.^g

Standard household-level measures of poverty do not take into account inequality within the household because it is difficult to know how household income/expenditure is distributed to each household member, particularly when it comes to common goods such as food, housing, water supply or sanitation. In addition, when different patterns of consumption are observed, it is not always clear if they are related to different levels of individual biological need, to different preferences or to the unequal distribution of resources.

Based on household-level measures, if in the same household women consume or spend less than is needed to function properly physically and socially, while men consume what is needed or more, both are still considered to have the same poverty status, either poor or non-poor, depending on the average consumption estimated at the household level. In countries where women have a lower status than men and unequal access to resources within the household, the simple disaggregation of poverty counts by sex will lead to underestimated gender gaps in poverty, because additional poor women might be found in some non-poor households.

Currently, there is no single straightforward measure of poverty from a gender perspective, and no single internationally agreed-upon indicator that can give more meaningful poverty counts for women and men. That would require taking into account intra-household inequality, including through the use of some individual-level indicators on selected dimensions of poverty (see box 8.2 on multidimensional poverty). Nevertheless, recent methodological developments suggest a shift in thinking on poverty and gender from a perspective focused on the household as an economic unit, to women and men with individual agency (capacity for individualized choice or action) and specific constraints, needs and preferences. This would include the measurement, at the individual level, of asset ownership (see box 8.5); individual experience of food insecurity (see box 8.4); and individual access to formal financial services (section B.2).

^a United Nations, 2014b.

^b World Bank, 2015.

^c United Nations, 2015a.

^d European Commission, 2013.

^e Duflo, 2012.

^f See, for example, Zimmermann, 2012.

^g See for example, Koohi-Kamali, 2008; Barcellos, Carvalho and Lleras-Muney, 2014; Fuwa and others, 2006; Parpiev and others, 2012; Gong, van Soest and Zhang, 2005; Azam and Kingdon, 2013; Duflo, 2012; Doss, 2013.

A. Household-level income/ consumption poverty

Globally, the number of people in extreme poverty living on less than \$1.25 a day² fell from 1.9 billion in 1990 to 1 billion in 2011.³ The proportion of the global population living in extreme poverty (which is referred to as the rate of extreme poverty) fell during the same period from 36 to 15 per cent at the global level and from 47 to 18 per cent in developing regions. A further reduction in poverty is projected by 2015, including a drop in the number of people in extreme poverty by another 175 million. This would place the extreme poverty rate in 2015 at 12 per cent globally, and at 14 per cent in developing regions.⁴

Progress in poverty reduction has been uneven. The largest reductions were observed in Eastern and South-Eastern Asia. Progress was more modest in other regions of the developing world. The poverty rate in sub-Saharan Africa, in particular, declined slowly over the period, from 57 per cent in 1990 to 47 per cent in 2011. However, the number of extremely poor in that region increased 1.4 times as a result of a population growth rate that exceeded the rate of poverty reduction. Indeed, sub-Saharan Africa has become the largest contributor to the global number of extremely poor (41 per cent in 2011), recently surpassing Southern Asia.⁵

While estimates of poverty rates⁶ and the number of poor people are available for the majority of countries, based either on international or national poverty lines, gender differences in poverty are not as easily captured through statistics. As discussed in box 8.1, poverty is traditionally measured on the basis of income and expenditure aggregated at the household level. Household-level data on poverty can be attributed to all members of a household at the analysis stage, thus enabling the calculation of poverty rates and counts disaggregated by sex and other characteristics of the household members. While

such data do not take into account the inequality between women and men *within* households, they can show whether there are gaps in poverty rates between women and men due to differences in living arrangements. That is, they take into account inequality *between* households.

Differences in poverty rates between women and men are more evident when focusing on population subgroups by selected age groups or other demographic characteristics associated with specific living arrangements, such as marital status, as will be shown in the next sub-section. However, when all ages or other characteristics are combined (averaged) and poverty data are disaggregated only by the sex of household members, very little of the gender dimension of poverty is revealed. Female and male poverty rates are similar in most countries with data available, while slightly higher for women than men in a few countries, mainly from developed regions.⁷

1. Poverty across age groups

A focus on stages of life cycle and living arrangements, as captured by data disaggregated by age and marital status of adult⁸ household members, reveals more meaningful gender differences in poverty. These differences in poverty rates between women and men may vary across countries depending on gender differences in living arrangements and specific country contexts. Such contexts include different access for women and men to labour market income and the various components of the welfare/social protection systems.⁹

In European countries, for example, large differences in poverty rates between women and men are found among the older age groups and to a lesser extent in young adulthood (figure 8.1), when women and men more often live without a partner as widowed, divorced/separated or never married persons. At age 65 and over, women are at a higher risk of poverty than men in most European countries. Between ages 18 to 24, the gender difference in poverty rates, most often to the disadvantage of women, is noticeable only in a smaller number of countries.

² The \$1.25 a day poverty line is at 2005 purchasing power parity (PPP) prices, and represents the average of the national poverty lines of the 15 poorest developing countries in the same year.

³ United Nations, 2015b.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, 2015.

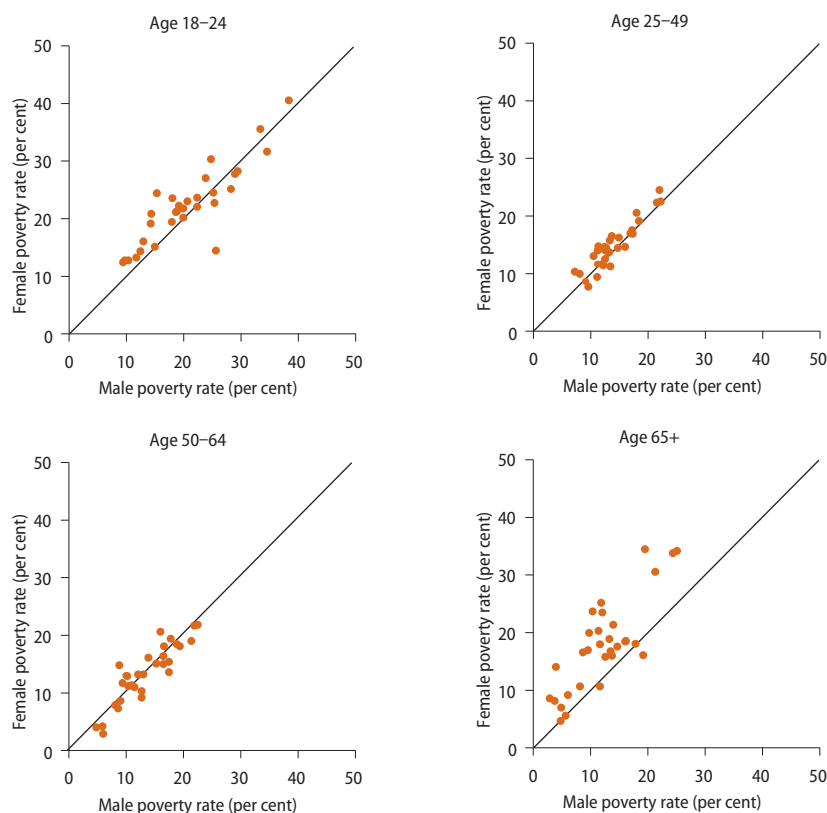
⁶ The poverty rate (or poverty incidence or headcount index) is the proportion of the population living in households with income or consumption expenditures below the poverty line. A poverty line may be internationally defined in terms of a single global standard, such as that set by the World Bank of \$1.25 per day for extreme poverty, or it may be country-specific. It also may refer to an absolute or a relative standard.

⁷ Data compiled by the United Nations Statistics Division (as at April 2014). Data shown in the Statistical Annex available at <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/gender/worldswomen.html>.

⁸ There are no significant differences in the living arrangement of girls and boys (younger than 15), as shown in Chapter 1 on Population and families. Therefore, the child poverty rates (without taking into account intrahousehold inequality) are similar between the two sexes. However, more boys than girls are found among the poor because there are more boys than girls in that age group of population.

⁹ Brady and Kall, 2008.

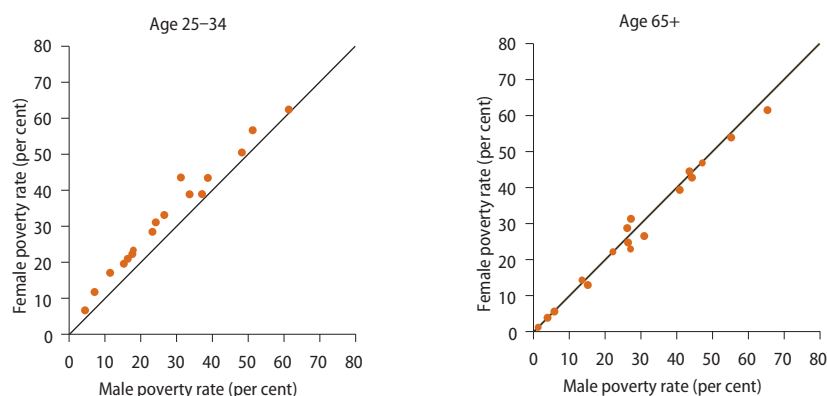
Figure 8.1
Poverty rate by sex and age group of household members, European countries, 2012



Source: EUROSTAT, 2014a. Income and Living Conditions database online (accessed May 2014).

Note: Data presented for 31 countries. A relative poverty line of 60 per cent of the national median equivalized income is used in each of the countries (equivalized income is household income adjusted for differences in age and sex composition of households).

Figure 8.2
Poverty rate by sex of household members in two age groups, Latin America and the Caribbean, 2006–2012 (latest available)



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), CEPALSTAT, 2014. Estadísticas e indicadores sociales (accessed July 2014).

Note: Data based on national poverty lines. Data presented for 17 countries.

Differences in poverty rates between women and men in certain age groups during adulthood are also noted in some developing countries with available data. The pattern across age groups is different than in developed regions. In Latin America and the Caribbean, for example, the largest differences between female and male poverty rates are found among young adults aged 25 to 34,¹⁰ consistent with the higher proportion of households of lone mothers with children in this region compared to others.¹¹ As age increases, sex differences in poverty rates fade away. At age 65 and older, female and male poverty rates are similar in most countries in this region (figure 8.2). Two factors may explain the relatively small or non-existent sex differences in poverty rates among older persons in Latin America and the Caribbean: a smaller proportion of older women living in one-person households¹² and the relative good coverage of older persons by social protection systems in the region, including through public pension schemes and health care.¹³

The poverty of working-age women and men

Working-age women (20 to 54) are more likely than working-age men to live in poor households when they have children and no partners

Sex disparities in poverty rates for working-age adults aged 20 to 54 are closely linked to marital and parenthood status, as illustrated in figure 8.3. Partnered women and men in this age group experience similar poverty rates, as shown by data for 30 developed and developing countries. The case of persons with no partner and no children is mixed; in some countries, female poverty rates for this group are higher, while in others, male poverty rates are higher. However, for the limited number of countries with comparable data for non-partnered persons with children,¹⁴ lone mothers with children tend to have higher poverty rates than lone fathers with children.

In fact, one of the contributing factors to increasing poverty for working-age women in some countries is the growth in the proportion

¹⁰ ECLAC, 2014.

¹¹ United Nations, 2014a.

¹² See Chapter 1 on Population and families.

¹³ See for example James and others, 2008; Arza, 2012; United Nations, 2013; UN Women, 2015.

¹⁴ Data available for 11 countries only. In the other 19 countries included in the comparison, the number of lone fathers living with children is too small to allow for the calculation of reliable poverty rates.

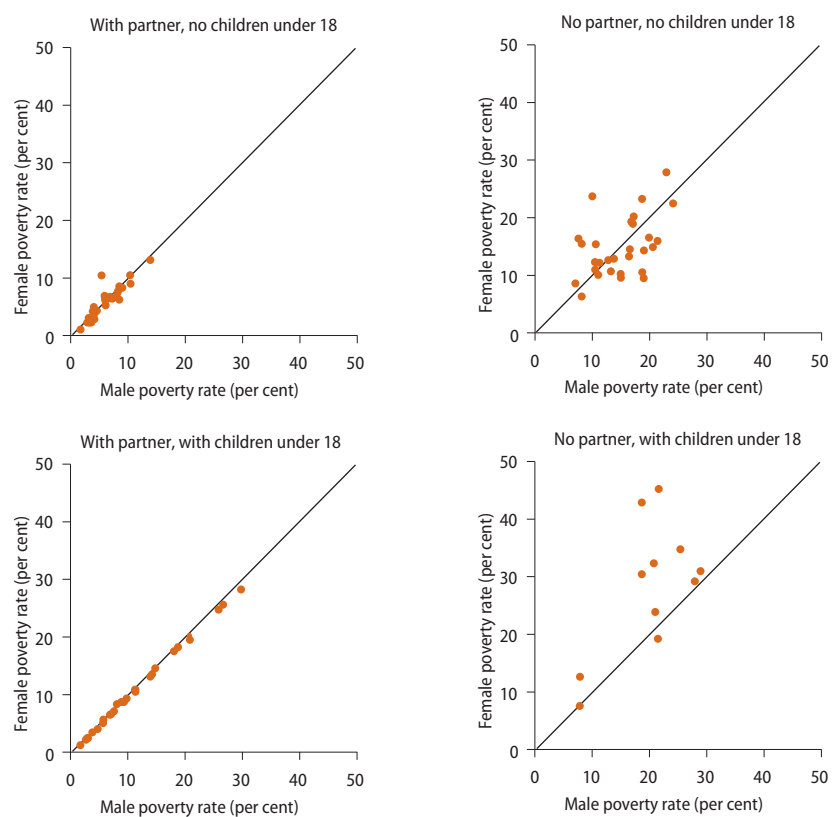
of non-partnered women with children.¹⁵ The trend of increasing proportions of lone mothers with children among working-age women has been observed in many countries, and is linked to a significant increase in divorces and childbearing outside of marriage (see Chapter 1 on Population and families). However, these marked changes have not been met with corresponding significant changes in women's labour force participation and social protection programmes. In all countries, women's labour force participation rates and wages continue to be considerably lower than those of men, with little progress being observed in many but not all regions (see Chapter 4 on Work). On the other hand, social protection programmes do not fully account for the gendered division of paid and unpaid work and are yet to adapt to the increasing incidence of single parenthood.¹⁶ Some of their components, including maternal benefits, child benefits, tax relief and unemployment benefits, are often linked to participation in employment, while limited access to social services, including care services among others, restrict women's employment opportunities.¹⁷

Women's economic vulnerability in one-parent families has implications for child poverty and well-being. Poverty during childhood has long-term consequences, including for the life-long process of building human capital, leading a productive life, and creating an economically secure retirement.¹⁸ Child poverty in one-parent families is becoming more problematic with the increase in the share of children in such families among all children in many countries.¹⁹ As noted in Chapter 1 on Population and families, three quarters of one-parent families are lone mothers with children and, as noted above, in most countries with data available, families of lone-mothers with children are more likely to be poor than families of lone-fathers with children.²⁰ The difference in child poverty rates between children living in lone-mother families and those living in two-parent families is striking (figure 8.4), particularly in developed countries. In 17 out of 27 developed countries with available data, poverty rates are more than three times higher for children in lone-mother families than in two-

parent families. Large differences are observed in some developing countries as well, although the small number of countries with data availability restricts the possibility of generalizing the results. The much higher child poverty rates in lone-mother households are linked to the smaller number of income earners in the household, as well as the relatively lower individual income for women than men.²¹ In addition, the monetary cost of raising children is higher because child care services have to be purchased when the one and only adult in the household has to be involved in paid work in order to provide an income. This is particularly relevant in countries where public policies do not provide for child care services free or at low cost.

Figure 8.3

Poverty rate for women and men aged 20 to 54 by partner status and presence of children in the household, 2004



Source: Luxembourg Income Study, 2014. Employment key figures dataset (accessed May 2014).

Note: Data based on 30 countries (23 developed countries and 7 developing countries) in all panels, with the exception of the fourth panel on non-partnered women and men with children under age 18, where data are available for 11 countries (6 developed countries and 5 developing countries). A smaller number of countries are presented in the fourth panel, as the poverty rate could not be calculated for some surveys where the number of cases of men with no partners and children under 18 was small. In some surveys, information on partners was available only for the household head or reference person. Children may refer to children living in the household and not only to a woman's or man's own children.

¹⁵ See, for example, Kodras and Jones, 1991.

¹⁶ UN Women, 2015.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Börsch-Supan and others (eds.), 2011.

¹⁹ United Nations, 2014a.

²⁰ Luxembourg Income Study, 2014.

²¹ OECD, 2014.

Box 8.2**Measuring multidimensional poverty from a gender perspective**

The notion that poverty is multidimensional is widely accepted at the global level. The Copenhagen Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development^a and the Beijing Platform for Action^b recognized that “poverty has various manifestations, including lack of income and productive resources sufficient to ensure a sustainable livelihood; hunger and malnutrition; ill health; limited or lack of access to education and other basic services; increasing morbidity and mortality from illness; homelessness and inadequate housing; unsafe environment; and social discrimination and exclusion. It is also characterized by a lack of participation in decision-making and in civil, social and cultural life.”

There is a large consensus on the multidimensionality of poverty, but not necessarily on how to measure it.^c On the one hand, a “dash-board approach” is frequently used. Through this methodology, each dimension of poverty has a distinct measure that can be used to guide policymaking in respective areas. A widely accepted example of this approach is the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), whereby key dimensions of development and poverty are monitored through distinct indicators. To some extent, various chapters of this report have also clearly presented dimensions of well-being in which women are more often deprived than men.

On the other hand, there is a certain appeal to using one single “measure” that can summarize the overall level of poverty and assess trends over time. Such a measure may be an indicator based on traditional monetary measures of poverty (such as those used in the past decades by the World Bank and most countries in the world); or aggregate or composite indicators such as the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) recently developed by the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative. However, as shown below, a gender perspective is yet to be integrated in either type of measure in order to obtain meaningful poverty counts for women and men.

Monetary poverty

Traditional monetary poverty, the most commonly used approach for measuring poverty so far, is based on the household-level measurement of consumption or income. It may be considered by some to be multidimensional, in the sense that consumption (and income) covers many components, such as food, clothing, hous-

ing and education that are all aggregated based on market prices.^d The components or “dimensions” covered and the “weights” given to each dimension within the income- or consumption-based poverty measures are based on individual household choices in the patterns of consumption of goods and services and the money spent for, or prices associated with those goods and services consumed.

However, there are limitations in using monetary measures of poverty as measures of deprivation on multiple dimensions. As argued in a 2009 United Nations report, *Rethinking Poverty: Report of the World Situation 2010*, patterns of consumption should not be treated as mere consumer preferences. Deprivations relating to key dimensions such as education and health, for example, may not be the result of choice, but of budget constraints or lack of supply of education and health services at affordable prices. Furthermore, some of the information on prices as weights may be inadequate or missing; as a result, important dimensions may be underrepresented in the income or consumption aggregate. This is the case when some social services are provided “free” to households—such as education or health services—and are therefore missed in the measurement of poverty. Certain important aspects of well-being or its opposite may have no corresponding “sensible estimates of relative prices.”^e This is the case, for example, of political participation, empowerment and the experience of violence. These dimensions of deprivation are not gender neutral; as shown throughout this report, women tend to experience deprivations on all these “under-measured” dimensions more often than men.

Last, but not least, one important caveat of the monetary approach is the lack of information on the distribution of expenditures and consumption at the individual level. As mentioned in the beginning of the chapter, this is a key element in a gender perspective on poverty. When poverty is measured at the household level, additional information at the individual level—including on dimensions of deprivations most relevant from a gender and poverty perspective, as illustrated above—is required to obtain meaningful poverty counts that take into account intra-household inequality. Methods for determining the dimensions of deprivation, how to measure deprivation at the individual level, and how to integrate the information obtained with the household-level information on the monetary dimension are yet to be developed.

^a United Nations, 1995b, Annex II, para 19.

^b United Nations, 1995a, para 47.

^c Ravallion, 2011; Lustig, 2011; Ferreira and Lugo, 2012.

^d Ravallion, 2011.

^e Ferreira and Lugo, 2012.

Box 8.2 (continued)

Multidimensional indices of poverty

Recent years have witnessed a growing interest in multidimensional indices of poverty. The most well-known is the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) developed by the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative for the *2010 Human Development Report*.^f It is based on the multidimensional poverty measurement framework proposed by Alkire and Foster, which identifies the poor as persons simultaneously experiencing multiple deprivations on a set of dimensions.^g The MPI is based on 10 indicators that are used to identify deprivations on three dimensions: health, education and living standards.

Assessing poverty based on multidimensional indices is challenging at best. A key limitation of the MPI is that it requires the use of relative weights for each dimension, which are chosen somewhat arbitrarily by the analyst. The choice of dimensions, indicators for the dimensions, weights and cut-offs may also vary among countries, making the comparisons difficult at the international level.

Because the poor is defined as a person *simultaneously* experiencing multiple deprivations, all data used in the assessment have to come from the same source (sample survey or census). While this is theoretically sound, in practice, it may limit the options of dimensions and indicators to be used. For instance, data on some of the dimensions of deprivation, important from a gender and poverty perspective, may not be routinely collected in household surveys used to measure the MPI. This type of constraint may explain why, in the MPI, indicators on living standards are limited to aspects of housing conditions, household assets and consumer durables, without considerations of current levels of income or consumption. Other “missing” dimensions of poverty data that appear important to deprived people but are overlooked in large-scale surveys may refer to quality of work, empowerment, physical safety, social connectedness and psychological well-being, as identified by the proponents of MPI.^h

From a gender perspective, better indicators and, in particular, individual-level indicators of key dimensions of capability are required. However, most of the more than 20 countriesⁱ that have so far implemented an MPI approach in their latest poverty assessments use only household-level data to identify deprivation. For example, in the MPI, a household and all members of that household are considered deprived

on the health dimension if: (1) there is at least one household member who is malnourished, or (2) if one or more children in the household died in the past 12 months. These indicators mirror some well-established indicators used to monitor the health dimension of development and poverty at national and subnational levels, such as the proportion of children underweight and the child mortality rate. However, their translation at the level of the household or the individual does not work, particularly from a gender perspective. An indicator such as “a child has died in the household in the last 12 months” does not say anything about the differences in health status between women and men and between boys and girls.

Different approaches and definitions of poverty can reveal not only different levels of poverty and different profiles of the poor (which has significant policy implications), but also different gender gaps in poverty. For example, in South Africa, an analysis of the 2008–2009 Living Conditions Survey showed larger gender disparities in poverty in the monetary approach than in the multidimensional approach.^j Use of different dimensions, indicators and weights within the MPI approach may also lead to different profiles of the poor and gender gap in poverty. Therefore a thorough testing of all of these components, from a gender perspective, is needed.

^f United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 2010.

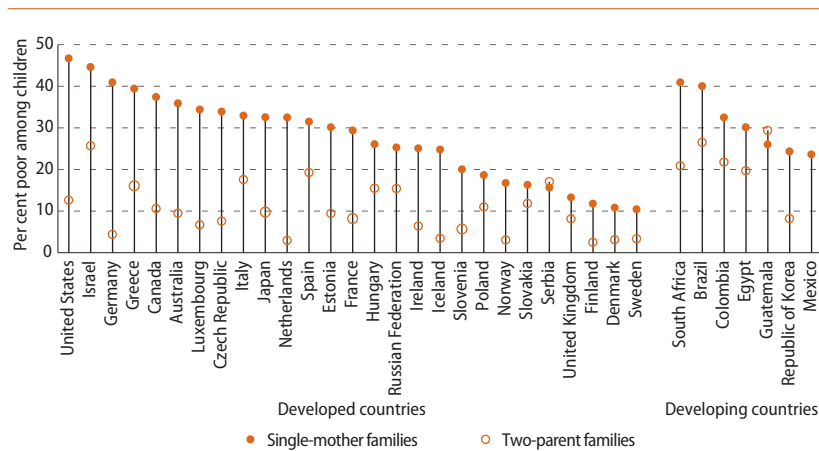
^g Alkire and Foster, 2011.

^h For more details see Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative, *Missing Dimensions of Poverty*. <http://www.ophi.org.uk/research/missing-dimensions/> (accessed May 2014).

ⁱ Mexico's country official poverty measure is one of the exceptions. There, deprivations on three key social dimensions used to identify deprivation—education, health and social security—are identified based on individual-level data (CONEVAL, 2010).

^j Statistics South Africa and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), 2013.

Figure 8.4
Child poverty rates by type of family arrangement, 2005–2013 (latest available)

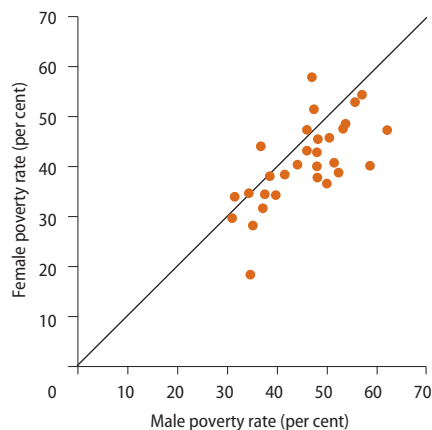


Source: Luxembourg Income Study, 2015. Inequality and Poverty Key figures dataset (accessed March 2015).

Working-age men have higher poverty rates than working-age women when unemployed and, in selected countries, when living in one-person households

Higher poverty rates for working-age women than men are associated with single motherhood and low income from labour or social benefits. By comparison, in the European context, the higher poverty rates for men are associated with unemployment. Unemployed men are more likely to be poor than unemployed women (figure 8.5) because they still play the role of family breadwinner and are often the primary or only income earner in the family. Women, on the other hand, are often secondary earners in their household. Being unemployed may not place women's households below the poverty line when spouses, who are the main income providers, continue to support their families.

Figure 8.5
Poverty rates by sex for unemployed persons aged 18 to 64 years, European countries, 2012



Source: EUROSTAT, 2014a. Income and Living Conditions database online (accessed May 2014).

Note: Data presented for 31 European countries. Unemployed refers to the most frequent work status in the previous year.

In some European countries, working-age men also have higher poverty rates than women when living in one-person households. Although women tend to have lower income than men, living in one-person households is not necessarily associated with higher poverty rates for women below age 65.²² For the 18 to 64 age group, poverty rates for male one-person households are higher than for female one-person households in about a third of European countries, including six countries where the disparity is more than 10 percentage points. The number of countries where working-age women living in one-person households have higher poverty rates than men is the same; however, the gender gap is much smaller.

Public income transfers have a key role in reducing poverty and poverty disparities by gender during working years, as well as the poverty of children in lone-mother families.²³ However, systematic data on the levels of the components of benefits, including on child and family allowances, tax relief, and unemployment benefits and the analysis of how each component may affect the poverty of women and men, are generally missing.

The poverty of older women and men

Older women are more likely to be poor than older men, particularly when living in one-person households

At older ages, women's income and poverty status are highly dependent on their work history, the number of children they had, their marital status and the pensions system in their country. Low hours of paid work during working ages are associated with more time spent in poverty at older ages.²⁴ Women are also less likely than men to have a retirement plan based on their own contribution, and when they do, they receive significantly smaller pensions.²⁵ In other words, many women face a double penalty. Compared to men, they have lower or no personal earnings during the working ages (due to their reproductive roles and inequality in the sharing of the domestic work burden), which translate into lower or no income after retirement and during older

²² EUROSTAT, Income and Living Conditions database online (2014a).

²³ See for example Gornick and Jantti, 2010.

²⁴ Vartanian and McNamara, 2002.

²⁵ See for example Arza, 2012; ILO, 2014; UN Women, 2015.

ages. Nevertheless, in some countries, modern pension systems have recognized the differences in the patterns of women's and men's paid and unpaid work by accounting for periods of child-care in the calculation of state pensions.²⁶ For example, in Latin American countries, pension systems reforms after 2005 included measures to improve gender equality,²⁷ some of which take into account differences in life expectancy at the age of retirement between women and men; provisions on survivorship of spouses; non-contributory benefits; subsidized bonuses to mothers for every child born or adopted; and economic compensation in the case of divorce or annulment of marriage, including transference of retirement funds.

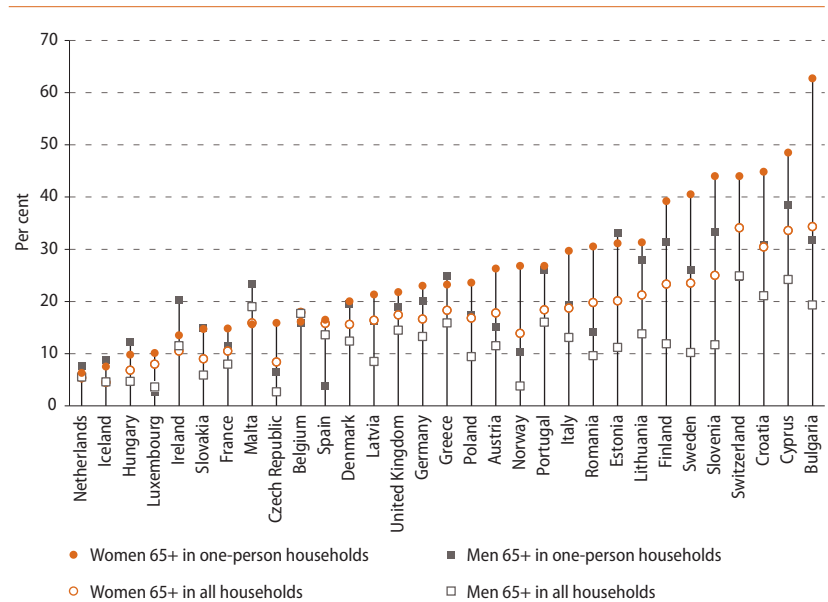
Poverty rates among older persons (age 65+) are higher for women than for men (figure 8.6) in most European countries. On average, 16 per cent of older women and 12 per cent of older men were poor in that region in 2012. Living in one-person households, in particular, increases the risk of poverty for both older women and men, and in two thirds of countries it is more so for women than for men. Furthermore, in a third of countries with data available the gender gap is higher in one-person households compared to all households, reflecting women's higher vulnerability when living by themselves relative to their vulnerability when living with another person. The average poverty rate for older persons living in one-person households in European countries in 2012 was 23 per cent for women and 17 per cent for men.

The higher poverty rates of older women in developed countries compared to men, combined with the higher share of women among the overall older population, result in a high share of women among the older poor (figure 8.7). For instance, in European countries, the average share of women among the older poor is 64 per cent, higher than their share in the total older population (56 per cent of the poor and non-poor combined). This is not the case for younger age groups. The share of women among the poor under age 65 is similar to the share of women among the overall population under age 65 (figure 8.7). Also, when all ages are taken into account, women represent half or slightly more than half of the poor population. In European countries, women represent 53 per

cent of all poor people and 54 per cent of the poor over age 18.²⁸ In developing regions, women and girls represent half of all poor people living on less than \$1.25 a day.²⁹ By another wealth measure, a slight overrepresentation of women aged 15 to 49 in the poorest 20 per cent of households is noted in most sub-Saharan African countries with available data.³⁰

Figure 8.6

Poverty rate for older persons (age 65 and over) by sex, in all households and in one-person households, European countries, 2012



Source: EUROSTAT, 2014a. Income and Living Conditions database online (accessed April 2014).

²⁸ Data compiled by the United Nations Statistics Division for this report. Data are based on poverty lines of 60 per cent of equivalized median income in European countries and national poverty lines in the rest of countries.

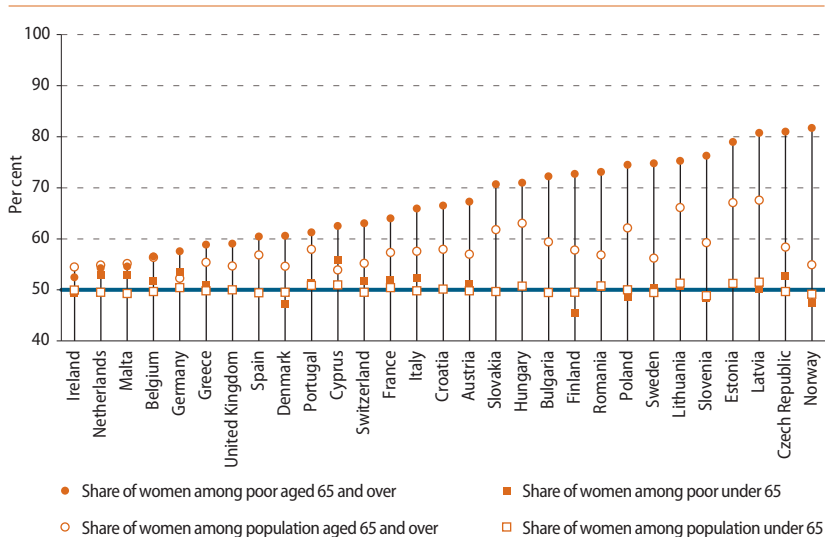
²⁹ World Bank, 2013.

³⁰ UN Women, 2015. The results are based on a household-level wealth asset index and data from Demographic and Health Surveys and Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys. While this analysis fills in some of the existing data gaps and shows a link between gender and poverty, it is, however, a scholarly solution to a statistical capacity problem in developing countries. More efforts at international and national levels are needed to promote a better utilization, from a gender perspective, of existing monetary poverty data and the development of poverty measures that adequately capture the gender gap (see box 8.1 and box 8.2). Wealth indices have limitations when utilized as measures of poverty, particularly when envisioned as tools for monitoring changes over time. From a gender perspective, the measurement of wealth indices is subject to the challenges inherent in the use of household-level data. In addition, more clarity is needed with regard to what types of poor are identified based on the method and what are the direct implications for policymaking. Such indices also discriminate poorly at the lower end of the wealth scale. Hartgen and other, 2013; Booyen and others, 2008.

²⁶ Vlachantoni, 2012.

²⁷ James and others, 2008.

Figure 8.7
Share of women in the population and in the total poor among persons under and over 65 years old, Europe, 2012



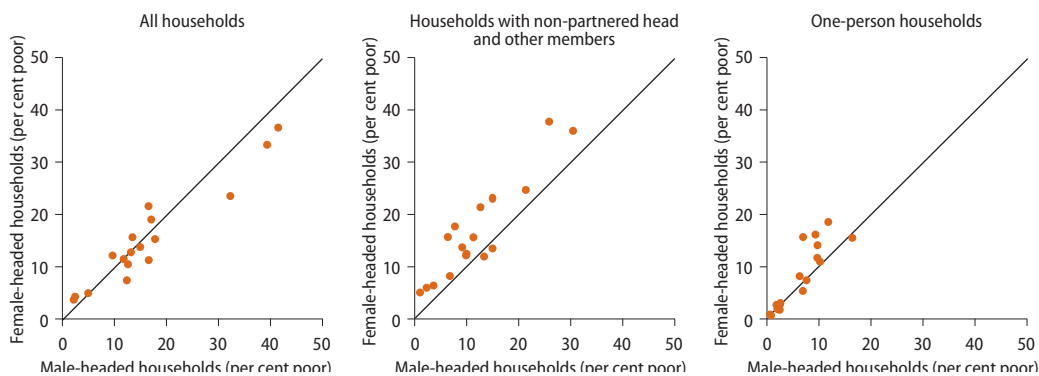
Source: EUROSTAT, 2014a. Income and Living Conditions database online (accessed April 2014).

In summary, women are more likely to be poor than men during the working age when they have dependent children and no partners to contribute to the household income or when their own income is non-existent or too low to support the entire family. The differences between working-age women and men disappear, or are inconsistent across countries, when there are no dependent children, including when living alone in one-person households. At older ages, women in one-person households in developed countries are consistently more likely to be poor than men. The data presented in this section are limited to a relatively small number of countries, with limited coverage of developing regions. However, they confirm that policy measures oriented towards reducing the gender gap in poverty need to consider, among others, providing child care services that would

free up the time of mothers, facilitate their integration into the labour force during childrearing years, and reduce their chances of becoming poor during the older ages. Social protection measures designed to account for the specific challenges and vulnerabilities of women during different stages of life, particularly their reproductive roles and higher involvement in care work, are also important.

The higher risk of poverty for lone mothers and older women living alone is also illustrated by data analysed at the household level, by comparing the poverty rates of certain types of female-headed households with those of male-headed households. It has to be noted that the analysis of poverty data disaggregated by types of households and the sex of the household head is more often found in developing countries. By contrast, in developed countries, the gender dimension of monetary poverty is more often captured through data disaggregated by the characteristics of all household members, which allows the comparison of poverty rates across population sub-groups, as done in the previous part of this chapter. The results of poverty analysis from a gender perspective based on the two approaches (all household members versus female/male-headed household) are consistent, nevertheless. For instance, in Latin America, households headed by women without a spouse/partner are more likely to be poor than households headed by men in similar living arrangements (figure 8.8). Also, in some of the countries in the region, households with women living alone have higher poverty rates than households with men living alone. The higher level of poverty for all female-headed households by comparison to male-headed households cannot be generalized, however, as shown in the first panel of figure 8.8 and explained in box 8.3.

Figure 8.8
Poverty rate by type of household and sex of the household head, Latin America, 2006–2012 (latest available)



Source: CEDLAS and the World Bank, 2014. Socio-Economic Database for Latin America and the Caribbean (SEDLAC) (accessed July 2014).

Note: Data presented for 17 countries. Poverty rates are based on the \$2.5 a day poverty line.

Box 8.3**The poverty of female- and male-headed households**

The gender dimension of poverty is often captured in developing countries through an analysis of female- and male-headed households. However, an analysis based on the overall simple distinction of those two categories, without further data disaggregation by specific types of households, yields puzzling results. Higher poverty rates may be associated with female- or male-headed households depending on the country-specific context, as shown by data compiled for the purpose of this report and previous comparative assessments.^a This is illustrated, for example, by the case of Latin American countries in figure 8.8. Furthermore, in sub-Saharan Africa, it is more often the case that male-headed households have higher poverty rates than female-headed households among the 23 countries with poverty data available. For example, male-headed households have higher poverty rates than female-headed households by more than 5 percentage points in Cameroon, Niger and Togo, and by more than 10 percentage points in Benin, Gambia, Ghana and Senegal. Nevertheless, in some countries, female-headed households have considerably higher poverty rates than male-headed households, varying from 6 percentage points in Namibia to 18 percentage points in South Africa.^b

The difficulty in generalizing about poverty disparities between female- and male-headed households is related not only to the contextual differences in women's and men's status but also the specific combination of various types of households—by size, composition and the definition of headship used—that may be included under these labels. Female-headed households cover a broad range of situations, from one-person households, households of lone mothers with children and households of couples with or without children where the woman rather than the man is reported as the household head. Although the view is held that households are headed by women only when men are not around to provide economic support for families, that is not necessarily the case. Male-headed households are also diverse. Many households identified as male-headed are households in which the male head has a female

partner (with or without children). However, other male-headed households may include one-person households or households of lone fathers with children.

Furthermore, the criteria used in identifying the head of the household for the purposes of statistical data collection and analysis vary across countries and are not always clear.^c This has implications for the assessment of poverty. It has been shown that the use of different criteria in defining household headship leads to the identification of different sets of households that overlap only by a small margin, with different poverty rates and profiles of the poor.^d

Therefore a simple analysis of poverty data by comparing female- with male-headed households has limited value in capturing the gender dimension of poverty. Instead, a detailed disaggregation of poverty data by household size and composition is needed. While these detailed data are generally missing in sub-Saharan Africa, a few cases illustrate the point. For example, in Benin, overall poverty rates are higher in households headed by males than those headed by females. A similar result is also observed for married heads of household. For widowed and divorced/separated heads, on the other hand, poverty is higher among female-headed households.^e In Madagascar, female-headed households have overall poverty levels similar to those of male-headed households. However, this conceals the fact that smaller households have consistently higher poverty rates when they are female-headed households rather than male-headed households, while larger households have similar poverty rates whether headed by women or men.^f In the Gambia and Niger, the lower poverty rate for female-headed households is attributed to the smaller household size and the receipt of cash remittances.^g On the other hand, in South Africa, where poverty rates are higher for female-headed households, these households are larger, less likely to include single persons and nuclear families, and more likely to be “skipped generations” households or extended households with three or more generations.^h

^a Data shown in Statistical Annex available at <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/gender/worldswomen.html>. Also, see United Nations, 2010, and Lampietti and Stalker, 2000.

^b Data compiled by the United Nations Statistics Division from national statistical offices (as at April 2014). Data shown in Statistical Annex available at <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/gender/worldswomen.html>.

^c For example, an analysis of census metadata in 131 countries conducting a census in the 2010 round showed that the headship concept is largely used in developing countries (88 per cent of countries) but not in developed countries (29 per cent). The definition of the head also varies across countries: in half the countries with available metadata, the criteria used for the identification refer to income, authority and decision-making power, with some variations from one country to another. In the other half, the head is defined vaguely as self-declared or recognized as such by other family members.

^d Fuwa, 2000.

^e Republic of Benin, 2013.

^f Republic of Madagascar, National Institute of Statistics, 2011.

^g Gambia Bureau of Statistics, 2011; National Institute of Statistics of Niger and the World Bank, 2013.

^h Statistics South Africa, 2014.

2. Gender differences in poverty over time

Important demographic and social changes have taken place in the past two decades that may have influenced trends in poverty for women and men. As shown in the previous section, lone mothers with children and older women living alone have higher poverty rates compared to men with similar characteristics. In some countries, the diversification of families has played a role in making the economic vulnerability of women more visible, in the sense that the contribution of lone mothers and older women living alone to overall poverty has become significant enough to increase the share of women among the total poor and alter the sex differences in poverty rates among certain groups of the working-age population and among the older age population. If the *feminization of poverty* is understood as the current higher share of women than men among the poor and/or the increase in the share of women among the poor over time, then the feminization of poverty, driven by changes in living arrangements for the adult population and the sex ratio at older ages, has taken place in the past decades in developed countries.

The *feminization of poverty* may also be understood as an increase of women's poverty rates relative to men's, as presented in this report. While demographic changes may have contributed to a relative increase in the gap between the overall adult female and male poverty rates, to the disadvantage of women, recent improvements in education, labour force participation and employment conditions, on the other hand, may have had the opposite effect. Changes in the poverty rates of women in selected age groups or types of households headed by non-partnered women, relative to men, is the focus of the analysis presented in this section.

Gender gap in poverty, to the disadvantage of women,
is narrowing slightly in some countries
while persisting in others

Available trend data show that some countries recorded a decline in the gender gap in poverty rates by various measures, while in others the gender gap remained the same or fluctuated slightly over the years. Available trend data for countries in Latin America and the Caribbean³¹

³¹ Analysis based on CEDLAS and the World Bank, July 2014. Only countries with more than five data points over time and similar methodology in measuring pov-

erty were included in the analysis, based on metadata information from CEDLAS and the World Bank, 2012.

erty were included in the analysis, based on metadata information from CEDLAS and the World Bank, 2012. show that differences between the overall female and male poverty rates (measured as a proportion of the female and male populations living below the \$2.5 a day poverty line) remained at similarly low levels³² in all countries in the region.³³ When looking at specific types of households, differences in poverty rates between female and male one-person households declined overall, although in some countries they fluctuated between survey years. This is illustrated in figure 8.9 by a selection of countries with trends for a longer period of time. Among households with more than two members, the difference in poverty rates between non-partnered female- and non-partnered male-headed households fluctuated over time or remained at the same level for most countries. Nevertheless, the overall trend of decline in poverty rates and the related gender gap was observed in some countries such as Brazil and Chile.

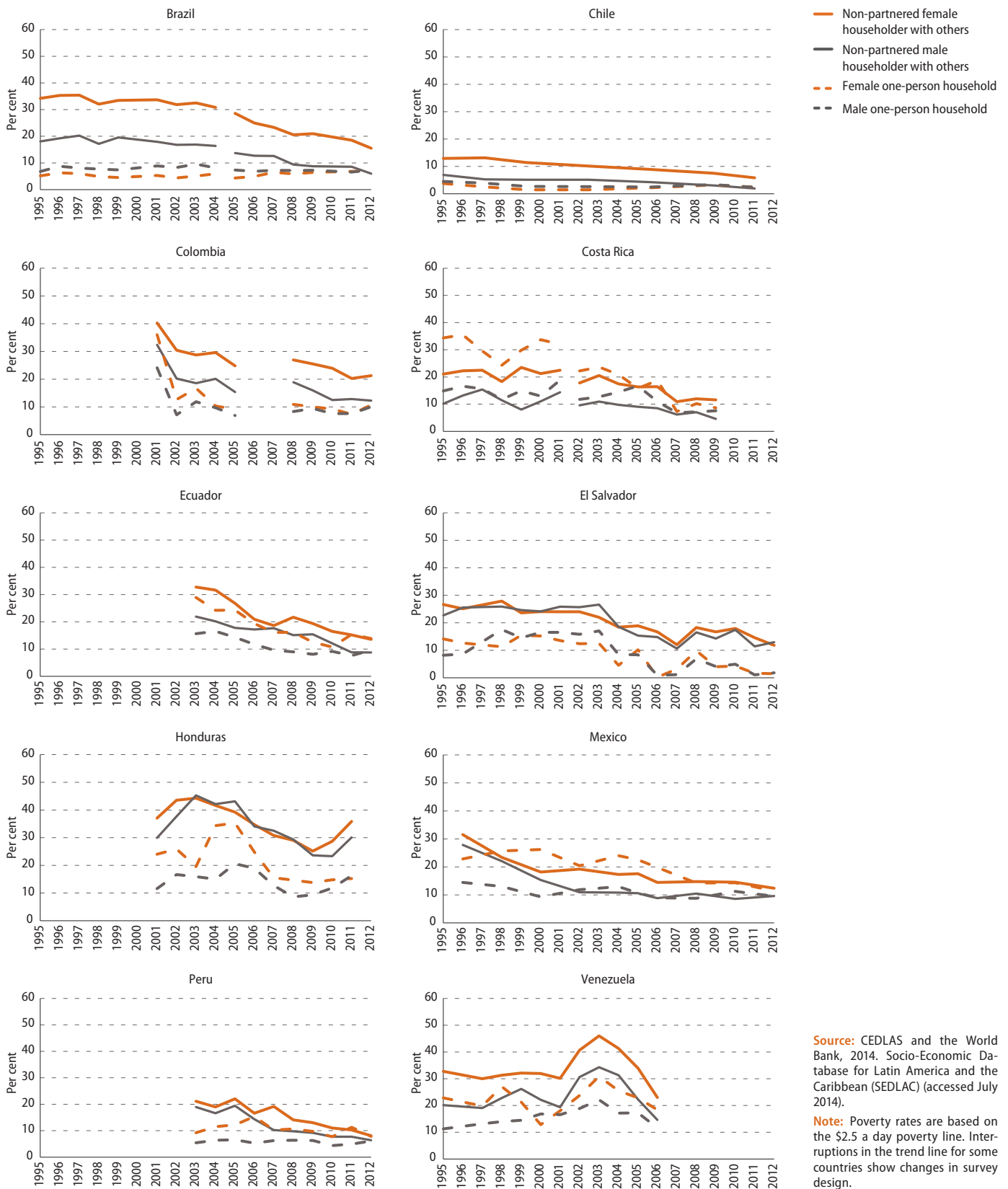
Recent trends (between 2006 and 2012) observed in 18 European countries show that women have had, on average, higher poverty rates than men, by a small margin for the working-age population and by a larger margin in the old age population (figure 8.10). A slight decline in the gender gap was observed among the older population, from 5 percentage points in 2006 to 3 percentage points in 2012. The poverty rate of older women declined slightly faster than men's up to 2009, and afterwards the gender gap remained stable, while the poverty rate increased for both women and men. For poverty rates in the working-age population, sex differences remained rather constant over time and at a low level.

Data on poverty covering longer periods of time since 1995 are available for some other developed countries, as illustrated by the cases of the United States of America and Canada. Data for the United States show a high risk of poverty for one-parent households; increasing levels of poverty for male and female one-parent households relative to other types of households since 2000; and no progress in reducing the gap between the poverty of female one-parent households and male one-parent households (figure 8.11).

³² Less than 2 percentage points.

³³ CEDLAS and the World Bank, Socio-Economic Database for Latin America and the Caribbean (SEDLAC) (July 2014).

Figure 8.9
Poverty rates by selected types of households, Latin America and the Caribbean, 1995–2012



Source: CEDLAS and the World Bank, 2014. Socio-Economic Database for Latin America and the Caribbean (SEDLAC) (accessed July 2014).

Note: Poverty rates are based on the \$2.5 a day poverty line. Interruptions in the trend line for some countries show changes in survey design.

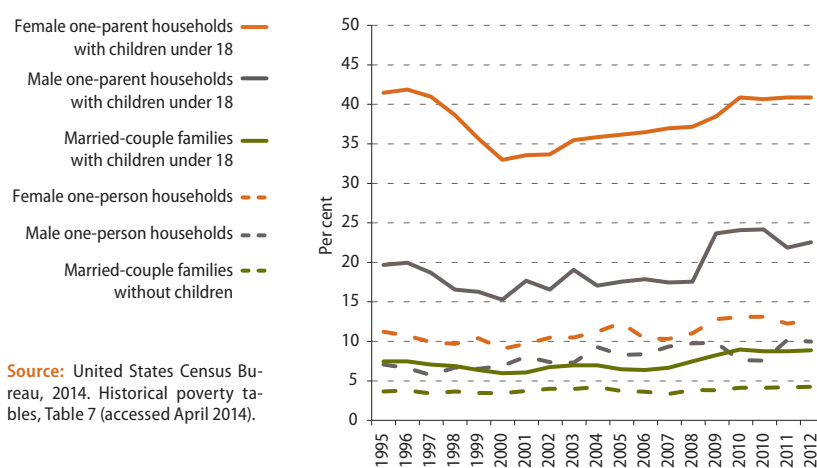
Figure 8.10
Poverty rates by sex and age group of household members, 18 European countries, 2006 to 2012



Source: EUROSTAT, 2014a. Income and Living Conditions database online (accessed July 2014).

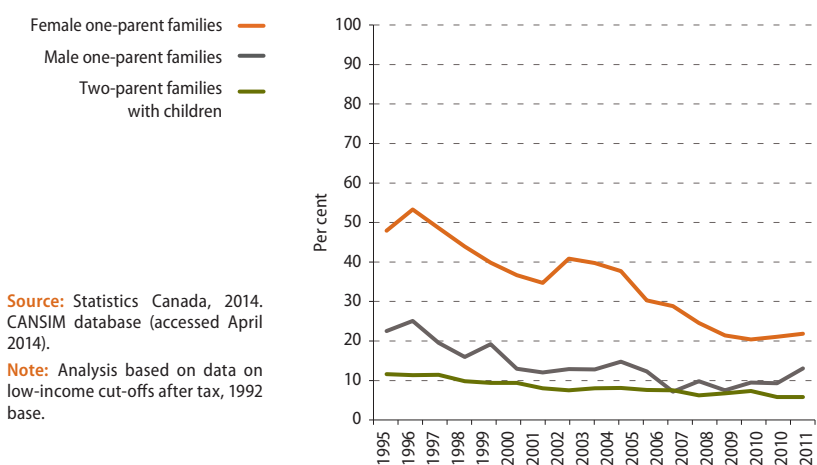
Note: Poverty rates are anchored at a fixed moment in time (2005). Average rates based on data for 18 European countries.

Figure 8.11
Poverty rates by type of household, USA, 1995 to 2012



Source: United States Census Bureau, 2014. Historical poverty tables, Table 7 (accessed April 2014).

Figure 8.12
Poverty rate in selected types of households, Canada, 1995 to 2011



Source: Statistics Canada, 2014. CANSIM database (accessed April 2014).

Note: Analysis based on data on low-income cut-offs after tax, 1992 base.

Data for Canada on the other hand, show that poverty rates for women are still higher than those of men but that the gap is diminishing, including among the older age population.³⁴ The analysis of the poverty level in selected types of households also indicates a decline in the gender gap among one-parent families (figure 8.12).

B. Economic autonomy of women

Women's well-being relative to men's, including in certain types of living arrangements such as one-parent families and one-person households of older persons, is one important link between gender and poverty. However, women in any kind of living arrangement should have the empowerment, including economic empowerment, to do what they want as active economic agents and to influence their own well-being and that of their families. This second part of the chapter looks at gender equality in terms of access to three types of economic resources: cash labour income, financial services and property.

³⁴ Statistics Canada, 2014. Analysis based on data on low-income cut-offs after tax, 1992 base. Data shown in the Statistical Annex available at <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/gender/worldswomen.html>.

Box 8.4

Measuring food insecurity from a gender perspective^a

Measurement and monitoring of food insecurity are crucial to the efforts of ending hunger and fulfilling the basic human right of access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food declared at the World Food Summit in Rome in 1996.^b Yet, assessing food insecurity is a serious challenge. As expressed by members of the Committee on World Food Security's High Level Panel of Experts, "at the global level, there are no direct estimates of the number of food insecure people."^c Aggregate, national-level estimates on under-nourishment are indirect estimates based on macro data that "give no sense of the severity of hunger."^d They also fail to show the distribution of food insecurity across populations, including by sex, requiring countries to rely on survey data. However, collecting data on food consumption and expenditure through large-scale national household surveys requires significant financial, human, and time resources, and the efforts necessary to implement and sustain such surveys are often prohibitive.^e

Even when large-scale national household surveys are available to provide data on food consumption and expenditures, they are collected at the household level. From a gender perspective, this restricts the analysis to comparisons of female- and male-headed households, which may be inconclusive or limited to certain types of households. For instance, a Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) analysis^f of household-level dietary energy consumption in 21 countries showed that in some of those countries, female-headed households have a statistically significant lower per capita food consumption, while in other countries male-headed households show a lower food consumption. Nevertheless, further disaggregation of data shows that large female-headed households and single women consistently have lower food consumption than male-headed households with similar characteristics.^g

Similar to monetary poverty, the analysis of food security based on household-level data on food consumption cannot reveal intra-household inequalities, or lead to adequate counts of women and men who are food insecure. Furthermore,

data collection on food consumption at the individual level is at best a difficult enterprise that can result in considerable estimation errors. Thus, individual-level data on access to food, a key dimension of food security, remain currently unavailable.^h

Voices of the Hungry (VoH), an initiative launched by FAO and its partners,ⁱ aims to fill the gap in global monitoring of access to food and the severity of food insecurity, including at the individual level, by using an experience-based food insecurity scale. The scale developed for this purpose—the Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES)—consists of a set of eight questions^j on self-reported food-related behaviours and experiences associated with increasing difficulties in obtaining food due to resource constraints. The questions reflect a continuum of food insecurity from worrying about food to compromising on quality and variety and further to reducing quantities, skipping meals and experiencing hunger. Following pilot surveys in four sub-Saharan African countries in 2013, the FIES was included, starting in 2014, in the Gallup World Poll[®] conducted annually in over 150 countries.

Using the FIES at the individual level can capture disparities in food security between women and men, including those due to intra-household differences in resource allocation and feeding priorities. Preliminary results from 117 countries^k show that women are more likely to be food insecure than men in 26 per cent of countries, and men in 12 per cent of countries. In the remaining countries, women are as likely as men to be food insecure. The association between food insecurity and gender is more prevalent in developing countries. The proportion of developing countries where women are more likely than men to be food insecure increases to 39 per cent, while for men, it remains at about the same level, at 13 per cent. However, at the completion of data collection exercises in the countries implementing the scale, further analysis is needed to confirm the validity of a global experience-based insecurity scale and ensure cross-country comparability of results, including from a gender perspective.

^a A first draft of this box was prepared by the FAO Statistics Division.

^b FAO, 1996.

^c HLPE (High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition), 2012. Pages 21–22.

^d *Ibid.*

^e Jones and others, 2013; de Weertd and others, 2014.

^f Data and analysis prepared by FAO, 2014. Data shown in Statistical Annex available at <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/gender/worldswomen.html>.

^g *Ibid.*

^h By comparison, individual-level data on malnutrition of children and pregnant women, capturing the dimension of food utilization, are often available from demographic and health surveys.

ⁱ For more details on the project see FAO, *Voices of the Hungry* (<http://www.fao.org/economic/ess/ess-fs/voices/en/>) (accessed June 2015).

^j The respondents are asked directly whether in the last 12 months there was a time when, because of lack of money or other resources they: (1) were worried that they would run out of food; (2) were unable to eat healthy and nutritious food; (3) ate only a few kinds of foods; (4) had to skip a meal; (5) ate less than they thought they should; (6) their household run out of food; (7) were hungry but did not eat; (8) went without eating for a whole day.

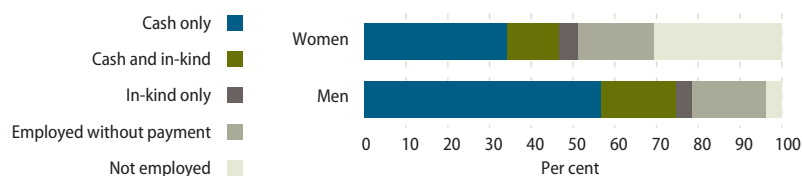
^k FAO, 2015.

1. Access to income

Women's access to cash labour income is systematically low in developing regions

As shown in Chapter 4 on Work, women are less likely to be employed than men and, when they are employed, they are more likely to be in vulnerable jobs, such 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 having cash labour income. For instance, in sub-Saharan Africa, only 34 per cent of married women aged 15 to 49 were employed in the past 12 months and paid in cash, and an additional 12 per cent were paid in cash and in-kind; the corresponding proportions for married men were 57 and 18 per cent, respectively (figure 8.13). Across the 44 developing countries with available data, the proportion of married women who earned any cash labour income in the past 12 months varied greatly, from 8 per cent in Timor-Leste to 79 per cent in Ghana. For men, the proportion varied from 33 per cent in Timor-Leste to 97 per cent in the Maldives. The gender gap ranged from 7 percentage points in Ghana to 74 percentage points in Pakistan.³⁵

Figure 8.13
Distribution of married women and men aged 15 to 49 by type of earnings from labour in the last 12 months, sub-Saharan Africa, 2005–2012 (latest available)



Source: Calculated by United Nations Statistics Division based on data from ICF International, 2014. Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) Programme database (correspondence in June 2014).

Note: Unweighted averages based on data from 30 countries.

Access to cash labour income is most limited for rural women, but the gender gap is highest in urban areas

Women in rural areas are most disadvantaged in terms of access to cash labour income (figure 8.14). They lag behind men in all countries with data, and, in most countries, they have lower access to cash income than women in urban ar-

³⁵ ICF International, 2014. Data shown in the Statistical Annex, <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/gender/worldswomen.html>.

reas. On average, in rural areas in sub-Saharan Africa, 43 per cent of married women aged 15 to 49 and 68 per cent of men had any cash labour income in the past 12 months. The corresponding figures in urban areas were 56 per cent and 90 per cent, respectively. Still, the gender gap was higher in urban than in rural areas, with very few country exceptions, showing that women are not able to access the more extensive employment opportunities offered in cities. At the same time, it shows that cash income opportunities in rural areas remain limited for both women and men.

Data on women's lack of cash labour income, such as those provided by ICF International based on Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS), clearly illustrate the economic dependency of women on men, as a consequence of the gender division of labour in the domestic and market arenas (see Chapter 4 on Work). However, further statistical information is needed, including on the level of personal income from labour and other sources (such as government transfers) individually accessed. This would allow for a better understanding of women's economic vulnerability and of the co-shared responsibility of care work between women, men and the state.

A significant proportion of married women in developing regions have no say in how their cash earnings are spent

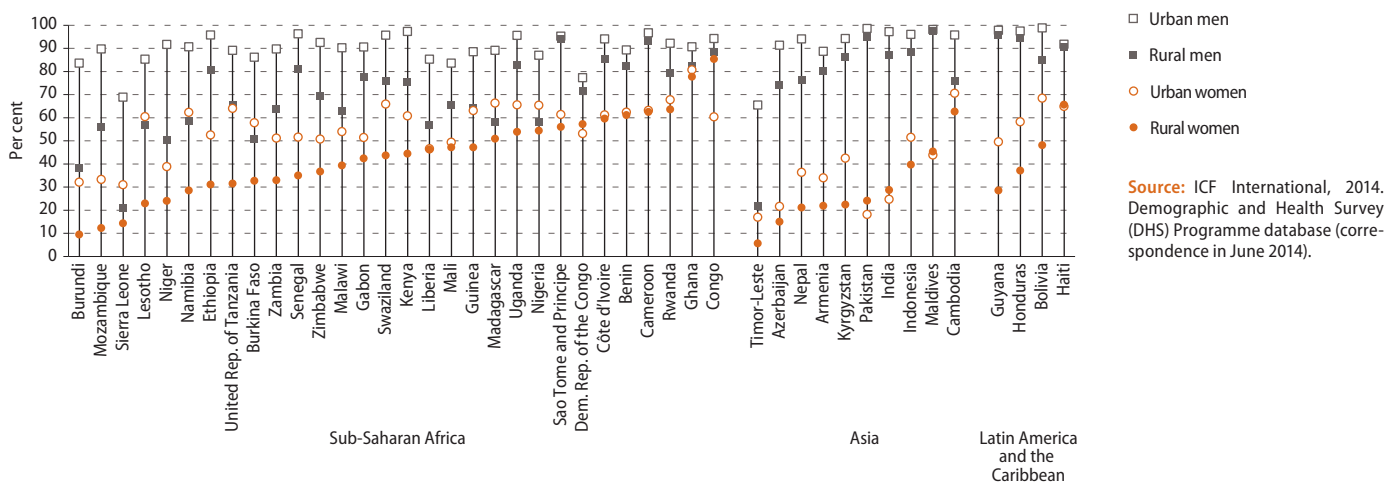
In developing countries, having a job and cash income does not necessarily translate into control over the economic resources acquired. On average 1 in 10 married women in developing countries with data are not consulted on how their own cash earnings are spent.³⁶ The proportion of married women in developing countries with no say in how their own cash earnings are spent ranges widely from 2 per cent in Cambodia, Colombia and Honduras to over 20 per cent in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Zambia and 42 per cent in Malawi. The proportion of women experiencing lack of control over their own income is higher in the poorest quintiles and lower in the wealthiest quintiles.³⁷

³⁶ Unweighted averages calculated by United Nations Statistics Division based on data from ICF International, Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) Programme database (2014) for 50 developing countries (latest available within the 2005–2012 time period).

³⁷ Data based on ICF International, 2014. Data shown in the Statistical Annex, <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/gender/worldswomen.html>.

Figure 8.14

Married women and men aged 15 to 49 who earned any cash labour income in the last 12 months, by urban and rural areas, 2005–2012 (latest available)



Source: ICF International, 2014. Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) Programme database (correspondence in June 2014).

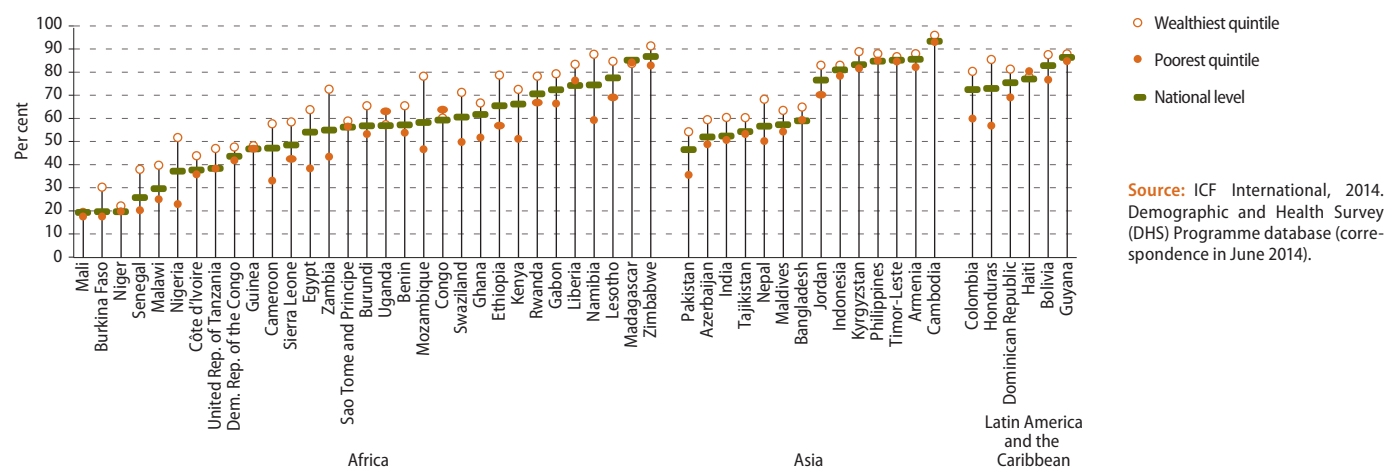
Furthermore, although women do contribute to the welfare of their household, either through paid or unpaid work, they often lack decision-making power over the economic resources of the household. For instance, only 2 in 3 married women aged 15 to 49 participate in decision-making on major household purchases in developing countries.³⁸ This is often the case in sub-Saharan Africa and Asia (figure 8.15). In sub-Saharan Africa, for example, about half of married women only (54 per cent) have a say on major household purchases. The proportion of women with power

of decision-making is lower in the poorest households, at 49 per cent, compared to 62 per cent in the wealthiest households.³⁹

By comparison, in European countries, the decision-making model among couples is generally egalitarian with respect to important expenses for children, purchases of durable consumer goods, borrowing money and the use of savings. However, women are more often involved than men in decision-making related to daily shopping and to expenses related to children and children's needs.⁴⁰

Figure 8.15

Proportion of married women aged 15 to 49 participating in household decision-making on major purchases, poorest and wealthiest quintiles, 2005–2012 (latest available)



Source: ICF International, 2014. Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) Programme database (correspondence in June 2014).

³⁸ Unweighted averages based on data on 51 countries from ICF International, 2014. Data shown in the Statistical Annex, <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/gender/worlds-women.html>.

³⁹ Unweighted averages calculated by United Nations Statistics Division based on data from ICF International, 2014.

⁴⁰ Eurostat, 2014b.

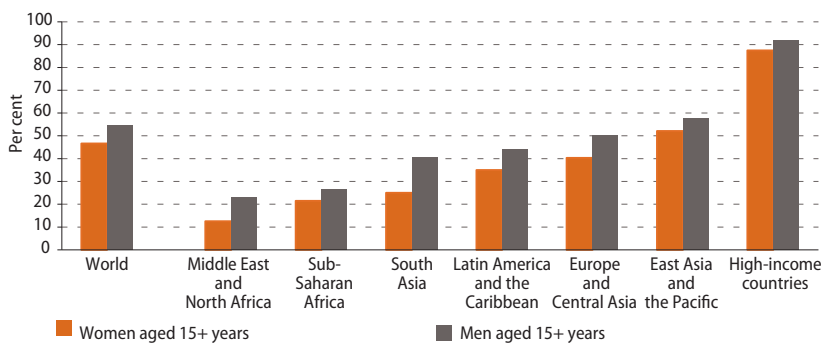
2. Use of formal financial services

Women use formal financial services less often than men in all regions of the world

Women have less access to formal financial systems than men. Globally in 2011, 47 per cent of women had an individual or joint account at a formal financial institution (a bank, credit union, cooperative, post office or microfinance institution), compared to 55 per cent of men. In developing countries, 37 per cent of women and 46 per cent of men had a formal account.⁴¹

The proportion of women with an account at a formal financial institution was lower than the proportion of men in all regions of the world (figure 8.16). The gender gap was highest in the Middle East and North Africa and in South Asia (regions as defined by the World Bank). In South Asia, 25 per cent of women compared to 41 per cent of men had an account (a difference of 16 percentage points). In the Middle East and North Africa, 13 per cent of women and 23 per cent of men had an account (a difference of 10 percentage points). Among countries in those regions, the gender gap was as high as 57 percentage points in Saudi Arabia and 49 percentage points in Turkey. A large gender gap was observed in other countries as well, at 20 percentage points or higher in Lebanon, Morocco and Oman and 17 percentage points in India.

Figure 8.16
Proportion of adults with an account at a formal financial institution, by sex, 2011



Source: World Bank, 2014. Global Financial Inclusion database (accessed March 2014).

Note: Weighted averages by World Bank regions, calculated by the World Bank. Regional and world aggregates omitted countries with samples that excluded more than 20 per cent of the population or used methodologies inconsistent with those used for other countries. Averages for the geographical regions shown (that is, all categories except "World" and "High-income countries") are based on data for developing countries only.

⁴¹ Demirciguc-Kunt and Klapper, 2012.

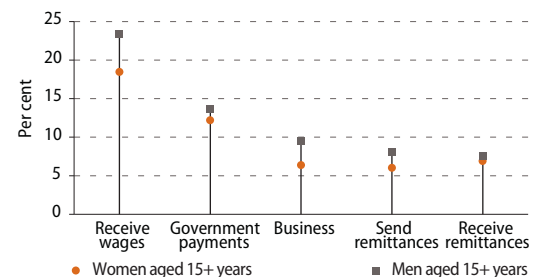
In developing regions, women are less likely to have a formal bank account than men across all income quintiles.⁴² More in-depth research also shows that global and regional gender gaps in having an account remain statistically significant (except for East Asia and the Pacific) after controlling for education, age, income and country-level characteristics.⁴³

The largest gender gaps are found in the use of a bank account for receiving wages and other business purposes

Globally, bank accounts held by individuals are most often used for receiving wages, government payments and other business purposes, and less often for sending or receiving remittances. The gender gap was most substantial in the use of such accounts for receiving wages and other business purposes (figure 8.17), consistent with the fact that women are less likely than men to be employed (see Chapter 4 on Work).

Among the most frequently self-reported reasons for not having a formal bank account were: lack of enough money to use one; banks or accounts are too expensive; and the fact that another family member already had one. Women were more likely than men to mention the last reason (26 per cent for women and 20 per cent for men globally). There was no difference between women and men in relation to the other reasons reported, such as banks being too far away, lack of necessary documentation, lack of trust in banks and religious reasons.⁴⁴

Figure 8.17
Use of own bank account, by purpose and by sex, world, 2011



Source: World Bank, 2014. Global Financial Inclusion database (accessed March 2014).

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

A smaller but significant gender gap was also observed for the activities related to saving and borrowing from a formal financial institution in the past year. This was the case in high-income countries and developing countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, the Middle East and North Africa, South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa.⁴⁵ The proportion of women who saved at a formal financial institution was 21 per cent compared to 24 per cent for men worldwide. In developing economies, the proportion was 16 per cent compared to 19 per cent, respectively. Saving clubs (pooling the deposits of their members and disbursing the entire amount to a different member each week or at another interval) are common alternatives to saving at a formal financial institution in developing countries, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, and are used equally by both women and men.

Globally, the proportion of people who borrowed from a financial institution in the past year was 8 per cent for women and 10 per cent for men. The gender gap was more pronounced in high-income countries—12 per cent of women versus 16 per cent of men. In developing regions, the proportion borrowing was 7 per cent for women and 9 per cent for men. While it is often assumed that women use informal borrowing and saving more often than men, the data showed no significant difference between them.

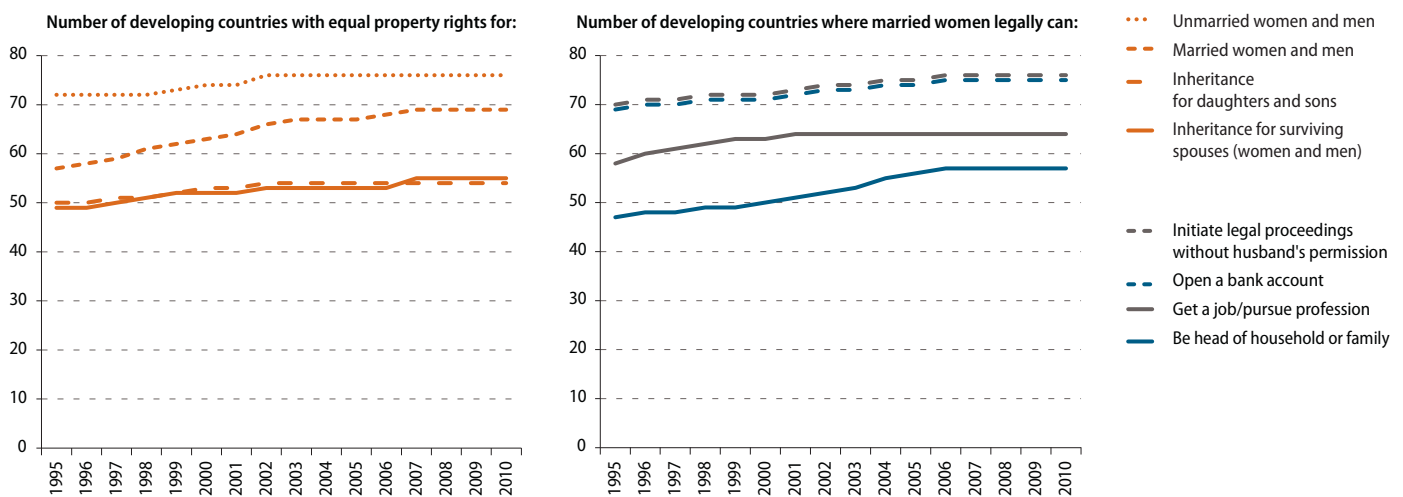
3. Property rights and asset ownership and control

Women are disadvantaged with respect to inheritance and property rights

The overall legal rights of women remain unequal compared to the rights of men in many countries. As many as 90 per cent of the 143 economies reviewed by the World Bank's *Women, Business and the Law 2014* have at least one legal difference restricting women's economic opportunities and their ability to be economically independent.⁴⁶ That said, many restrictions have been removed over the past four decades. Research shows that international conventions such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and women's political representation at the national level played a role in closing legal gaps in women's economic rights, while conflict situations and weak rule of law perpetuated discrimination.⁴⁷ Countries in Latin America have made tremendous progress and have caught up with developed countries in terms of women's legal rights.⁴⁸

Figure 8.18

Number of developing countries with equal legal rights for women and men on selected issues, 1995 to 2010



Source: World Bank and the International Finance Corporation, 2014. "Time series" in *Women, Business and the Law, 2012. Removing Barriers to Economic Inclusion* (accessed May 2014).

Note: Assessment based on 80 developing countries.

⁴⁵ Demircug-Kunt and Klapper, 2012.

⁴⁶ World Bank and the IFC, 2014.

⁴⁷ Hallward-Driemeier, Hasan and Rusu, 2013.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

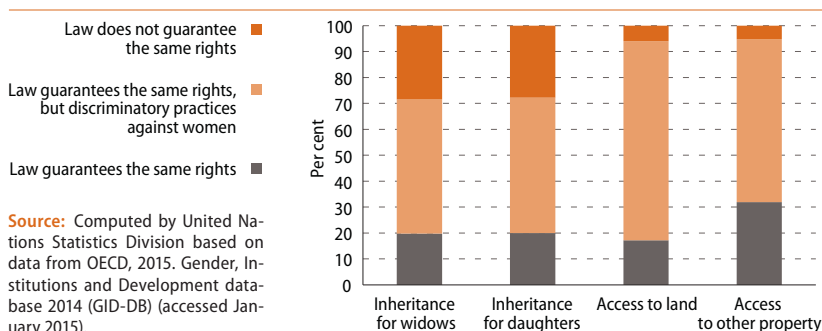
More recently, between 1995 and 2010, a number of developing countries, most of them located in sub-Saharan Africa and East Asia, also underwent positive changes in women's legal rights related to their economic independence (figure 8.18). Yet, many restrictions remain, particularly with regard to inheritance rights for daughters and wives, and women's legal rights to become the head of household and get a job without a husband's permission. The countries showing the largest number of legal differences between women and men are concentrated in Northern Africa, sub-Saharan Africa and West Asia.⁴⁹

In an additional number of countries, although laws provide for gender equality in inheritance for the overall population, discrimination is still found in practice among some groups of population (figure 8.19). This is the case for about half of the 116 developing countries with available information. Discriminatory informal laws, customs and practices also restrict women's access to land and other property in a large proportion of developing countries, including in more than three quarters with regard to land and nearly two thirds with regard to other property.

While data on legal and customary practices of discrimination against women in access to property are available for a majority of countries, individual-level data on ownership of land and other assets are currently lacking (see box 8.5). However, the limited number of existing case studies points to gender inequality. For instance, in Ecuador, Ghana and India, women own land, dwellings, livestock and agricultural equipment less often than men.⁵⁰

In summary, women have considerably lower access than men to cash labour income, and persistent discriminatory statutory and customary laws restrict women's access to land and other assets in many countries. Many women do not have decision-power over their own cash labour income and household resources, particularly in the poorest households. This lower access to economic resources increases women's economic dependency on men and, in certain types of family arrangements, results in higher poverty rates for women. Gender disparities in poverty are becoming more visible with the diversification of family arrangements, including an increase in one-person households and one-parent families. Working-age women in developed and developing countries are more likely to be poor than men when they have dependent children and no partners to contribute to the household income or when their own income is non-existent or too low to support the entire family. At older ages, women in developed countries are more likely than men to be poor, particularly when living in one-person households. The emerging diversification of family arrangements, including the increase in single parenthood and independent living in one-person households during older ages has a gender dimension that is yet to be adequately accounted for by social protection programmes. More data are needed to provide a comprehensive view of the links between gender, poverty, living arrangements and the impact of various components of social protection programmes and to support and monitor policymaking. The measurement of poverty itself needs to integrate a gender perspective and account for intrahousehold inequality on a series of dimensions of deprivations that limit women's choices and opportunities.

Figure 8.19
Proportion of developing countries with gender inequality with regard to inheritance rights, entitlements to ownership of land and other property, 2014



Source: Computed by United Nations Statistics Division based on data from OECD, 2015. Gender, Institutions and Development database 2014 (GID-DB) (accessed January 2015).

Note: Information available for 116 countries.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ Doss and others, 2011.

Box 8.5**Measuring individual-level asset ownership and control from a gender perspective**

Traditional poverty studies define poverty as a lack of income or consumption, but this approach often fails to capture the wide range of vulnerabilities experienced by individuals. Asset-based studies provide important insights into people's well-being because they focus on the accumulation of assets over the life cycle. Assets serve multiple functions. In their productive capacity, they generate income and facilitate access to capital and credit. They also strengthen a household's capacity to cope with and respond to shocks by enhancing its ability to diversify income and ease liquidity constraints. Moreover, assets comprise a store of wealth that can be sold to generate income. Finally, they may provide status and security.

Most assets are owned and controlled by individuals within households, either solely or jointly with another person. Prior research suggests a strong association between *who* in the household owns assets and important development outcomes, including in terms of nutrition, health and education. In Ghana, for example, women's landholdings are positively correlated with household food expenditure.^a In Bangladesh, Ethiopia and South Africa, the greater a woman's asset holdings at marriage, the larger the share the household spends on children's education.^b In Bangladesh, a higher share of assets in women's hands is also associated with better health outcomes for girls.^c Indicators of women's asset ownership are also correlated with egalitarian decision-making in Ecuador and Ghana,^d and several studies indicate that asset ownership can protect against spousal violence.^e

By measuring asset ownership and control at the individual level, policymakers are thus better equipped to understand women's empowerment and well-being, including their economic vulnerability and decision-making, and to address other related policy issues, such as those referring to livelihoods, including agricultural productivity and entrepreneurship, and reductions in poverty and vulnerability. Yet, despite these important policy implications, relatively little data exist on individual ownership and control of assets, particularly data derived from nationally representative surveys.^f Instead, when

asset data are collected, it is usually done at the household level by asking questions about whether anyone in the household owns land, housing or other key assets.

To integrate data collection on individual-level asset ownership and control into the regular production of official statistics, the Evidence and Data for Gender Equality (EDGE) project,^g a joint initiative of the United Nations Statistics Division and UN-Women, is developing methodological guidance for national statistical offices on measuring individual-level ownership and control of financial and physical assets, including agricultural land, dwellings, other real estate, livestock, agricultural equipment, valuables, enterprise assets, financial assets and liabilities.

The EDGE methodology conceptualizes asset ownership as a bundle of rights, including the right to sell and bequeath and manage an asset and to use the benefits accruing from it. It should be noted that these rights may not all accrue to the same individual, and ownership may be supported by legal documents or simply recognized within the community. In this regard, four approaches in collecting data on asset ownership and control are proposed by the EDGE initiative. The first is to collect information on reported ownership by asking respondents to identify who owns the asset, either individually or jointly. The second approach is to collect information on documented ownership, by asking respondents whether formal ownership documents exist for an asset and whose names are listed as an owner on the documents. The third approach is to collect information on economic ownership by asking respondents which person(s) would control the proceeds from the sale of the asset. The fourth approach is to ask about particular rights over an asset, including the rights to sell and bequeath an asset. This proposed EDGE methodology is currently piloted in select countries. The findings of these pilots will inform international guidelines in measuring individual-level asset ownership and control from a gender perspective that would equip countries to collect data in a comparable manner, monitor gendered patterns of asset ownership, and create or enhance policies to improve the well-being of women and their households.

^a Doss, 2005.

^b Quisumbing and Maluccio, 2003.

^c Hallman, 2000.

^d Deere and Twyman, 2012.

^e Bhattacharyya, Bedi and Chhachhi, 2011; Grabe, 2010; Panda and Agarwal, 2005.

^f Initiatives that include some individual-level asset data include the World Bank's Living Standard Measurement Study-Integrated Surveys on Agriculture (LSMS-ISA), the Agricultural Censuses supported by FAO, the Gender Asset Gap Project's (GAGP) work in Ecuador, Ghana and India, the Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI) and the Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS).

^g For additional information see United Nations Statistics Division, Evidence and Data for Gender Equality, at <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/gender/EDGE/about.html>.