

HARNESSING THE POWER OF DATA FOR GENDER EQUALITY

**Introducing the 2019
EM2030 SDG Gender Index**

About Equal Measures 2030

Equal Measures 2030 (EM2030) is a joint effort of leading regional and global organizations from civil society and the development and private sectors. We work to ensure that girls' and women's movements, advocates and champions have the data they need, when they need them, and in a form they can use to guide and drive the ambitious policy, law and budget decisions needed to meet existing commitments made by governments in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to achieve gender equality.

We believe that:

- If we provide increased access to data, analysis, and tools on the progress towards the SDGs affecting girls and women, and;
- If girls' and women's movements, advocates, and champions have greater skills and capacity to use data effectively, and;
- If girls' and women's movements, advocates, and champions lead powerful data-driven influencing campaigns;

Then real changes in gender equality laws, policies and budget allocations will follow.

Message from the Equal Measures 2030 Director

Over many years as an advocate, I have seen how data can shine a light on neglected issues, can drive policy change, and can increase accountability. I have also seen the power of girls and women themselves to mobilize and fight for progressive change, even with few resources behind them. We hope that the SDG Gender Index will be used by girls' and women's movements, and champions from all sectors, to ensure that governments live up to the gender equality promises laid out in the SDGs.



Alison Holder

Director

Equal Measures 2030

SDG 1

Poverty

- Poverty
- Social assistance coverage
- Laws on women's land rights
- Women's views on food affordability

SDG 2

Hunger & Nutrition

- Undernourishment
- Obesity among women
- Anaemia among women

SDG 3

Health

- Maternal mortality
- Adolescent birth rate
- Access to family planning

SDG 4

Education

- Girls' primary school progression
- Girls' secondary education completion
- Young women not in education, employment or training (NEET)
- Women's literacy

SDG 5

Gender Equality

- Child, early, and forced marriage
- Perceptions of partner violence
- Legal grounds for abortion
- Women in parliament
- Women in ministerial roles

SDG 6

Water & Sanitation

- Basic drinking water access
- Basic sanitation access
- Women's satisfaction with water quality

SDG 7

Energy

- Access to electricity
- Access to clean fuels and technology
- Women's satisfaction with air quality

SDG 8

Work & Economic Growth

- Wage equality
- Women in vulnerable work
- Collective bargaining rights in law
- Laws on women's workplace equality
- Women's ownership of bank accounts

SDG 9

Industry, Infrastructure & Innovation

- Women's use of digital banking
- Women's satisfaction with roads
- Women's internet access
- Women in science and technology research

SDG 10

Inequality

- Palma income inequality ratio
- Freedom from discrimination
- Migration treaty ratification

SDG 11

Cities & Communities

- Women's views on housing affordability
- Air pollution
- Women's perceptions of personal safety

SDG 13

Climate

- Women's representation in climate change political process
- Commitment to disaster risk reduction
- Climate vulnerability

SDG 16

Peace & Institutions

- Coverage of birth registration systems
- Female victims of homicide
- Women justices on high courts
- Views on state openness and legitimacy

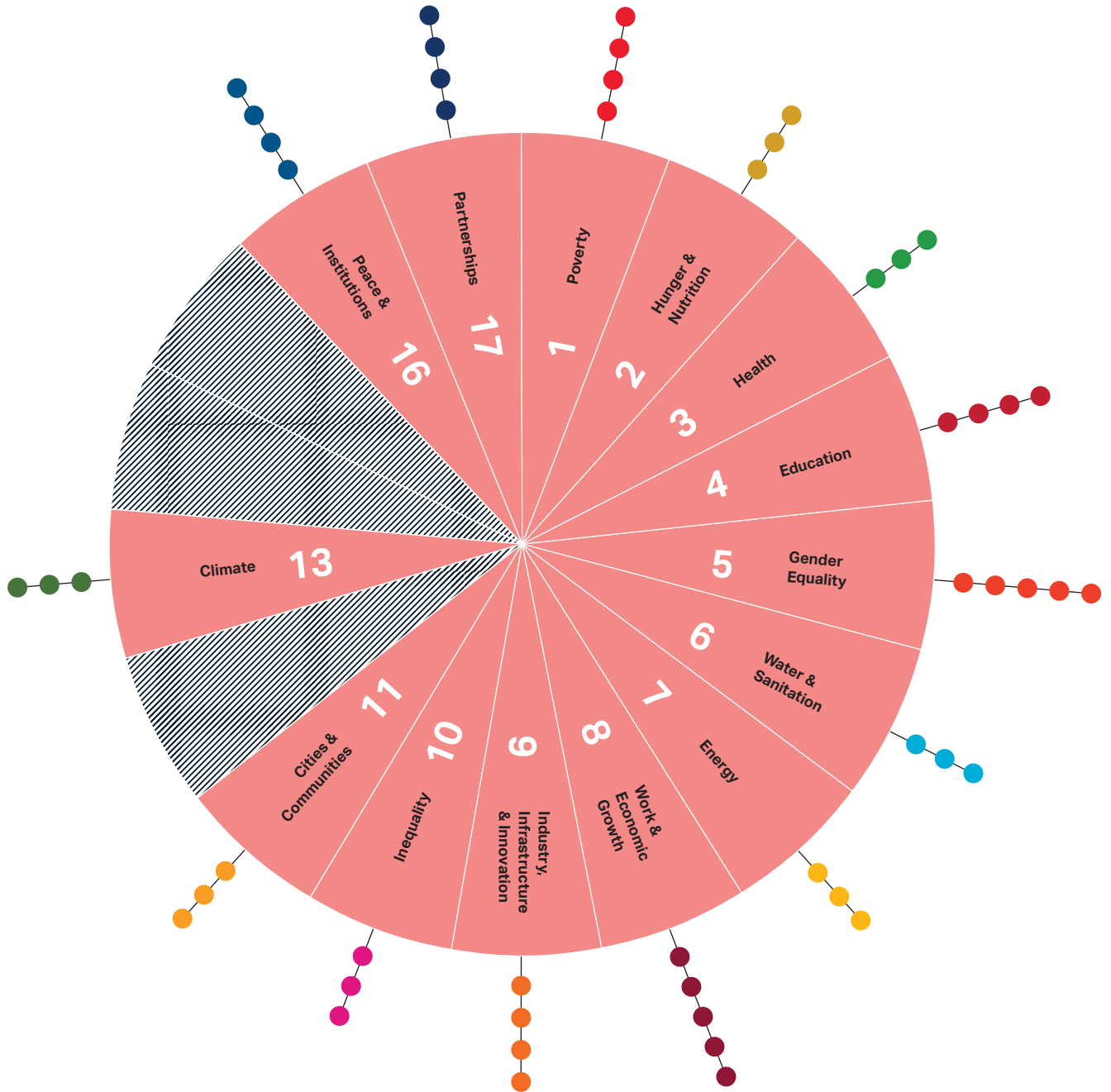
SDG 17

Partnerships

- Government spending on social assistance
- Tax revenue
- Disaggregation of national budgets
- Openness of gender statistics

Figure 1 Issues covered by the SDG Gender Index

The 2019 EM2030 SDG Gender Index includes 51 indicators across 14 of the 17 official Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and covers 129 countries across all regions of the world. Each goal in the index is covered by three to five indicators (see Figure 1). The indicators are both those that are gender-specific and those that are not, but nonetheless have a disproportionate effect on girls and women.



Acknowledgements

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Foreword

A foreword from our partners

In 2015, when 193 countries signed on to the most ambitious development agenda in history, their promises included a pledge to achieve gender equality and leave no one behind. When we formed Equal Measures 2030, we did so because we believed that the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) could be a turning point for gender equality; a set of 17 goals promising to transform our world and contribute substantially to the realization of human rights.

We share a belief in the power of girls and women, and their collective action. We also share a belief in the power of data. Each of us knows first-hand from our diverse perspectives that data can drive accountability and debate for the realization of rights.

We are proud to introduce the 2019 SDG Gender Index, the most comprehensive tool available to explore the state of gender equality across 129 countries (covering 95 percent of the world's girls and women), 14 of the 17 SDGs, and 51 indicators linked to issues inherent in the SDGs. The index has been shaped by inputs from across our own organizations, but also our work with partners across our focus countries – Colombia, El Salvador, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Senegal, and Tanzania – as well as dialogue with thousands of

other stakeholders worldwide.

The 2019 SDG Gender Index finds that, with just 11 years to go until 2030, nearly 40 percent of the world's girls and women – 1.4 billion – live in countries failing on gender equality. Another 1.4 billion live in countries that “barely pass”.

Even the highest scoring countries have more to do, particularly on complex issues such as climate change, gender

budgeting and public services, equal representation in powerful positions, gender pay gaps, and gender-based violence. No country has reached the “last mile” on gender equality.

Overall the index finds that the world is furthest behind on gender equality issues related to public finance and better gender data (SDG 17), climate change (SDG 13), gender equality in industry and innovation (SDG 9), and – worryingly – the standalone gender equality goal (SDG 5). All of these are crucial and systemic issues that cut across many if not all dimensions of girls' and women's rights and well-being.

While the index presents a challenging picture, it also presents a hopeful message about the power of international efforts and public investment. Countries, overall, have performed best on issues where coordinated and concerted policy focus and funding have been directed over the past 20 years,

Our 2019 SDG Gender Index finds that nearly 40 percent of the world's girls and women live in countries failing on gender equality

including on hunger and nutrition (SDG 2), water and sanitation (SDG 6), health (SDG 3), and education (SDG 4). With increased investment – political, programmatic, and financial – in girls and women, we can reach our goals and power progress for all.

And so, where do we go from here?

We commit to updating this baseline picture in 2021, and regularly thereafter until 2030.

We commit to digging further into the findings, analyzing and elaborating what the index data can tell us about the issues our organizations have prioritized, and about the countries and regions we work in. This report marks the start not the end of our work on the SDG Gender Index.

We commit to sharing the index widely across our global, regional, national, and local networks, and to supporting girls' and women's organizations

and movements to use this data to add further fuel to their powerful advocacy.

We commit to advocating for more and better gender data, so that all countries can be included in future iterations of the index, and so that we can better understand how the index results vary for different groups of girls and women, who we know are excluded because of their gender and/or sex, but also their age, disability, class, ethnicity, religion, and so many other factors.

We commit to putting the index findings in front of powerful decision makers and asking them what action they are taking *today* to ensure the 2021 SDG Gender Index results show that we are moving in the right direction.

We hope you will join us in using, building upon, adapting, and improving this powerful tool.



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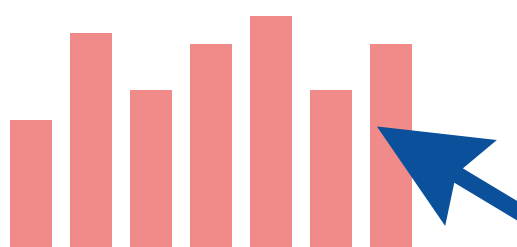
The design of the index

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Explore the Gender Advocates Data Hub, an online platform showcasing the results of the 2019 SDG Gender Index, other data and evidence, data visualizations, stories, tools, and country-, region-, and issue-specific resources for and by advocates.

Explore now: www.data.em2030.org



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Key findings from the 2019 SDG Gender Index



Photo: UNDP on Flickr (CC BY- NC-ND 2.0)

Global findings

The 2019 SDG Gender Index finds that, across the 129 countries studied, no country has fully achieved the promise of gender equality envisioned in the ambitious 2030 Agenda. The global average score of 65.7 out of 100 is “poor”; barely a “passing grade”. This means that nearly 40 percent of the world’s girls and women – 1.4 billion – live in countries that are failing on gender equality (scores of 59 or less out of 100) and another 1.4 billion live in countries that “barely pass” (scores of 60–69 out of 100).

- No country achieves an “excellent” overall score of 90 or above, but Denmark (89.3), which tops the index, comes close. The other countries in the top ten are Finland, Sweden, Norway, Netherlands, Slovenia, Germany, Canada, Ireland, and Australia.
- The bottom ten countries in the index – Sierra Leone, Liberia, Nigeria, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Yemen, Congo, DR Congo, Chad – all also appear on the OECD’s 2018 list of fragile states.
- Overall, higher income countries are more likely to have greater gender equality than lower



income countries. But the data show that this is not always the case:

- Some countries – Finland, Georgia, Greece, Kyrgyzstan, Malawi, Rwanda, Slovenia, and Viet Nam, among others – perform better than would be expected based on their GDP per capita.
 - On the other hand, other countries – such as Botswana, Iraq, Malaysia, Russia, South Korea, Switzerland, Turkey, and the United States, among others – have lower gender equality scores than might be expected given the countries' income levels.
- No one country is the world's best performer – or even among the world's top ten performers – across *all* goals or *all* indicators. Pockets of progress and compelling success stories can be found even among the index' lower performing regions and countries. For example:
 - The majority of the top scoring countries on the index' indicators related to women's participation in government and the judiciary are Latin American and Sub-Saharan African countries.

- Several lower income countries perform well on indicators that capture women's physical safety, through their perceptions of safety walking alone at night: Rwanda, for example, has the fifth highest score globally on this indicator.
 - Women are more likely to have had their need for modern methods of family planning met in Brazil, China, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Thailand, and Uruguay than in Canada, Denmark, Netherlands, Norway, and Sweden (though all of these countries still receive "good" or "excellent" scores on the measure).
 - Kenya has very high rates of women who use digital banking – higher rates than three quarters of the world's countries.
 - Colombia has better coverage of social assistance amongst its poorest people than the United States.
 - On the openness of government budgets: the bottom 20 countries by overall index score perform better than the top 20 countries on the indicator that measures the extent to which a national budget is broken down by factors such as gender, age, income, or region.
- Overall the index finds the world is furthest behind on gender equality issues related to public finance and better gender data (SDG 17), climate change (SDG 13), gender equality in industry and innovation (SDG 9), and worryingly, the standalone gender equality goal (SDG 5).
 - Sixty countries are failing on SDG 5 (the standalone goal on gender equality), with a "very poor" score of 59 or lower, and another 24 countries "barely pass" with a "poor" score between 60 and 69.
 - Countries, overall, have performed best on issues where coordinated and concerted policy focus and funding have been directed over the past 10 to 20 years, including on hunger and nutrition (SDG 2), water and sanitation (SDG 6), health (SDG 3), and education (SDG 4) – reinforcing the need for concerted policy focus in the future on the areas falling furthest behind in the index.

Findings by region

Of the top 20 countries globally, 18 are in Europe and North America and two (Australia and New Zealand) are in the Asia and the Pacific region.¹ Of the bottom 20 countries, 17 are in Sub-Saharan Africa, two in Asia and the Pacific (Bangladesh and Pakistan), and one in the Middle East and North Africa (Yemen). Significant differences exist within regions: every region has at least a 17-point variance between its top- and bottom-scoring country, and every region includes at least one country with a "poor" or "very poor" score overall on the index.

No one country featured in the 2019 SDG Gender Index is the world's best performer – or even among the world's top ten performers – across all goals or all indicators

Asia and the Pacific

With an average regional index score of 64.6, the Asia and the Pacific region falls right in the middle of the five regions covered by the 2019 SDG Gender Index.

- The region is the second lowest performer on the measure of women's ability to rise to the top ranks of national governments; only three countries in the region are more than half way toward the target of full gender parity in ministries or senior government positions (Indonesia, New Zealand, and Philippines).
- The Asia and the Pacific region performs better on the indicator related to commitment to disaster risk reduction than any other region in the world, and six countries have fully met the index target – though the regional average for the indicator is still a "failing grade".

Europe and North America

With an average regional index score of 79.1, the Europe and North America region tops the 2019 SDG Gender Index.

- Notable outliers or surprise stories in the region include Slovenia, which places 6th overall in the index, and Russia (59th). Canada (8th) far outperforms its neighbour to the south. The United States (28th) has its overall score driven down by poor performance on indicators related to poverty, women's participation in the economy, and inequality.
- Social assistance programmes can provide economic lifelines for women and are particularly critical for marginalized groups. Yet, while Europe and North America has the highest regional score on this indicator, with 18 countries fully meeting the target of 100 percent coverage, the United States and most Eastern European countries have coverage rates around or worse than the global average.
- Modern methods of family planning enable girls and women to make choices about their own bodies, avoid unwanted or dangerous pregnancies, and space out births. The region has room for improvement on this indicator – it fares worse on average than Latin America and the Caribbean, no country in the region meets the 100 percent target, and nearly half fall under 75 percent.

Latin America and the Caribbean

With an average regional index score of 66.5, Latin America and the Caribbean is the second highest ranking region in the 2019 SDG Gender Index.



Photo: Getty Images

Box 1 SDG Gender Index scoring system

The overall index score and individual goal scores are based on a scale of 0–100. A score of 100 reflects the achievement of gender equality in relation to the underlying indicators. For example, that anaemia is eliminated, that all girls complete their education, that there is no unmet need for modern methods of contraception. A score of 50 would signify that a country is about halfway to meeting that goal.

Excellent:	90 and above
Good:	80–89
Fair:	70–79
Poor:	60–69
Very poor:	59 and below

- The region is characterized by its tight clustering of countries overall in the index scores, as well as on most goals – the region has fewer dramatic outliers in either direction than do other regions.
- Countries with the lowest overall scores (Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Venezuela) have experienced civil conflict or political unrest in the past 30 years.
- Latin America and the Caribbean is by far the lowest scoring region in the world on two indicators related to women’s physical safety – the region receives a “poor” overall score that is more than ten points below the next lowest scoring region on female victims of homicide, and El Salvador is the lowest scoring country in the world on this indicator.

The Middle East and North Africa

With an average regional index score of 60.8, the Middle East and North Africa is the second lowest ranking region in the 2019 SDG Gender Index.

- Five countries in the region fall into “very poor” failing scores overall on the index, with Yemen the fourth lowest ranking country in the world.
- The region scores particularly well on measures of access to basic services, energy, and infrastructure, with all countries at or nearly at full electricity coverage, except for Yemen.
- The region falls behind the world on a wide set of indicators related to women’s legal rights, including land ownership, workplace equality, and the extent to which there are legal grounds for abortion.

Sub-Saharan Africa

With an average regional index score of 51.1, Sub-Saharan Africa is the lowest ranking region in the 2019 SDG Gender Index.

- The region’s strongest goal performances are on SDG 2: Hunger & Nutrition and SDG 8: Work & Economic Growth. However, indicators where most of the world performs quite well – including on maternal mortality, access to drinking water, and electricity – are critical and persistent weak spots across much of Sub-Saharan Africa.
- Many Sub-Saharan African countries perform well, and several countries perform exceptionally well, on the proportion of women in government: Sub-Saharan Africa is the only region aside from Latin America and the Caribbean where any country has fully achieved or surpassed parity in a lower house of parliament. Rwanda (61 percent of parliament), Namibia (46 percent), South Africa (42 percent), Senegal (42 percent) all rank in the top ten countries in the 2019 SDG Gender Index in terms of women in parliament.

Leaving no one behind: what data show about multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination

Gender inequality is compounded by other factors. Girls and women around the world, in countries of all income levels, experience additional disadvantages on the basis of age, income, ethnic or religious identity, geographic location, sexual orientation and gender identity, disability, immigration status, or HIV status, among other factors.

- In a world where sufficiently disaggregated data were available, we could look at the 2019 SDG Gender Index scores for these different groups; unfortunately, the lack of data coverage and insufficient disaggregation of data make this kind of comparison impossible.
- In Section 6, disaggregated national data and smaller-scale studies on four key issues relevant to the 2019 SDG Gender Index help to illustrate some of the multidimensional deprivations that national averages hide.

3

About the 2019 SDG Gender Index

EM2030's approach: data in the hands of gender advocates

The 2019 SDG Gender Index builds on the first three years of our partnership's engagement and research. It was shaped by collaboration across our ten core partner organizations and partners in seven focus countries – Colombia, El Salvador, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Senegal, and Tanzania – as well as dialogue with thousands of other stakeholders worldwide. This mix of country engagement and global consultation and research informed the design of the expanded index.

The index was designed with previous EM2030 research and work in mind, including a survey of 109 policymakers in five countries, a global survey of 613 gender advocates, and the pilot SDG Gender Index. This research has shaped our understanding of policy priorities, demand for gender-related data, and the challenges and opportunities ahead.² A pilot index was launched in 2018 in each of our six initial focus countries, shared in meetings with officials in national statistical offices and national development planning ministries, and discussed at regional events. The contextualized experiences of partner organizations in applying the index to frame advocacy efforts and focus on SDG issues that they prioritized were core to the approach of designing the 2019 SDG Gender Index.

Gender data is critically needed to realize progress toward gender equality and the entire 2030 Agenda.³ Our 2018 survey of gender equality advocates found that nine in ten (89 percent) agree that a breakthrough in SDG progress on helping the most disadvantaged girls and women will not be possible without relevant data.⁴ But data alone is not enough – our engagement with partners around the world reinforced that gender data are most useful in driving policy change when

Box 2 What did EM2030 prioritize when constructing the index?

- **Accessible and useful for advocates:** the index is easily shared and understood by all audiences, and highlights regional and country-specific issues
- **Clear policy levers:** the index includes indicators on laws and policies that advance women's rights
- **Gets at key gender issues:** the index covers issues, including those not covered by other indices, that are critical to women's rights and lived realities
- **Strong methodology:** the methodology to construct the index is rigorous and informed by technical experts
- **Good indicators:** the indicators chosen are the "best possible", with good data coverage and applicability to high-, middle-, and low-income countries
- **Tracks over time:** future iterations can be used to measure progress or stagnation

Box 3 Gender Advocates Data Hub

To learn more about the methodology for the design of the index and how indicators were selected, see Annex II: Methodology or the full Technical Report on the EM2030 Gender Advocates Data Hub.

Through interactive data visualizations and regional, goal and country profiles, the Gender Advocates Data Hub enables advocates to easily unpack insights and findings from our 2019 SDG Gender Index.

Advocates can visit the Hub to compare country performances across regions, generate an interpretation of global trends, explore the SDGs based on thematic areas of interest, or read about the girls and women who are using data to drive action in their communities. Explore now: www.data.em2030.org.

they align with advocates' needs and are shared in accessible formats. The index is designed from this perspective: by and for advocates.

What makes the index unique?

The index is the most comprehensive tool to measure gender equality aligned explicitly to the SDGs. Because gender equality is linked to the entire development agenda, this index provides a bellwether for the progress and problem areas that could impact broader development gains. The scope of the SDG Gender Index differs from that of other tools that measure gender equality (e.g. the Gender Inequality Index (GII), Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI), World Economic Forum (WEF) Global Gender Gap Index), which cover four or five dimensions of gender equality, namely those related to health, education, and economic participation.⁵ And it is distinct from gender indicator frameworks (e.g. the UN Women SDG Indicator Framework and United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) Minimum Set of Gender Indicators, and Data2X Ready to Measure) that suggest indicators for the 2030 Agenda or track our ability to measure them, but that do not compile and present global data across them.⁶

The SDG Gender Index is built to amplify and support these foundational works. It presents the big picture of gender equality in the SDG agenda and captures a range of issues that are relevant to some extent across all countries and contexts.

The index is also unique in that it includes many issues that are under-studied from a gender perspective – or even entirely omitted from the official SDG framework – yet are critical to gender and the achievement of specific SDG goals and targets. The index draws on diverse data sources, including from non-governmental organizations (NGOs), development agencies, civil society, and the private sector. It aims to fill gaps, using a gender lens to scrutinize the SDGs and capture issues under each goal that have been identified as important to advocates. Often they relate to an enabling environment for gender equality that is not captured in the official SDG monitoring framework (which

was developed with gender as a key cross-cutting issue but without a gender lens on each goal). Examples include the legal framework for abortion, disaggregated national budgeting (including by gender), and female justices in the highest courts.

The composition of indicators in the index also sets it apart from other tools. The index draws on both official SDG indicators and complementary indicators, and looks at the desired ends (goals, targets, and outcomes) and the enabling means (laws, policies, processes, and financing) that are needed to achieve gender equality set against the Sustainable Development Goals. The inclusion of complementary "enabling means" indicators – many of which are linked to policy levers – highlights the intended use of the index as a tool to drive policy change.

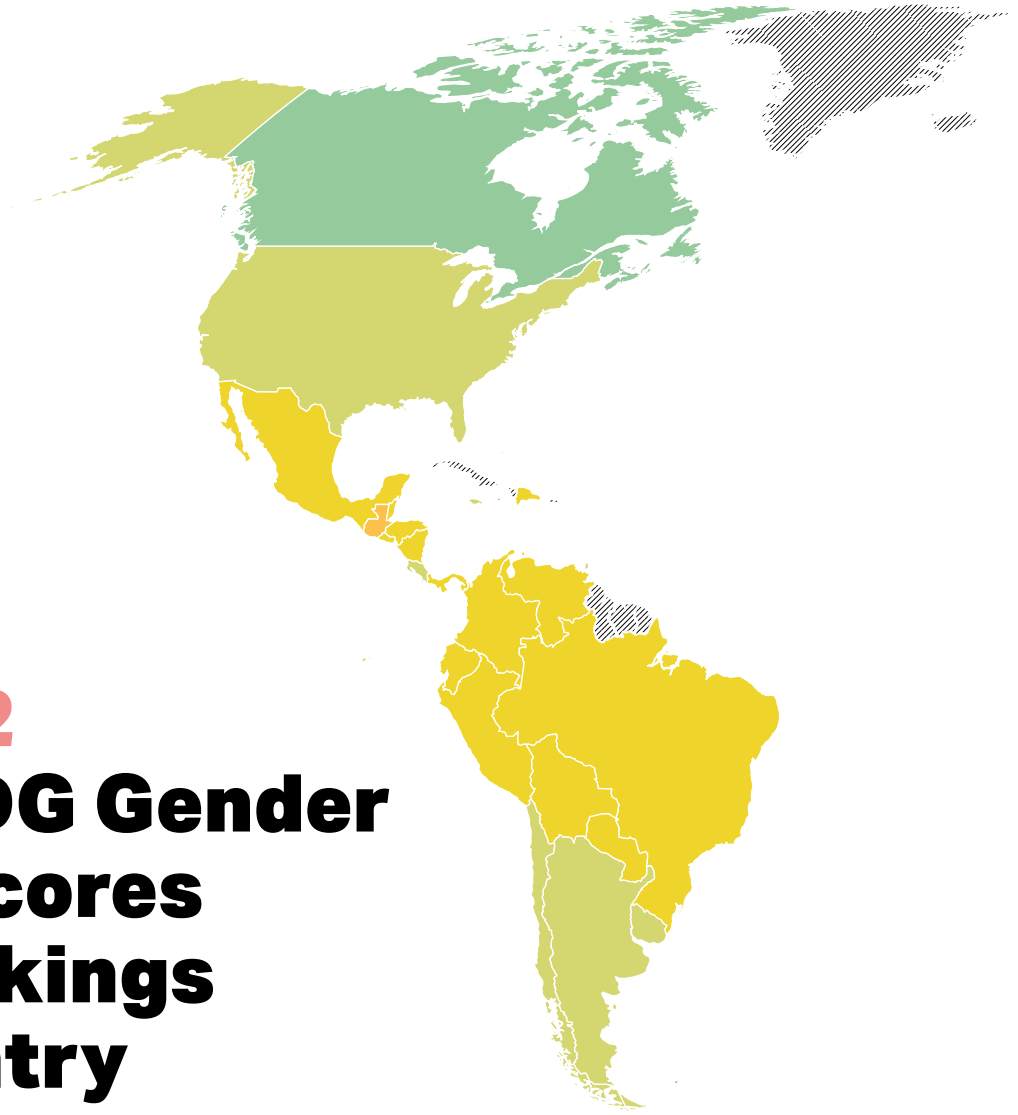
How should the index be interpreted?

In an ideal world, this SDG Gender Index would cover all the world's countries. However, dozens of countries, especially small states and states affected by instability, lack data across enough indicators to be included (see Annex II: Methodology). There are also many issues that we would like to have captured in the index, but could not due to insufficient data coverage globally.⁷ EM2030 will continue to scale up our work, add countries, and capture new and innovative measures of gender equality in future iterations of the index.

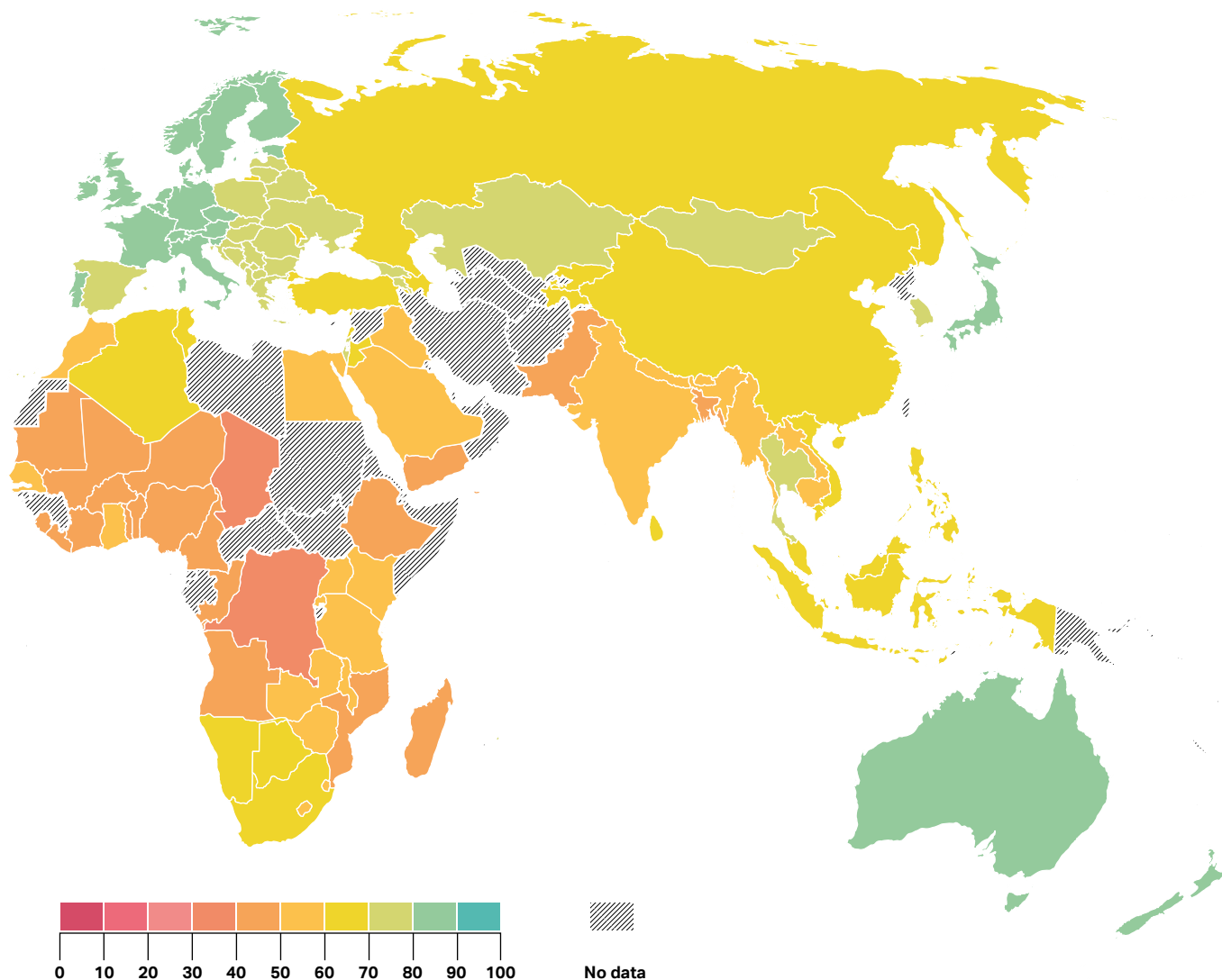
The index scores should thus be interpreted as baseline findings. The 2019 SDG Gender Index is a snapshot of where the world stands, as close to today as is possible based on availability of recent data, linked to the vision of gender equality set forth by the 2030 Agenda. With each iteration of the index, it will be possible to track progress by country, goal, and indicator and delve into richer trend analysis. We hope – and fully expect – that many countries across all income levels will make strides towards gender equality between now and the release of the next SDG Gender Index in 2021. And we hope that the SDG Gender Index will help to catalyze those changes.

Figure 2

2019 SDG Gender Index scores and rankings by country



1	Denmark	89.3	23	Spain	79.7	45	Kazakhstan	71.1
2	Finland	88.8	24	Lithuania	79.4	46	Ukraine	71.0
3	Sweden	88.0	25	Latvia	79.4	47	Argentina	70.8
4	Norway	87.7	26	Croatia	79.0	48	Trinidad and Tobago	70.7
5	Netherlands	86.8	27	Bulgaria	77.6	49	Armenia	70.6
6	Slovenia	86.5	28	United States of America	77.6	50	Jamaica	70.6
7	Germany	86.2	29	Greece	77.4	51	Albania	70.6
8	Canada	85.8	30	Poland	77.0	52	Thailand	70.3
9	Ireland	85.4	31	Israel	76.7	53	Mongolia	70.0
10	Australia	85.2	32	Uruguay	75.5	54	Moldova	69.5
11	New Zealand	85.1	33	Montenegro	74.5	55	Paraguay	69.4
12	Switzerland	85.0	34	Serbia	74.5	56	Kyrgyzstan	67.9
13	Austria	84.8	35	Hungary	74.1	57	Colombia	67.9
14	France	84.0	36	Belarus	73.6	58	Ecuador	67.7
15	Belgium	83.3	37	Mauritius	73.1	59	Russia	67.6
16	Portugal	83.1	38	Bosnia and Herzegovina	72.8	60	Malaysia	67.5
17	United Kingdom	82.2	39	Chile	72.8	61	Azerbaijan	67.5
18	Estonia	82.0	40	Georgia	72.8	62	Viet Nam	67.2
19	Italy	81.8	41	South Korea	72.6	63	Panama	67.2
20	Czechia	81.4	42	FYR Macedonia	72.2	64	Mexico	66.9
21	Japan	80.6	43	Romania	72.0	65	Algeria	66.9
22	Slovakia	79.8	44	Costa Rica	71.4	66	Peru	66.7



67	Tunisia	66.0
68	Bolivia	65.3
69	Indonesia	65.2
70	Turkey	65.2
71	South Africa	64.9
72	Tajikistan	64.8
73	Philippines	64.8
74	China	64.7
75	Namibia	64.5
76	Dominican Republic	62.8
77	Brazil	62.8
78	El Salvador	62.7
79	Belize	62.6
80	Sri Lanka	62.1
81	Honduras	61.8
82	Venezuela	61.4
83	Botswana	60.9
84	Nicaragua	60.4
85	Jordan	60.4
86	Lebanon	60.2
87	Egypt	59.7
88	Morocco	59.3

89	Guatemala	58.3
90	Bhutan	58.2
91	Rwanda	58.1
92	Saudi Arabia	57.4
93	Eswatini	57.1
94	Ghana	56.6
95	India	56.2
96	Cambodia	56.0
97	Kenya	55.1
98	Myanmar	54.1
99	Lesotho	53.7
100	Zimbabwe	53.7
101	Tanzania UR	53.5
102	Nepal	52.6
103	Iraq	52.3
104	Senegal	52.2
105	Lao PDR	52.2
106	Malawi	51.8
107	Uganda	50.6
108	Zambia	50.1
109	Benin	49.9
110	Bangladesh	49.2

111	Côte d'Ivoire	48.9
112	Angola	48.9
113	Pakistan	48.9
114	Mozambique	48.8
115	Togo	48.6
116	Burkina Faso	48.6
117	Ethiopia	48.3
118	Cameroon	47.9
119	Madagascar	47.7
120	Sierra Leone	47.6
121	Liberia	47.3
122	Nigeria	46.1
123	Mali	46.0
124	Mauritania	45.0
125	Niger	44.9
126	Yemen	44.7
127	Congo	44.0
128	DR Congo	38.2
129	Chad	33.4

Source: Equal Measures 2030, 2019

4

GLOBAL OVERVIEW



Photo: Plan International,
Kyle Parsons

Key global findings

The 2019 SDG Gender Index finds that, across the 129 countries studied, no country has fully achieved the promise of gender equality envisioned in the ambitious 2030 Agenda (see Figure 2 on p. 12). The global average score of 65.7 out of 100 falls far short: nearly 40 percent of the world's girls and women – 1.4 billion – live in countries failing on gender equality (scores of 59 or less out of 100) and another 1.4 billion live in countries that “barely pass” (scores of 60–69 out of 100) (see Figure 3 on p. 15).

The 2019 SDG Gender Index indicates that many countries have achieved important milestones towards gender equality in a number of the SDGs, such as education, health, access to basic services, and in codifying certain legal rights, but that many issues remain to be addressed so that girls and women – across all regions of the world – enjoy full equality and the realisation of their rights.

No country achieves an “excellent” overall score of 90 or above, but Denmark (89.3), which tops the index, comes close. The other countries that rank in the top ten on the index – Finland, Sweden, Norway, Netherlands, Slovenia, Germany, Canada, Ireland, and Australia – tend to have in common reasonably strong public services and social safety nets.⁸

It is not surprising that the countries at the bottom of the index are also those facing extreme poverty as well as fragility. The ten lowest scoring countries in the index – Sierra Leone, Liberia, Nigeria, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Yemen, Congo, DR Congo, and Chad – have an average

income of just over \$2,500 (PPP) per person per year. All appear on the OECD's 2018 list of fragile states.⁹ This reflects the importance of basic levels of social and economic stability, rule of law, and the need for sufficient resources to provide the services needed to protect, promote and fulfil the rights of girls and women (see Box 4 on p. 16).

In line with the vision of the SDGs as a “universal” agenda, applying equally to all countries, and aligned with the principle of universal human rights, the 2019 SDG Gender Index uses the same set of targets and indicators for all countries. However, it should be recognized that the 129 countries in the index have different starting points in relation to gender equality and the capacity to fulfil the rights of girls and women. Most of the countries in the bottom half of the index, for example, continue to face a wide range of political challenges and economic disadvantages that are related to historical legacies of colonialism, among other major factors. A core principle underlying the SDGs – articulated in Goal 17: Partnerships – is that better-off countries should support those less well-off in their effort to reach the goals, including the gender equality dimensions of the SDGs.

Variation in index scores between and within regions

Of the top 20 ranking countries globally, 18 are in Europe and North America and two (Australia and New Zealand) are in the Asia and the Pacific region. Of the bottom 20 ranking countries, 17 are in Sub-Saharan Africa, two in Asia and the Pacific (Bangladesh and Pakistan), and one in the Middle East and North Africa (Yemen).

There is strong variation in index scores within regions. Every region has a difference of at least 17 points in scores between a top and bottom ranking

No country has fully achieved the promise of gender equality envisioned in the ambitious 2030 SDG Agenda

Figure 3 The number of girls and women living in countries by 2019 SDG Gender Index score grouping, in millions



Source: Equal Measures 2030, 2019

Box 4 Gender equality in fragile, conflict- and crisis-affected settings

During crises, whether an armed conflict, natural disaster, or complex emergency, gender inequalities are often exacerbated. Pre-existing patterns of violence and exploitation worsen, and new threats emerge. Girls and women face heightened risks including gender-based violence and trafficking, unintended pregnancy, maternal morbidity and mortality, unsafe abortions, and child, early, and forced marriage. They may be excluded from decision-making processes or prevented from accessing essential services due to harmful social norms.^I

Girls and women in countries facing humanitarian emergencies are among the most vulnerable and the least visible. Research by ODI and IRC showed that refugees, internally displaced persons, and other people caught in crises are not systematically included in countries' SDG progress reports, national surveys to determine socioeconomic status and needs, or national development and sectoral plans.^{II}

The bottom ten countries in the index have an average income of just over \$2,500 (PPP) per person per year and all also appear on the OECD's 2018 list of fragile states. Of the 21 countries with extremely low scores on the index (below 50 points, indicating the country is less than halfway to key gender equality targets) all but two (Togo and Benin) feature on the OECD's 2018 list of fragile states.^{III}

Challenges around data availability mean that countries facing the most chronic, severe and complex humanitarian emergencies are absent from the index. Countries like Syria, Afghanistan or the Central African Republic could not be included in the index because sufficient data is not available. Furthermore, while countries such as Yemen are included, the most recent data available precede the most recent conflict. The next update of the index in 2021 is likely to present an even worse picture for countries like Yemen.

The 2030 Agenda recognizes that many of the drivers of humanitarian crises threaten to reverse much of the development progress made in recent decades. It is simply impossible to achieve the SDGs without focusing attention on girls and women in fragile and conflict-affected contexts.

I UN Women, "In Focus: Women and Girls in Conflict," (2018), <http://beijing20.unwomen.org/en/in-focus/armed-conflict>

II ODI and IRC, "Fragility, crisis and leaving no one behind," (2018), www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/resource-documents/12424.pdf

III OECD, "States of Fragility," (2018), www.oecd.org/dac/states-of-fragility-2018-9789264302075-en.htm

country. Even in Latin America and the Caribbean, which has the least variation of any region, countries are spread across "very poor", "poor", and "fair" scores (see Figure 4 on p. 17). In other regions, the difference is even more pronounced: the gap between top and bottom scoring countries in Sub-Saharan Africa is 39.7 points and Asia and the Pacific has countries right across the score categories.

Relationship between national income and 2019 SDG Gender Index scores

Countries' scores on the index tend to correlate with national income, as shown in Figure 5 on p. 17. This simply means that, overall, higher income countries are more likely to have greater gender equality than lower income countries. But the data show that this is not always the case: examination of the countries that deviate from this trend shows that progress in gender equality is not linked only to economic development.

Some countries – Finland, Georgia, Greece, Kyrgyzstan, Malawi, Rwanda, Slovenia, and Viet Nam, amongst others – perform better than would be expected based on their GDP per capita (those that fall below the line in Figure 5 can be considered to have higher gender equality than would be predicted by the country's income level). Further research should be undertaken to understand what laws, policies, and budget decisions have enabled these countries to make their resources stretch further to lead to stronger gender equality than might be expected.

For example, Slovenia achieves a higher index score than Ireland and Switzerland even though it has just half the national income per capita. Amongst middle-income countries, Viet Nam and Kyrgyzstan score higher than expected despite national income levels that are only a fraction of those in Malaysia and Russia, respectively.

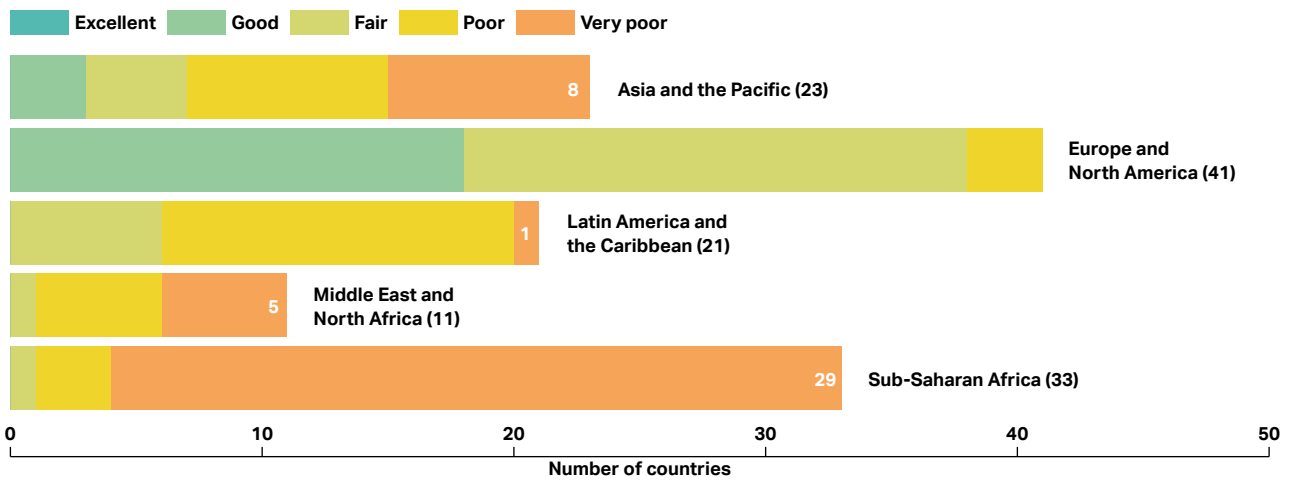
On the other hand, other countries – such as Botswana, Iraq, Malaysia, Russia, South Korea, Switzerland, Turkey, the United States, amongst others – have gender equality scores that are lower than expected (those that fall above the line in Figure 5 can be considered to have lower gender equality than would be predicted by the country's income level). There is a clear agenda for advocates to encourage those countries "above the line" to better convert their resources into the policies, laws, and budget decisions that will lead to greater gender equality.

A key advantage of the SDG Gender Index is that it allows a country's overall index score to be looked at on a goal-by-goal basis. This kind of analysis can help to identify what might be driving the countries that "buck the trend", either by having higher or lower gender equality than might be expected based on their income level.

All countries need to improve on some aspects of gender equality

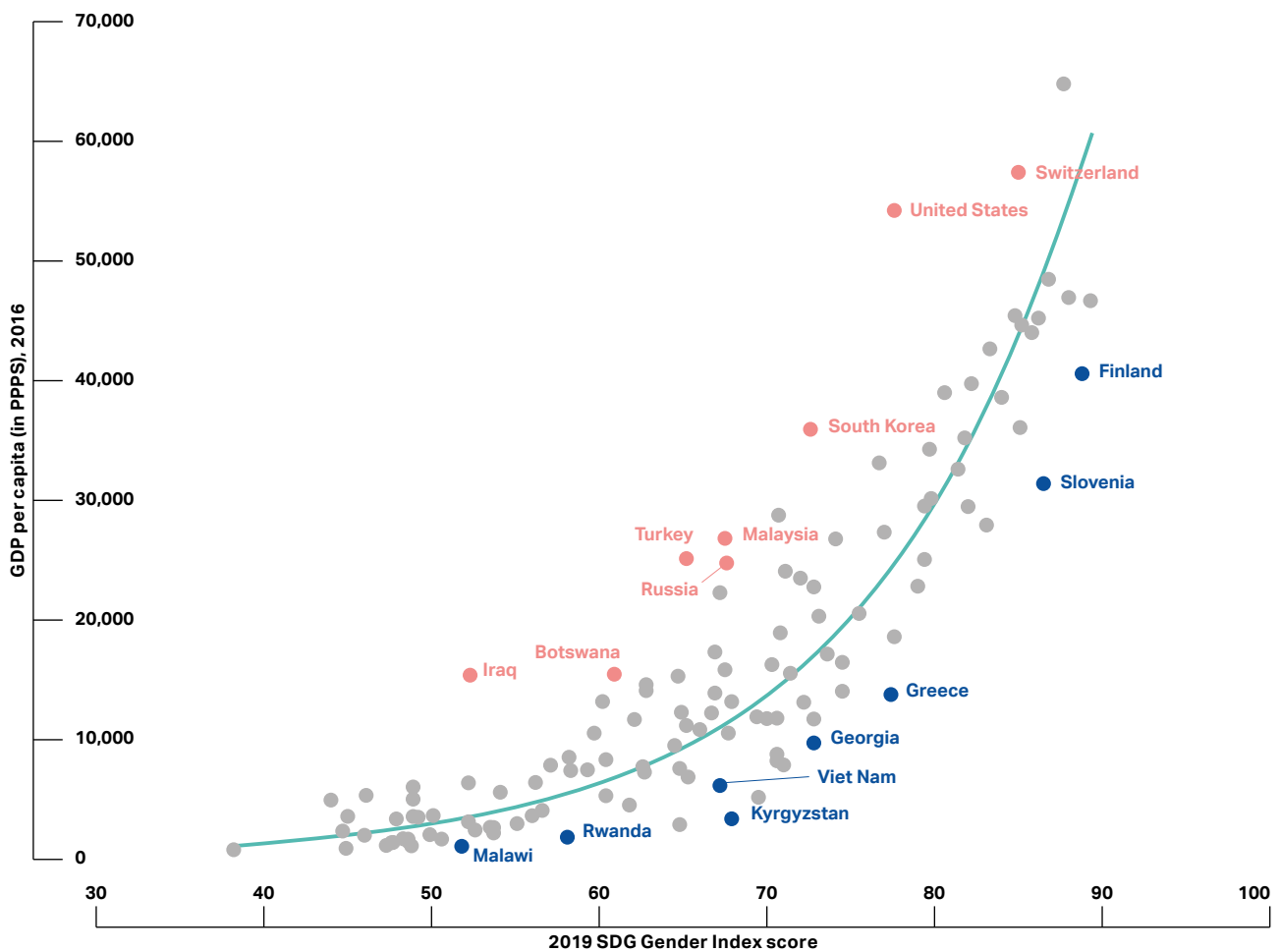
Digging deeper into overall country gender equality scores to look across goals – and even down to the individual issues and indicators – it is apparent that no one country is the world's best performer, or even among the world's top ten performers, across all goals or all indicators.¹⁰ By sorting the index rankings for individual SDGs, the top countries can

Figure 4 Number of countries by 2019 SDG Gender Index score grouping



Source: Equal Measures 2030, 2019

Figure 5 2019 SDG Gender Index scores and national per capita income



Sources: Equal Measures 2030, 2019 and World Bank, 2018

change significantly from the overall rankings (to see the numeric index scores by SDG, see the Gender Advocates Data Hub www.data.em2030.org).

Denmark, for example, is the index' top overall performer but drops to 14th place on SDG 4: Education, behind countries such as Georgia, Ireland, Japan, Kazakhstan, Lithuania, and Slovenia.

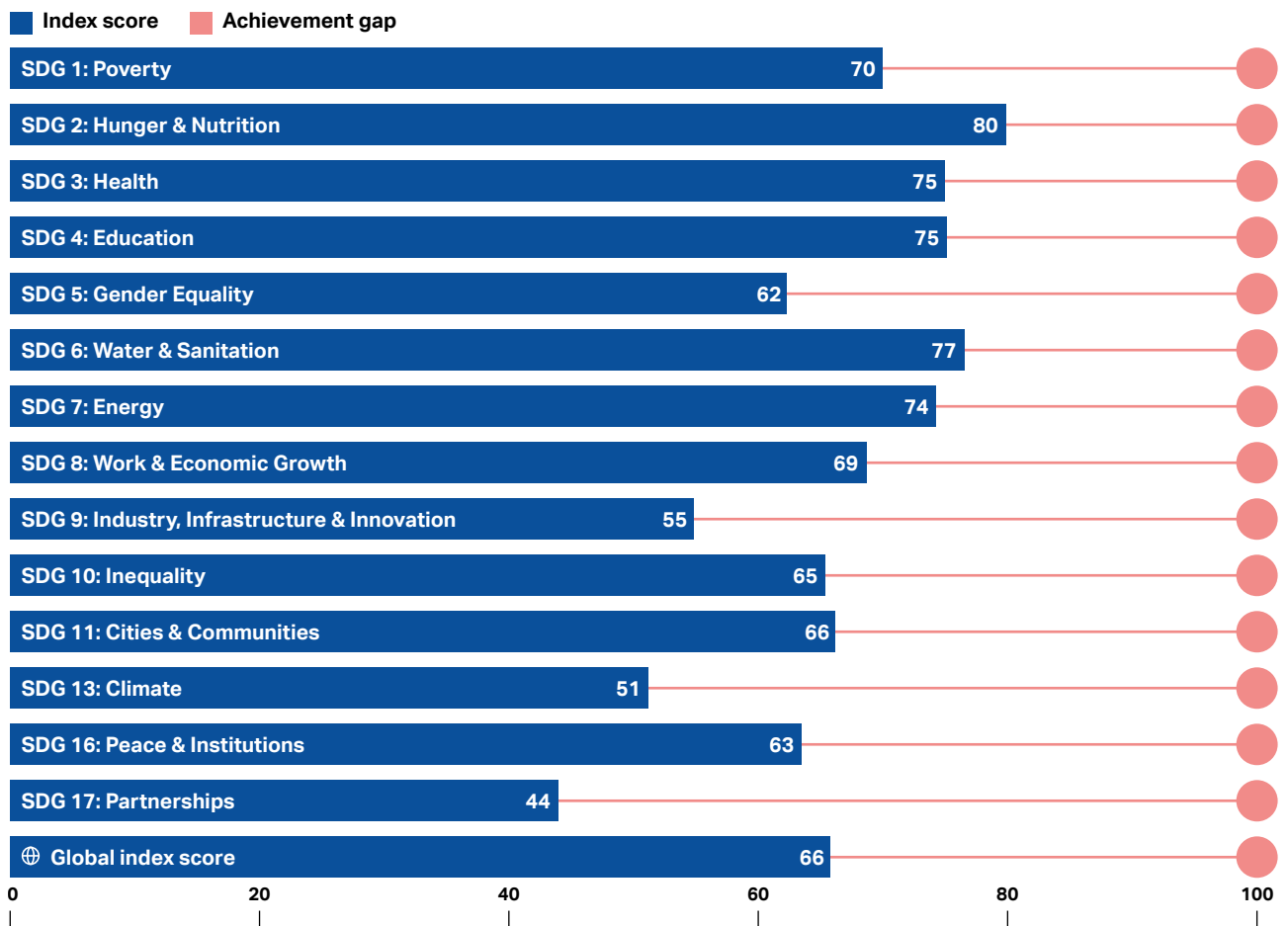
This is partly driven by the fact that Denmark has a lower percentage of young women who have completed secondary school and lower literacy rates amongst women than many of the other 13 countries that score higher on SDG 4: Education.

Most of the top scoring countries have "poor" or even "very poor" scores on at least one of the



Photo: Plan International, G. Van Buggenhout

Figure 6 2019 SDG Gender Index scores by goal, global averages



Source: Equal Measures 2030, 2019

Box 5 Areas for improvement for the 20 top scoring countries

These indicators have some of the lowest scores for the 20 top scoring countries (starting with the lowest average score for the top 20 countries). The low scores suggest that even the countries with high overall scores for gender equality are struggling with thorny issues such as climate change, gender budgeting and public services, equal representation in powerful positions, gender pay gaps, and gender-based violence.

- 13b:** Extent to which a country is committed to disaster risk reduction
- 17b:** Tax revenue as a % of GDP
- 17d:** Openness of gender statistics
- 8a:** Wage equality between women and men for similar work
- 16c:** Percentage of seats held by women on a country's Supreme Court or highest court
- 13c:** Level of climate vulnerability
- 5d:** Proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments
- 9d:** Proportion of women in science and technology research positions
- 9b:** Proportion of women who report being satisfied with the quality of roads in the city or area where they live
- 17a:** Social expenditure as a % of GDP
- 17c:** Extent to which a national budget is broken down by factors such as gender, age, income, or region
- 5e:** Proportion of ministerial/senior government positions held by women
- 11c:** Percentage of women aged 15+ who report that they "feel safe walking alone at night in the city or area where you live"

14 goals covered by the index. This suggests that every country in the world, even high-income countries, can improve their laws, policies, or public budget decisions to reach gender equality by 2030. Thorny issues such as climate change, gender budgeting and public services, equal representation in public institutions, gender pay gaps, and gender-based violence continue to remain challenges, even for the countries that score highly on gender equality overall (see Box 5 on p. 19).

Countries with far fewer resources are still tackling key gender inequalities

On the other hand, examples of progress and compelling success stories can be found even among the regions and countries performing less well on the index overall.

For example, the majority of the top scoring countries on the indicators related to women's participation in government and the judiciary are in the Latin America and the Caribbean, and Sub-Saharan Africa regions (see Figure 14 on p. 33 and Thematic deep dive on p. 42). Bolivia, Namibia, and Senegal (and over a dozen other countries in the index) have higher percentages of women in parliament than Denmark, the top scoring country in the index overall.

Several lower income countries perform well on indicators that capture women's perceptions of safety when walking in their area alone at night: Rwanda, for example, has the fifth highest score globally on this indicator, with higher scores than Norway, Slovenia, Switzerland, and Tajikistan. The highest proportions of women who felt unsafe walking at night were in Brazil, South Africa, and Venezuela (see Thematic deep dive on p. 33 for an in-depth exploration of women's physical safety in Latin America and the Caribbean).

The issue of access to family planning is captured by Indicator 3c: *the proportion of women who indicate that they have had their need for family planning satisfied with modern methods*. Here, Brazil, China, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Thailand, and Uruguay come in the top ten scores for this indicator, ahead of much higher income countries like Canada, Denmark, Netherlands, Norway, and Sweden (though all receive "good" or "excellent" scores on the indicator).

Other bright spots for low- and middle-income countries include digital banking: Kenya, for example, has higher rates of women who use digital banking services than three quarters of the world's countries.

And on the openness of government budgets: the 20 countries with the lowest overall index scores, for example, perform better than the top 20 countries on the indicator that measures the extent to which a national budget is broken down by factors such as gender, age, income, or region.

Global patterns in goal scores

Overall the index finds the world is furthest behind on gender equality issues related to public finance and better gender data (SDG 17), climate change (SDG 13), gender equality in industry and innovation (SDG 9), and worryingly, the standalone gender equality goal (SDG 5) (see Figure 6 on p. 18 and Box 6 on p. 20).

The global picture on key issues that cut across SDGs

In 2018, EM2030 surveyed gender equality advocates globally, asking about the issues they prioritize in their advocacy and how they use data and evidence. The three issues that emerged

Box 6 SDG 5: Gender Equality is among the goals furthest from being achieved

The finding that SDG 5: Gender Equality is one of the goals with the lowest overall scores is important to unpack. Sixty countries have a “failing grade” on this goal, with a “very poor” score of 59 or lower, and another 24 countries “barely pass” with a score between 60 and 69. Comparing the average SDG 5 score with the issues that have much higher average scores indicates that, while countries are generally doing better on key development issues that impact girls’ and women’s wellbeing (for example, strides made to combat maternal mortality and improve girls’ primary school enrolment during the Millennium Development Goal era), progress has not necessarily translated to other measures of gender equality.

The indicators within SDG 5 that most drag down the average scores relate to political representation – both the indicator on percentage of parliamentary seats held by women and the indicator on percentage of ministerial/ senior government positions held by women. Poor representation of women in government is a rights issue and has detrimental effects on society, meaning we all lose from missing the perspectives and experiences of half the population in powerful decision-making bodies.

The SDG 5 results also show that abortion laws remain highly restricted in a large number of countries around the world, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia and the Pacific, and the Middle East and North Africa (with Ireland the only country from Europe and North America grouped amongst the countries with the most restrictive legal framework for abortion in the world; a score that will change in the next iteration of the SDG Gender Index due the 2018 repeal of its abortion ban).¹

And in an era when advanced technologies are increasingly changing the world we live in, global patterns in the index scores also suggest critical weaknesses in gender equality issues related to equitable access to the internet, parity in science and technology fields, and women’s engagement in the digital economy, as well as girls’ and women’s vulnerability to climate change and gender gaps in public finance and national budgeting.

¹ Indicator 5c scores capture a set of dimensions of legal grounds of abortion, including abortion without restriction to reason, to save a woman’s life, to preserve health, socioeconomic grounds, mental health grounds, and in the case of rape.

at the top of the priority list for advocates were gender-based violence, sexual and reproductive health and rights, and economic empowerment (including land and financial inclusion). All are issues that cut across several SDGs, so require additional examination.

Gender-based violence

Gender-based violence was identified as the issue that gender equality advocates were most likely to prioritise in their advocacy work in the 2018 EM2030 Gender Advocates Survey. Gender-based violence is an issue that is found across several official SDGs and thus across the 2019 SDG

Gender Index – it is an area where the availability of comparable data is limited, but improving.

Global estimates by the World Health Organization indicate that on average more than one in three women (35 percent) have experienced some form of violence in their lifetime.¹¹ The 2019 SDG Gender Index includes four indicators

that directly relate to gender-based violence: *the child, early, and forced marriage rate for girls under 18 years of age*; *discriminatory social norms measured by the percentage of women who agree that a husband/partner is justified in beating his wife/partner under certain circumstances*; *women’s perceptions of their personal safety (the percentage of women aged 15+ years who reported that they “feel safe walking alone at night in the city or area where you live”)*; and *female victims of intentional homicide*.

While Latin America and the Caribbean has the second highest regional score on the index, it falls far short of the global average on the indicators on women’s physical safety, including female victims of intentional homicide, with the region scoring nearly 30 points lower than the average score for the other four regions. Latin America and the Caribbean also scores nearly 20 points lower than an already-low average across the other four regions on women’s perceptions of their safety walking alone in their area at night (see Thematic deep dive on p. 33 for details on gender-based violence in Latin America and the Caribbean). Of the four violence-related indicators in the index, the issue of whether women feel safe walking alone at night is the most challenging,

The 2019 SDG Gender Index includes four indicators that directly relate to gender-based violence

Box 7 Common areas for improvement globally

Globally, these indicators have some of the lowest scores in the index (ordered starting with the lowest average score below). The low scores suggest common difficulties in addressing gender equality in several areas: social expenditure, climate change and disaster risk reduction, open data, women's political participation and ability to rise to the highest offices, taxation, good governance, women's inclusion in the digital economy and on the internet, and social assistance for the poorest people.

- 17a:** Social expenditure as a % of GDP (for all types of social assistance programmes)
- 13 b:** Extent to which a state is committed to disaster risk reduction
- 17d:** Openness of gender statistics
- 5e:** Proportion of ministerial/senior government positions held by women
- 17b:** Tax revenue as a % of GDP
- 16d:** Extent to which a state is viewed as legitimate, open, and representative
- 5d:** Proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments
- 16c:** Percentage of seats held by women on a country's Supreme Court or highest court
- 9a:** Proportion of women who have made or received digital payments in the past year
- 9c:** Proportion of women with access to internet service
- 1b:** Proportion of the poorest quintile of the population covered by social assistance programs

based on a global average: overall, countries are only just over halfway (54.7) to the target of every woman feeling safe.

Sexual and reproductive health and rights

Sexual and reproductive health and rights was the second highest priority issue for gender equality advocates in the 2018 EM2030 Gender

Advocates Survey. The average global score on SDG 3: Health (global score of 75.0) is relatively strong compared to other goals, but masks significant regional differences (Sub-Saharan Africa has a "failing" score of 48.9, while all other regions combined have an average score of 82.7) and shortcomings on indicators. Scores on Indicator 3c:

Proportion of women married or in a union of reproductive age (aged 15–49 years) who have had their need for family planning satisfied with modern methods, for example, are far from the target, even in Europe and North America (regional average score of 70.8): in Albania, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, FYR Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia, less than 40 percent of women were able to adequately access family planning services.

Economic empowerment, land, and financial inclusion

This broad agenda emerged as the third most common priority area for gender advocates in the 2018 EM2030 Gender Advocates Survey. Economic empowerment, land, and financial inclusion issues are found woven into at least 10 of the 14 SDGs in the index and are directly linked with at least 29 of the 51 indicators.

As with all other issue areas, crucial data gaps impede the measurement of the women's economic empowerment agenda. One major gap is in the lack of globally comparable data on women's paid and unpaid care burden. There are also few data on the intra-household allocation of resources (many of the index indicators, due to standard data collection methods, reflect households rather than individuals), and there is a lack of data that reflect women's real income and tax burden.

Crucial to the fulfilment of women's economic rights – and virtually all other human rights – is the mobilization of resources for public services.¹² Cuts to services such as health, education, social services, and social protection are especially damaging for women. Yet Goal 17: Partnerships (global score of 44.0) is the lowest scoring goal in the index. Across all regions, low goal scores are driven down in large part by failing scores on Indicator 17a: *Social expenditure as a % of GDP*, the lowest scoring indicator in the whole index. The benchmark for this indicator is set high, by countries like Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, and Italy, but drops off sharply after the top ten or so countries.

The impact of concerted global effort on key gender equality issues

While it is clear that several issues in the index are lagging critically behind where we would hope them to be in order to achieve the targets by 2030 – and further work is needed on all of the issues in the index – the index also presents a hopeful message about the power of international efforts and public investment. Countries, overall, have performed best on issues where coordinated and concerted policy focus and funding have been directed over the past 20 years, including on SDG 2: Hunger & Nutrition, SDG 6: Water & Sanitation, SDG 3: Health, and SDG 4: Education.

The index also presents a hopeful message about the power of international efforts and public investment

5

REGIONAL OVERVIEWS



Asia and the Pacific



Key findings from the Asia and the Pacific region

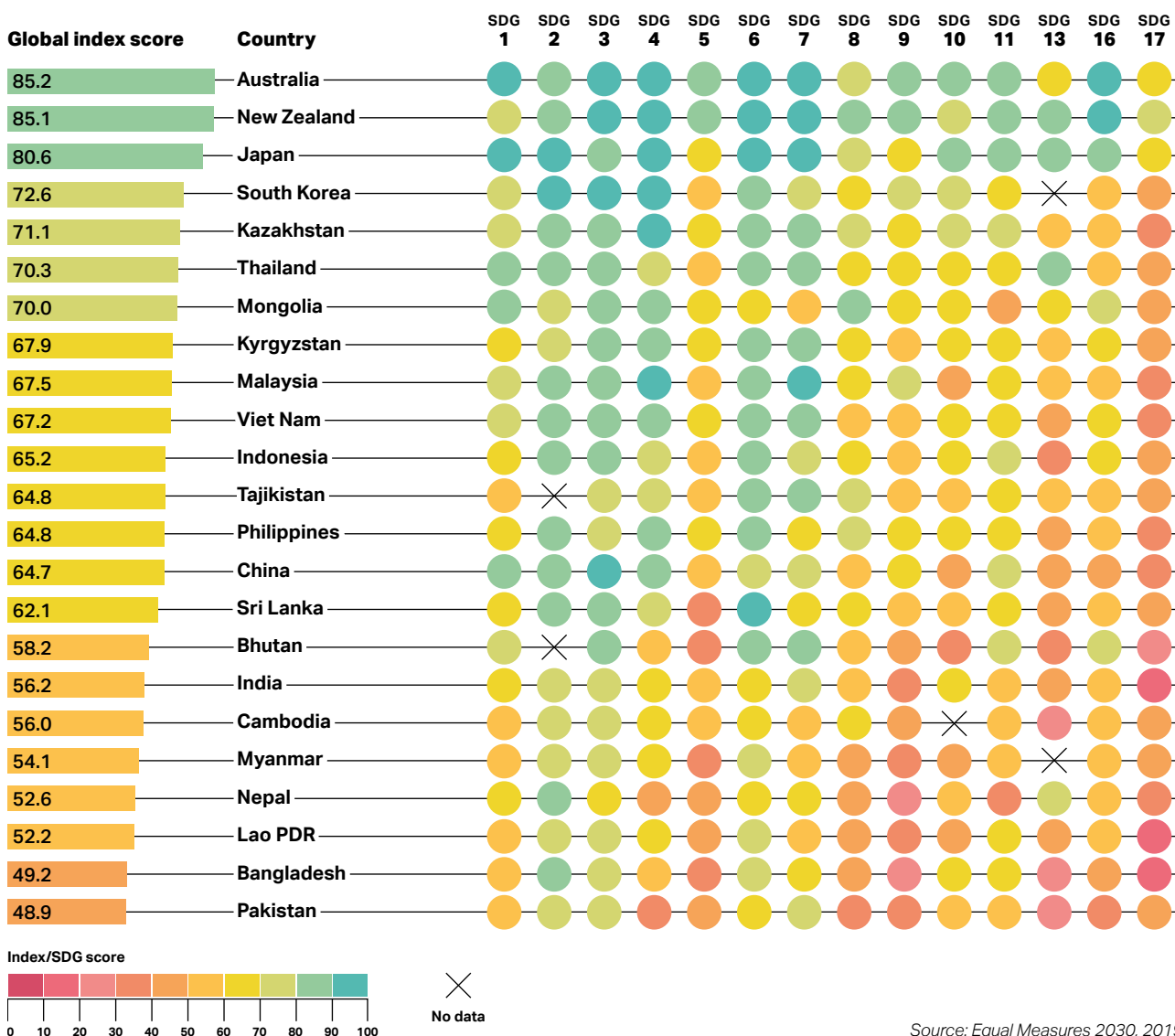
With an average regional index score of 64.6, the Asia and the Pacific region falls right in the middle of the five regions covered by the 2019 SDG Gender Index. The region is home to three of the overall index' top 25 performers – Australia, Japan, and New Zealand – but no other countries in the region cross into “good” overall index scores. The difference between the highest ranked and lowest ranked countries in the region (Australia and Pakistan) is 36 points – the second largest gap within any region in the world. No country in the region comes within 14 points of gender equality as measured by the index,

and a significant gap separates the region's top two performers (Australia and New Zealand) from Japan (in 3rd place), with another 8 points separating Japan from South Korea (in 4th place).

More than in any other region, the goal-by-goal average scores for Asia and the Pacific track closely with global averages: the region is no more than 7 points away from the global average on any goal score. The region outperforms the global average on SDG 2: Hunger & Nutrition, SDG 3: Health, and SDG 6: Water & Sanitation and falls a bit behind global averages across SDG 5: Gender Equality, SDG 8: Work & Economic Growth, SDG 10: Inequality, SDG 16: Peace & Institutions, and SDG 17: Partnerships.

The goals the region does well on relative to other regions nonetheless show interesting variation among countries at the indicator level. On SDG 2: Hunger & Nutrition, for example, the region does better than the global average – ranking second out of the five regions – in large part because of lower rates of obesity among

Figure 7 2019 SDG Gender Index scores and rankings by country – Asia and the Pacific



Source: Equal Measures 2030, 2019

Box 8 Top and bottom performers

Australia: 85.2
 New Zealand: 85.1
 Japan: 80.6
 Lao PDR: 52.2
 Bangladesh: 49.2
 Pakistan: 48.9

women in Asia than in Europe and North America, the Middle East, and Latin America and the Caribbean, and lower anaemia rates than in Sub-Saharan Africa or the Middle East and North Africa. Even Australia and New Zealand, the region's two countries with the highest rates of obesity among women, still have lower rates of obesity than the lowest performer on the indicator in any

other region. Obesity patterns fall into some geographical differences within the region, with Kazakhstan, Mongolia, and Tajikistan all scoring worse on the obesity indicator than on the overall index – the three countries have all seen significant increases in overweight and obesity since the 1990s, with more than half of adults, and significantly more women than men, in each country overweight or obese.¹³

A number of countries in Asia and the Pacific that fall into the bottom quartile of overall scores in the index perform unusually well on some goals, and vice versa. For example, Nepal, one of the lowest scoring countries in the region, is one of the top three performers on SDG 13: Climate, due to better commitment to disaster risk reduction compared to regional neighbours and relatively

good gender balance on its UNFCCC delegation. Mongolia is the region's lowest or second lowest scorer on SDG 6: Water & Sanitation, SDG 7: Energy, and SDG 11: Cities & Communities, but its overall score was pulled up enough by stronger performance on other goals to land in 7th place overall in the region.

The region is also characterized by dramatically wide intra-regional gaps on several goals, in particular SDG 4: Education (more than 62-point gap between top and bottom countries), SDG 9: Industry, Infrastructure & Innovation (57-point gap), SDG 13: Climate (64-point gap), SDG 16: Peace & Institutions (61-point gap) and SDG 17: Partnerships (63-point gap). On SDG 4: Education, for example, the six top scoring countries in the region on the index score over 90, while Pakistan is the lowest scoring country on this goal due to low rates of girls who have completed secondary education and relatively low rates of female literacy (see Thematic deep dive on p. 25).

With an average regional index score of 64.6, the Asia and the Pacific region falls right in the middle of the five regions covered by the SDG Gender Index



Photo: Plan International



Photo: Jessica Lomelin, Equal Measures 2030

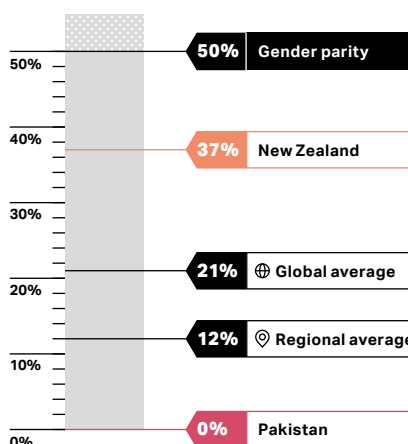
Box 9 Asia and the Pacific indicator spotlight

5e: Proportion of ministerial/senior government positions held by women

While several Asian countries have elected female heads of government in recent years – including New Zealand, South Korea, Taiwan, and Thailand – the region is the second worst performer globally on the measure of women’s ability to rise to the top ranks of national governments. Only three countries in the region are more than halfway toward the target of full gender parity in ministries or senior government positions (Indonesia, New Zealand, and Philippines).

13b: Extent to which a state is committed to disaster risk reduction (score) The Sendai Framework, which outlines clear targets and priorities to prevent new and reduce existing disaster risks, recognizes the differential impact of disasters on men and women, and boys and girls. The Asia and the Pacific region performs better on this indicator than any other region in the world, and six countries have fully met the index target, but the regional indicator score is nonetheless a “very poor” or failing score.

Figure 8 Proportion (%) of ministerial/senior government positions held by women, 2017



Source: *Equal Measures 2030, 2019* based on *Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2018*



Thematic deep dive: persistent inequalities in girls’ education

The Asia and the Pacific region has rallied around the goal of achieving universal education with a focus on ensuring that no one is left behind, including girls and those who face economic, cultural, and other disadvantages. The life-cycle approach of the education indicators in the index – tracking key transition points in girls’ education from primary and secondary education to post-schooling labour market status and literacy skills – provides insights into girls’ schooling trajectories in the region.

Girls’ access to education varies across Asia and the Pacific. One of the sub-regions facing persistent challenges in gender equality in education is South Asia, particularly Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan. In 2018, the number of primary and secondary school-age girls was 186.2 million in the three countries, representing 52 percent of girls in the entire Asia and the Pacific region.¹⁴

New policies have improved parity in primary education, but inequalities still persist at higher levels of schooling. India broadened access through accelerated learning programmes that provided basic skills and primary education qualifications to adolescent girls.¹⁵ School stipends in Bangladesh have supported girls to make the transition to secondary education.¹⁶

Pakistan lags behind: the National Education Policy Plan for 2017–2025 even sets different target years for universalizing primary education (2020 for boys and 2025 for girls).¹⁷

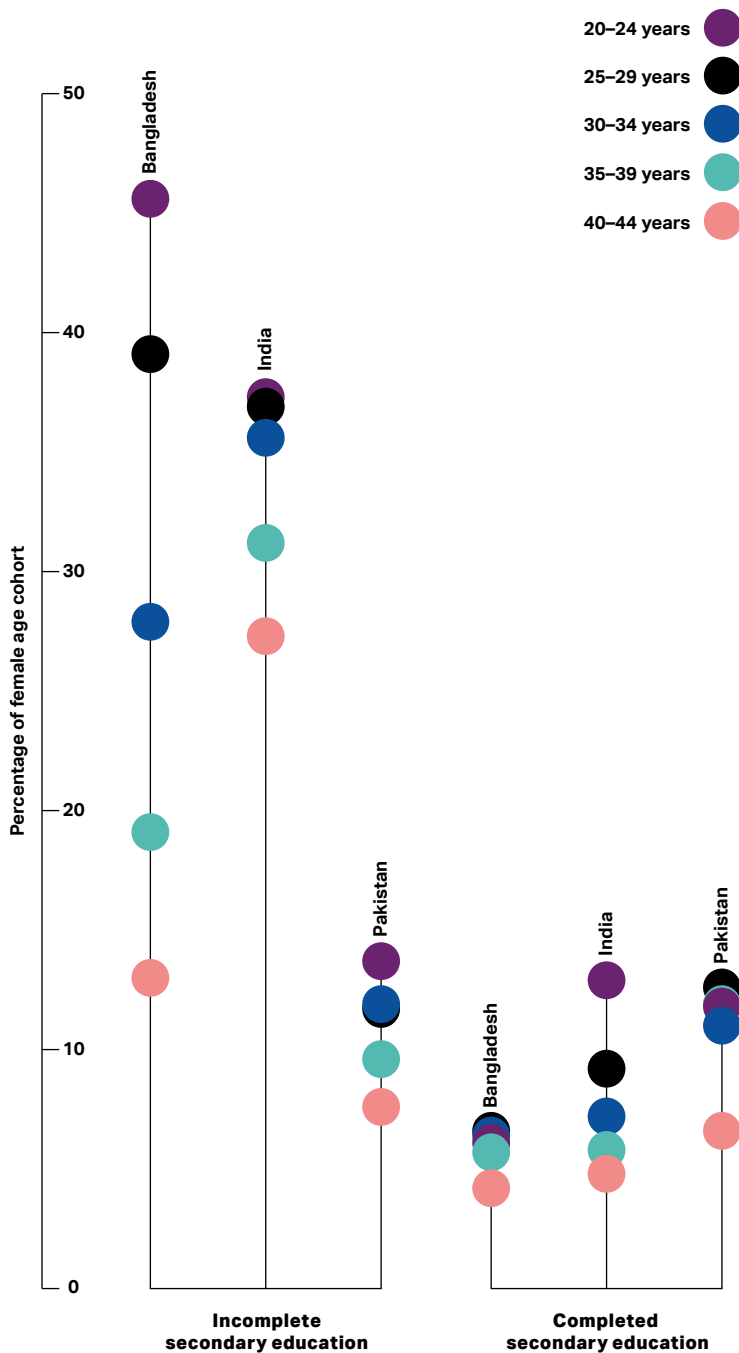
There has been steady improvement in the share of women with some secondary education in Bangladesh (where half of 15–19 year-olds were in secondary education compared to less than one in five of women aged 35 years and older) and more recently in India, where almost 70 percent of 15–19 year-olds were in

secondary education compared to less than 40 percent of those in the 20–24 year age group (see Figure 9 on p. 26). However, persistent gender disparities are evident if we look at those who actually complete secondary education. The same surveys show that there has been almost no progress in the last 15–20 years, despite the fact that child marriage rates have halved over the same period.¹⁸

If the goal is universal secondary education, then there is still a very long way to go in these three countries. The aspirations for universal secondary education seem unachievable without addressing the learning crisis. Citizen-led data collections in India and Pakistan show that rural girls are losing out on basic skills: according to the Annual Status of Education Report's (ASER) assessment of basic math skills of 14–16 year-olds in India, 44 percent of girls can do division compared to 50 percent of boys.¹⁹ ASER data in Pakistan underscores the role that poverty plays in compounding challenges to girls' educational opportunities: only 15 percent of the poorest rural girls aged 5–16 years were able to read a story in Urdu compared to 42 percent of girls from the richest households.

This learning crisis in South Asia holds back progress not only on secondary education, but also in young people's transition to work. In India, amongst the 15–24 year-old age group in 2012, about 8 percent of boys were not in employment, education or training (NEET), compared to 49 percent of girls. In Pakistan about 7 percent of boys were NEET but the rate was almost eight times as high amongst girls (54 percent) in 2015. While data show that the barriers to primary education have weakened in the region, they remain persistent regarding girls' ability to complete secondary education, undermining girls' rights and critically harming their success in the labour market.

Figure 9 Secondary education attainment among women by age group in Bangladesh, India and Pakistan, 2014–18



New policies in the region have improved parity in primary education, but inequalities still persist at higher levels of schooling

Source: Equal Measures 2030, 2019 based on ICF, 2019. The DHS Program STATcompiler [Accessed April 2019]

Europe and North America



Key findings from the Europe and North America region

With an average regional index score of 79.1, the Europe and North America region tops the 2019 SDG Gender Index.²⁰ The region is home to nine of the top ten performing countries covered by the index and 18 countries in the region achieve “good” overall scores on the index. Of the five regions covered by the index, Europe and North America is the only one without any country with a “very poor” overall score on the index.

Yet significant differences exist between countries in the Europe and North America region in terms of overall scores on the index and, even more pronounced, performance

across certain goals and indicators (see Box 11 on p. 30). The difference in overall index scores between the highest ranked (Denmark)

and lowest ranked (Azerbaijan) countries in the region is 22 points. Some geographic patterns emerge in scores: Eastern European countries on average perform worse across most goals than other countries in the region, with Baltic States performing significantly better than Balkan States. Notable outliers or surprise stories in the region include Slovenia, which places 6th overall in the index, Russia (59th), and the United States (28th), which has its overall score driven down by poor performance on indicators related to poverty, women’s participation in the economy, and inequality, landing it far further down in overall index scores than neighbouring Canada (8th).

In general, the region is characterized by particularly good performance on SDG 1: Poverty, SDG 3: Health, SDG 4: Education, SDG 6: Water & Sanitation, and SDG 7: Energy. The regional averages on SDG 5: Gender Equality and SDG 9: Industry, Infrastructure & Innovation are good relative to other regions. However, the scores leave room for improvement: on average, the region is farthest from meeting the index targets for SDG 13: Climate (58.0, “very poor”) and SDG 17: Partnerships (52.8, “very poor”). This is driven in large part by the low scores across the region on indicators measuring the extent to which states are committed to disaster risk reduction through the Sendai Framework, and government spending on social assistance.

Though many countries in Europe and North America have very high scores on individual

Box 10 Top and bottom performers

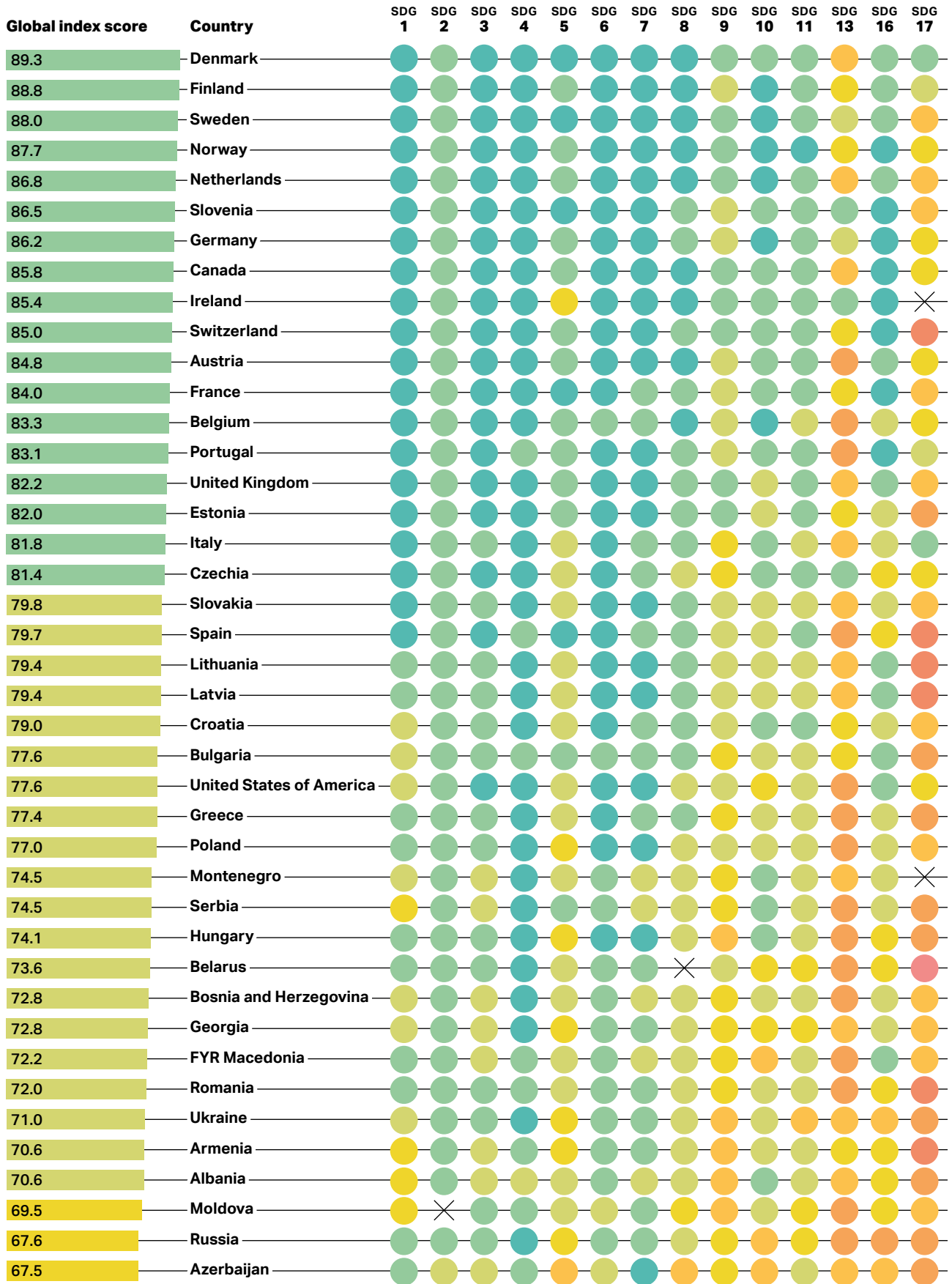
Denmark: 89.3
Finland: 88.8
Sweden: 88.0

Moldova: 69.5
Russia: 67.6
Azerbaijan: 67.5

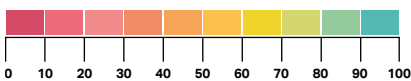


Photo: Getty Images

Figure 10 2019 SDG Gender Index scores and rankings by country – Europe and North America



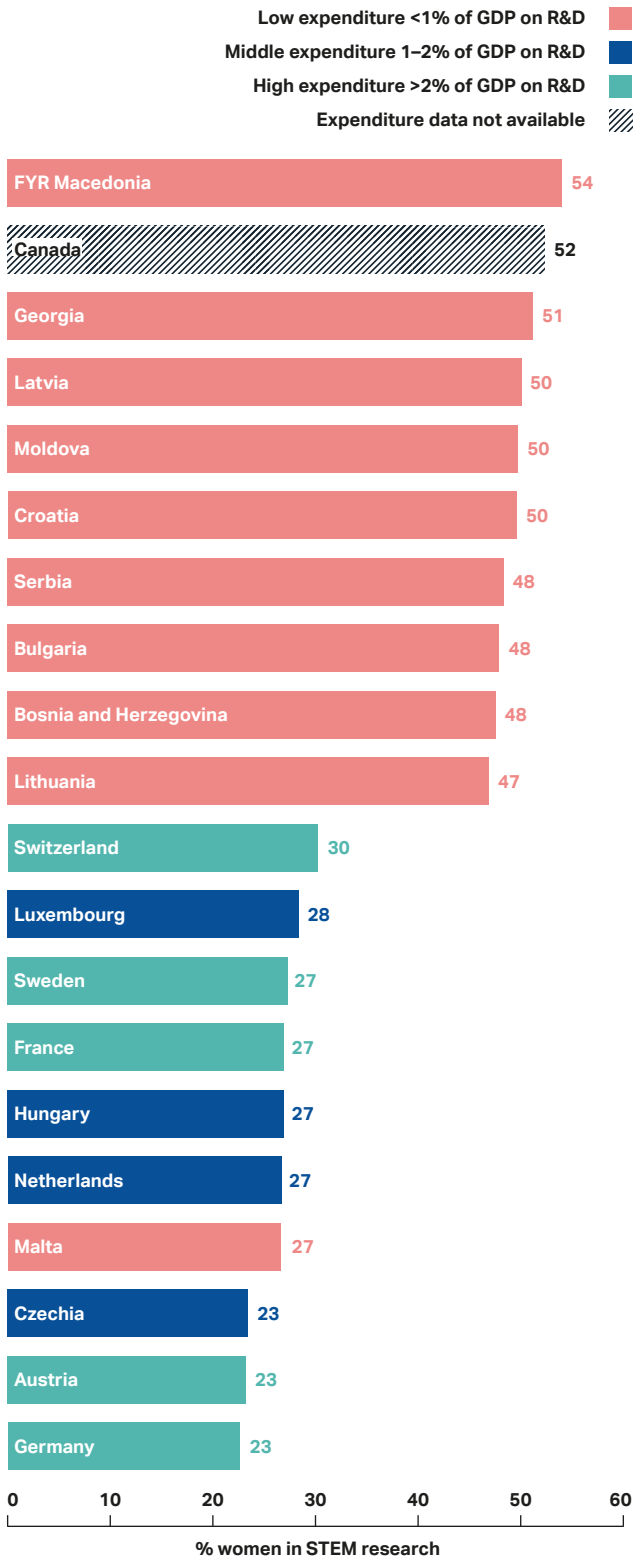
Index/SDG score



✕ No data

indicators, no country scores perfectly on all indicators under any goal. Every country in the region has its own mix and depth of challenges to address, demonstrating the universal relevance of the 2019 SDG Gender Index for developed and developing nations alike.

Figure 11 Women in STEM research and expenditure on STEM research in Europe and North America, 2016



Source: Equal Measures 2030, 2019 based on Eurostat, 2016

Thematic deep dive: women in science and technology research positions

As the world transitions to an economy that is increasingly driven by advanced technologies, closing the global gender gap in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) education, research, and work is crucial to empowering women and addressing the shortage of qualified workers in these fields in many countries. One critical measure of how countries are incorporating concerns about gender equality in the new economy is an examination of how governments support girls' STEM education and entry into research roles, many of which are funded by national budgets.

Indicator 9d: *Proportion of women in science and technology research positions* shows interesting variation within Europe and North America that does not track with income level, level of overall investment in science and technology research, or performance on the overall index (see Figure 11 on p. 29). Seventeen countries in Europe and North America are less than three-quarters of the way to parity. Eight countries in the region are close to full parity between men and women in science and technology research positions, which is a lower proportion of countries close to reaching full parity than in Asia and the Pacific or Latin America and the Caribbean. Countries that have reached or nearly reached parity include Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Georgia, Latvia and Moldova (one of the region's lowest performing countries overall). In fact, on this indicator, the average score of the region's bottom ten overall performers on the index is better than that of the top ten overall performers. Many Eastern European countries – and Balkan states, in particular – perform well. Two of the eight highest ranked countries globally in terms of female STEM researchers are located in Eastern Europe.

The ten lowest regional performers on the indicator include many nations that are considered global powerhouses of engineering and technology, but that risk not capturing half their populations' potential in their STEM talent pools. Austria, Czechia, and Germany are all less than halfway to parity despite the fact that Austria and Germany have high expenditure on R&D (see Figure 11 on p. 29). A number of factors related to education, workplace development, wages, and government investment explain this pattern. Germany, for example, which has the largest technology-based economy in the region other than the United Kingdom, has a relatively low rate of female STEM graduates compared to other countries in the region, has one of the steepest rates of women dropping from full-time into part-time work or out of the economy, and has the largest gender pay gap in technology jobs on the continent, with market research showing that male technology workers earn almost €15,000 more per year than their female counterparts.²¹

Box 11 Europe and North America indicator spotlight

1b: Proportion of the poorest quintile of the population covered by social assistance programmes Social assistance programmes can provide economic lifelines for women and are particularly critical for marginalized groups. Yet, while Europe and North America has the highest regional score on this indicator, with 18 countries fully meeting the target of 100 percent coverage, the United States and most Eastern European countries have coverage rates around or worse than the global average.

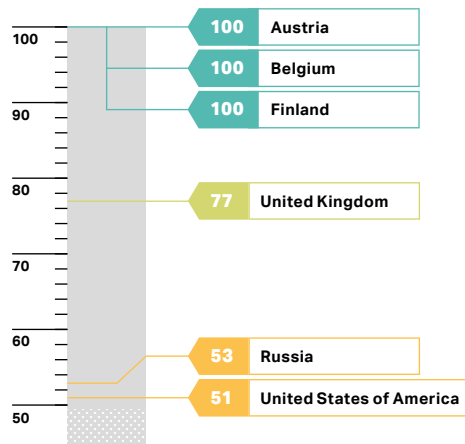
3c: Proportion of women married or in a union of reproductive age (aged 15–49 years) who have had their need for family planning satisfied with modern methods Modern methods of family planning enable girls and women to make choices about their own bodies, avoid unwanted or dangerous pregnancies, and space out births. The region has significant room for improvement on this indicator – it fares worse on average than Latin America and the Caribbean, no country in the region meets the 100 percent target, and nearly half fall under 75 percent.

8c: Extent of freedom of association and collective bargaining rights in law (score)

Women constitute the largest number of workers in precarious employment in both the developed and developing world, and collective bargaining, though relatively under-researched, can be critical to nondiscrimination in the workplace, equal pay for

work of equal value, and parental leave rights. Many top scoring countries overall on the 2019 SDG Gender Index have strong collective bargaining rights, but several countries in Europe and North America fall far behind: the United States and Russia are regional outliers for their low scores, and several countries that score in the top quartile on the overall index also have gaps, including Bulgaria, Czechia, and the United Kingdom.

Figure 12 Extent of freedom of association and collective bargaining rights in law (score), 2016



Source: *Equal Measures 2030, 2019* based on *Center for Global Workers' Rights, 2016*



Photo: Nina Robinson, The Verbatim Agency, Getty Images

Latin America and the Caribbean



Key findings from the Latin America and the Caribbean region

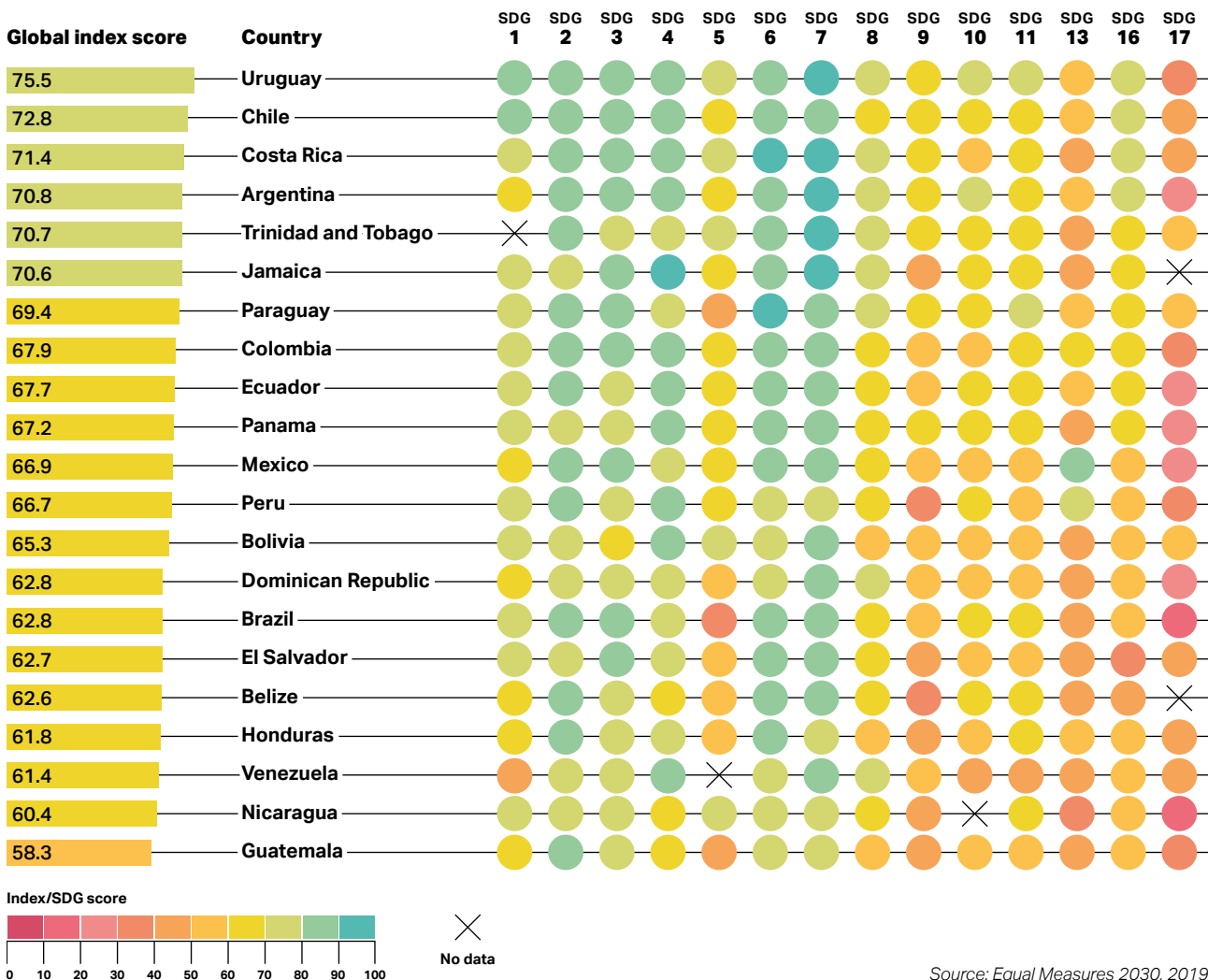
With an average regional index score of 66.5, Latin America and the Caribbean is the second-highest ranking region overall in the 2019 SDG Gender Index. The region's best performing countries – Chile, Costa Rica, and Uruguay – all place in the top 50 countries in the index and, along with Argentina, Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago, receive “fair” scores overall in the index. Fourteen countries receive “poor” scores and one (Guatemala) receives a “very poor” score overall. Yet Latin America and the Caribbean joins Europe and North America as the only two regions with no country falling into the bottom quartile of overall scores in the index.

The region is characterized by its tight clustering of countries overall in the index scores, as well as on

most goals – the region has fewer dramatic outliers in either direction than do other regions. The difference in overall index scores between the highest ranked (Uruguay) and lowest ranked (Guatemala) countries in the region is 17 points, the smallest gap of any region. And there is no more than a 49-point gap between any two countries in the region on any goal (the only region where this is the case). Moreover, no country in the region is in the bottom-three performing countries worldwide on any goal. The only indicator on which a Latin American country falls to the very bottom of global rankings is on violence against women (see Thematic deep dive on p. 33).

As a region, Latin America and the Caribbean performs best, relative to other regions and in terms of closeness to achieving targets, on SDG 2: Hunger & Nutrition, SDG 3: Health, SDG 6: Water & Sanitation, and SDG 7: Energy. The region falls behind the global averages for SDG 10: Inequality, SDG 11: Cities & Communities, SDG 16: Peace & Institutions and SDG 17: Partnerships. While all regions fall dramatically behind targets on SDG 17: Partnerships, Latin America and the Caribbean is the lowest scoring region on the goal, with countries

Figure 13 2019 SDG Gender Index scores and rankings by country – Latin America and the Caribbean



Source: Equal Measures 2030, 2019



Photo: Jessica Lomelin, Equal Measures 2030

facing many challenges meeting targets for social expenditure as a percentage of GDP and openness of gender statistics.

Some patterns emerge in scores: countries with the lowest scores overall in the region (Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Venezuela)

have all experienced civil conflict or significant political unrest in the past 30 years. Interestingly, Colombia performs better than other post-conflict or conflict-affected countries (see Box 4 on p. 16 for more on index scores in conflict-affected countries) and ranks 8th in the region on SDG 16: Peace & Institutions – though the regional average for the indicator is still “very poor,” signalling significant work

left to be done to improve institutions and ensure women’s safety in Colombia and across the region. All countries at the bottom of the regional rankings do poorly (less than one third of the way toward a target) on one or more indicator related to violence or women’s physical safety, be it safety walking at night, perceptions of intimate partner violence, homicides of women, or state stability.

No country in the region performs best on all goals. Performances vary within the region on SDG 4: Education, SDG 5: Gender Equality, and SDG 16: Peace & Institutions (see Thematic deep dive on p. 33). On SDG 4: Education, for example, nearly all countries in the region are within ten points of the target for female literacy, and primary school retention is generally high – but Nicaragua falls 20 points behind the next lowest country on girls’ primary school progression and Nicaragua and Guatemala are nearly ten points behind the next lowest country on literacy. And there is wide variation on indicator 4b: *Percentage*

Box 12 Top and bottom performers

Uruguay: 75.5
Chile: 72.8
Costa Rica: 71.4

Venezuela: 61.4
Nicaragua: 60.4
Guatemala: 58.3

of young women aged 3–5 years above upper secondary school graduation age who have completed secondary education, with only Chile, Jamaica, and Peru within 20 points of the target; Brazil is the lowest ranked country on the indicator and, surprisingly, Uruguay, the top overall scorer in the region, is the 4th lowest on this indicator.

On SDG 5: Gender Equality, the region does relatively well compared to other regions on indicators

of early marriage and perceptions of intimate partner violence – with exceptions, such as high rates of early marriage in Dominican Republic, Honduras, and Nicaragua, and high rates of acceptance of partner violence in Ecuador and Peru. The region does fairly well compared to other regions on indicators related to women in government – several Latin American and Caribbean countries have achieved or surpassed parity in national parliaments – but all regions on average fall far short of parity. But the region falls furthest behind on indicator 5c: *The extent to which there are legal grounds for abortion (score)*, with 16 countries in the region with significant legal restrictions on abortion; the region is the lowest performing region in the world on this critical measure of women’s health and agency.

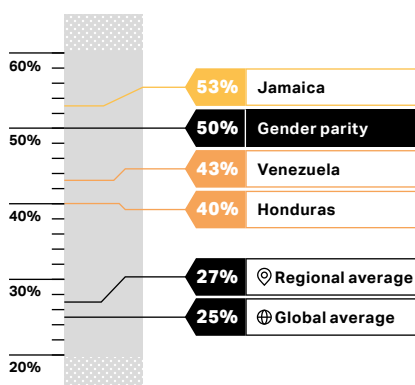
Box 13 Latin America and the Caribbean indicator spotlight

1a: Proportion of the population living below the national poverty line Latin America and the Caribbean is the second lowest performing region on this measure of poverty (with Guatemala, Honduras, and Mexico scoring particularly poorly), and also has high rates of women reporting an inability to afford food (particularly in Dominican Republic, Jamaica, and Venezuela).

5c: The extent to which there are legal grounds for abortion (score) Access to safe, legal abortion is critical to women’s rights and ability to control when and if to become pregnant. Yet only one country in the region (Uruguay) has full legal grounds for abortion; 16 countries in the region score 50 or below on this indicator.

16c: Percentage of women justices on a country’s Supreme Court or highest court Since 2000, women’s participation in the highest courts of law has nearly doubled in Latin America and the Caribbean. The regional average of 27 percent of seats held by women surpasses the global average of 25 percent. Women justices make up 40 percent or more of the justices on the highest courts in four countries from this region (Guatemala, Honduras, Jamaica, and Venezuela).

Figure 14 Proportion (%) of women justices on a country’s Supreme Court or highest court, 2017



Source: *Equal Measures 2030, 2019 based on Women, Business and the Law, 2018*



Photo: Eduardo Dorantes, Unsplash

Thematic deep dive: girls’ and women’s physical safety

While Latin America and the Caribbean is the second highest overall performing region in the index, it is by far the lowest scoring region in the index, it is by far the lowest scoring region in the world on two indicators related to women’s physical safety. On indicator 16b: *Female victims of intentional homicide (per 100,000 population)*, the region receives a “very poor” overall score that is more than ten points below the next lowest scoring region, and El Salvador is the lowest scoring country in the world on the indicator (15.7 women killed per 100,000 population). Belize (8.15 women killed per 100,000 population), Honduras (10.21 women killed per 100,000 population), and Jamaica (9.33 women killed per 100,000 population) also have some of the highest rates of fatal violence against women in the world. Six of the ten countries

Six of the ten countries globally with the highest rates of women killed are in Latin America and the Caribbean

globally with the highest rates of women killed are in Latin America and the Caribbean. These findings track with the region’s troublingly low performance on another indicator related to women’s perceptions of safety, 11c: *Percentage of women aged 15+ who report that they did not “feel safe walking alone at night in the city or area where you live”* (regional score of 40.6).

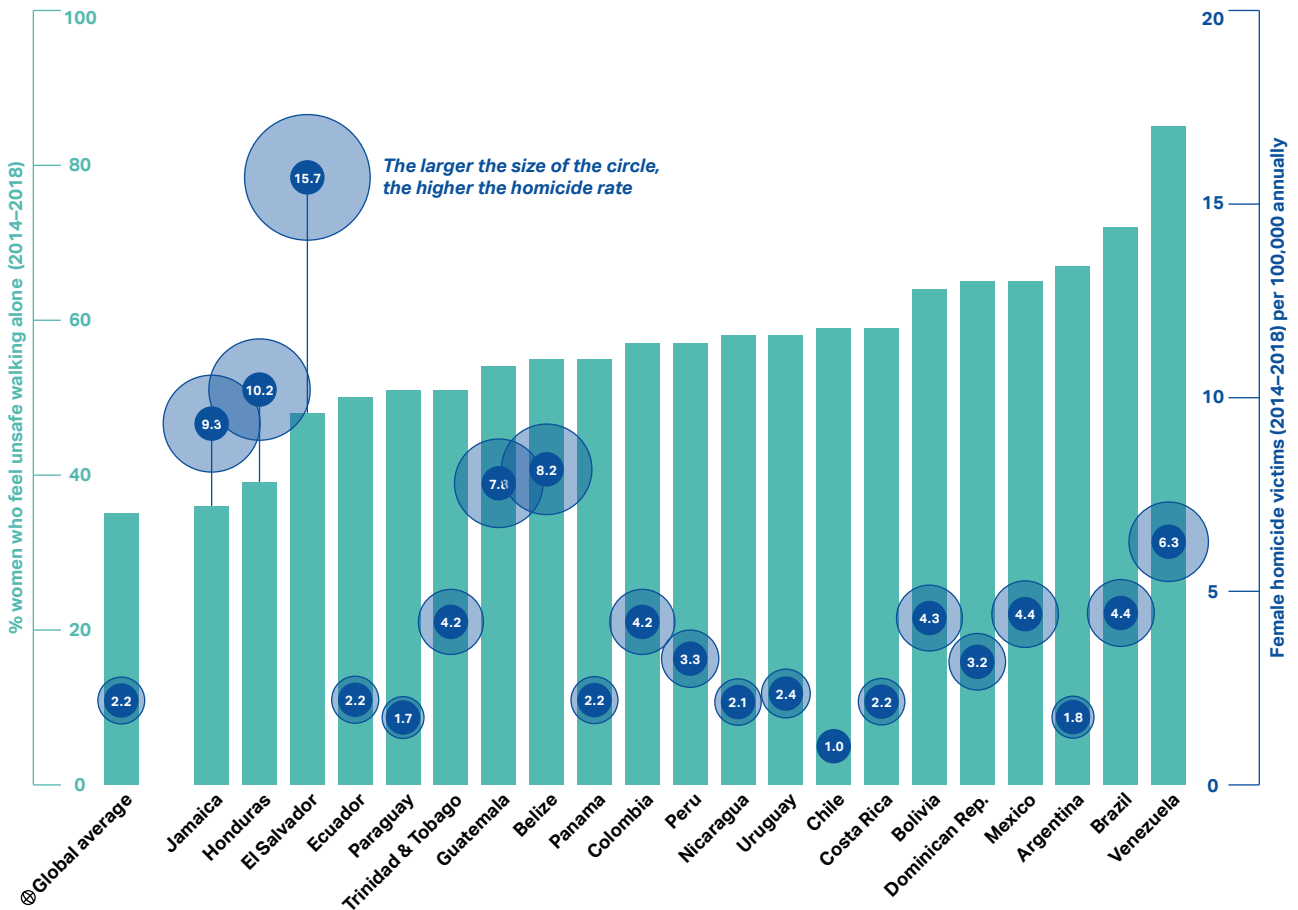
Many forms of violence against girls and women are pervasive in Latin America and the Caribbean. According to a November 2017 United Nations Development Program (UNDP) Report, the region has the highest rate in the world of gender-based sexual violence against women, and the Economic Commission for Latin

America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) estimates that an average of 12 women are murdered per day across the region.²² There were nearly 3,000 female victims of homicide in 2017 alone.²³ High rates of violence against women are directly linked to other critical issues captured by SDG 16: Peace & Institutions related to an inclusive judiciary,

government accountability, and strong institutions. Most countries across Latin America and the Caribbean have legal frameworks that criminalize domestic violence and take steps to minimize other forms of violence against women, and offer judicial accountability – to date, nearly 30 countries have enacted laws against domestic violence or have characterized the violence as a crime, and most countries have national action plans to combat gender-based violence, due in part to widespread and well-organized advocacy from women’s organizations.

Yet, in practice, millions of women in Latin America and the Caribbean continue to be failed by the legal system. As many as 98 percent of the cases of femicide and violence against girls and women in Latin America go unpunished annually.²⁴ Legal impunity is fed by cultural belief systems and gender norms that lead many to consider acts of violence against girls and women to be acceptable.²⁵ The magnitude of the problem requires that governments across the region fully resource national action plans and invest in coordination mechanisms, technical capacities, information systems, and educational efforts targeting boys and men as well as girls and women to prevent and respond to gender-based violence.²⁶

Figure 15 Women’s perception of feeling safe walking alone at night and female homicide rates, 2014–2018



Source: Equal Measures 2030, 2019 based on Gallup, 2018 and UNODC, 2018

The Middle East and North Africa



Key findings from the Middle East and North Africa region

With an overall index score of 60.8, the Middle East and North Africa region ranks fourth among the five regions covered by the 2019 SDG Gender Index. Israel is the only country in the region that

places in the top quartile of overall index scores and receives a high “fair” score overall. Five countries in the region fall into “very poor” scores overall on the index, with Yemen the fourth lowest ranking country in the world.

No country in the region comes within 23 points of full gender equality as measured by the index. The Middle East and North Africa also has the largest percentage point gap of any region between the highest

scoring country overall (Israel) and the second-highest scoring country (Algeria). And the difference between the highest ranked and lowest ranked countries in the region (Israel and Yemen) is 32 points – the third largest gap between a top and bottom regional performer in the world. It should be noted that data for several indicators come from before 2016, so those goals may not

adequately reflect the worsening situation for girls and women in Yemen; the next iteration of the SDG Gender Index will likely show an even more pronounced gap within the region due to Yemen’s humanitarian crisis.

More than in any other region, the lowest overall regional scorer (Yemen) maintains low scores across every goal – this holds true across every single goal except one (SDG 11: Cities & Communities, where Yemen still ranks in the region’s bottom three). Such a pattern is not true of any other region – compare this to Asia and the Pacific, where Bangladesh, the overall lowest scorer in the region, is only the lowest performer on two of the 14 goals. On the other end of the spectrum in the Middle East and North Africa, though, there is interesting variance. Israel is the top country on only eight goals, despite its markedly higher overall score, than the cluster of countries behind it. Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Morocco, Tunisia, and Turkey all score in the top two countries on at least one goal – Egypt tops SDG 7: Energy scores, for example, and Saudi Arabia tops SDG 6: Water & Sanitation.

On goal-by-goal average scores, the region outperforms the global average on SDG 3: Health, SDG 6: Water & Sanitation, and SDG 7: Energy, but falls quite a bit behind global averages across SDG 8: Work & Economic Growth, SDG 5: Gender Equality, SDG 16: Peace & Institutions, and SDG 9: Industry, Infrastructure & Innovation.

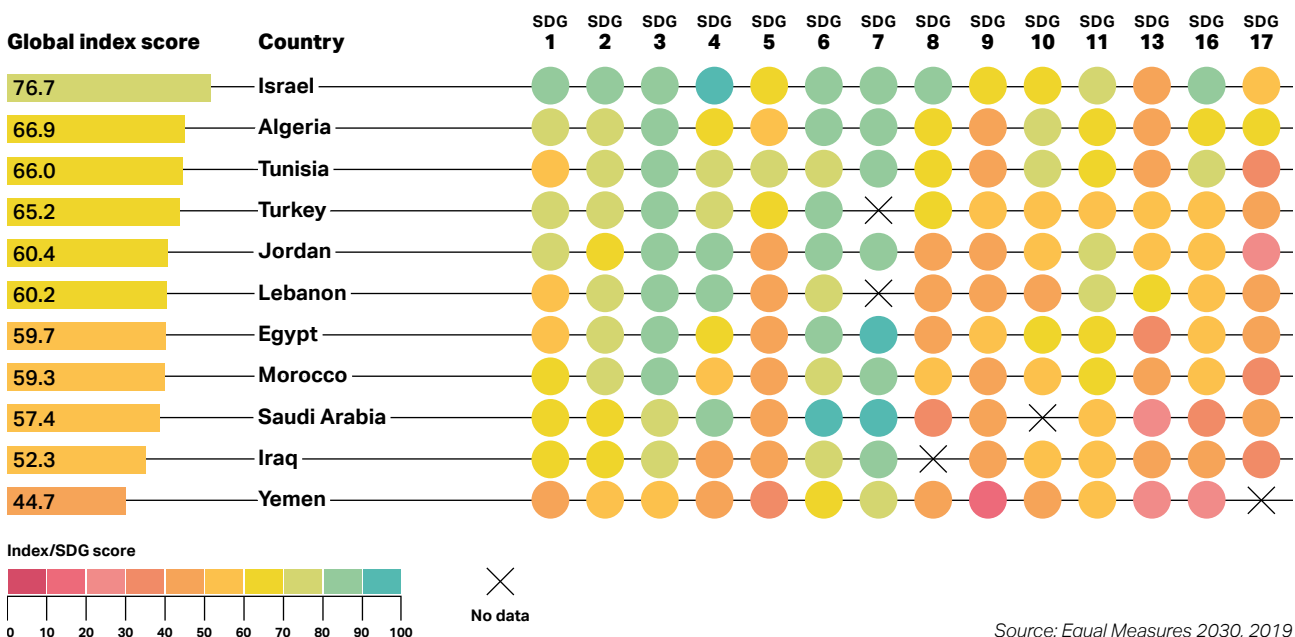
Several goal scores are pulled down by poor regional performance on one particular indicator, signalling regional trouble spots. On SDG 5: Gender Equality, for example, the region has the lowest scores across both indicators related to women in government. On SDG 1: Poverty,

Box 14 Top and bottom performers

Israel: 76.7
Algeria: 66.9
Tunisia: 66.0

Saudi Arabia: 57.4
Iraq: 52.3
Yemen: 44.7

Figure 16 2019 SDG Gender Index scores and rankings by country – Middle East and North Africa



Source: Equal Measures 2030, 2019



Photo: Salah Malkawi/UNDP, Flickr (CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

the region has widely variable performance – Lebanon is one of the world’s lowest scorers on the proportion of the poorest quintile of the population covered by social assistance programmes. Similarly, on SDG 2: Hunger & Nutrition, the region’s good scores on rates of undernourishment (except in Iraq and Yemen) are pulled down by high rates of obesity and anaemia among women in most of the region’s countries. Rates of obesity among women in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey are comparable with or higher than that of the United States (Europe and North America’s lowest performer). And obesity rates among women are significantly higher than among men in every country in the region, with women experiencing obesity at nearly double the rate of men in some countries (particularly in Gulf states, many of which are not covered by the index due to data availability).²⁷ Research shows that the rising obesity epidemic in the Middle East and North

Africa is linked to high-caloric consumption trends, women’s relative lack of physical activity and mobility in public spaces, and the lack of emphasis on physical education for girls, which some governments have taken steps to remedy through public health campaigns targeting girls and women in recent years.²⁸

On SDG 8: Work & Economic Growth (regional score of 53.6), the Middle East and North Africa is eight points behind the next best scoring region and nearly 30 points behind the highest scoring region on the goal. The region performs particularly poorly on indicators related to freedom of association and collective bargaining rights (Egypt, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia receive the lowest possible score on the measure), laws mandating women’s workplace equality (no country in the region has full legal equality for women; see Thematic deep dive on p. 37), and women’s ownership of accounts at financial institutions (Yemen is ranked lowest in the world, but most

countries in the region receive “very poor” scores; Israel is the only country in the region to score “excellent” on the indicator).

Thematic deep dive: legal barriers for women

Women’s ability to own, use, inherit, and bequeath land is critical to their ability to build assets and have financial security. In countries where women lack full property rights, they are less likely to hold leadership positions in local businesses and are more likely to fall under the national poverty line after becoming divorced or widowed.²⁹ Likewise, women’s ability to participate equally in the workforce is linked to their agency, household decision-making power, financial wellbeing, and physical safety in the workplace.

Yet the World Bank finds that over 90 percent of countries around the world have at least one law on the books that denies women equal rights and hinders women’s participation in the economy.³⁰ In the 2019 SDG Gender Index, the Middle East and North Africa has the lowest regional scores in the world on two measures of women’s equality under the law: 8d: *Extent to which the country has laws mandating women’s workplace equality* (regional average 52.7) and 1c: *The extent to which laws afford women and men equal and secure access to land use, control and ownership* (score) (regional average 59.1).

Indicator 1c measures equality in property ownership across five dimensions: who can legally administer marital property, valuation of nonmonetary contributions, equal ownership rights to immovable property, sons’ and daughters’ equal rights to inherit assets, and female and male surviving spouses’ rights to inherit assets. Across the Middle East and North Africa, only two countries (Israel and Turkey) have each of these legal protections in place.

Indicator 8d measures a range of issues related to women’s ability to work, starting from when a woman applies for a job through to when she retires, including if the law mandates equal remuneration for work of equal value, if the law mandates nondiscrimination, and if legislation on workplace sexual harassment exists. Every country in the region, across income levels and unrelated to overall performance on the index, has at least one such legal barrier. In Jordan and Yemen, for example, married women cannot accept a job without spousal permission.³¹ In Egypt and Israel, women are barred from some industries that are deemed hazardous. In Lebanon and Tunisia, sexual harassment in the workplace is not expressly prohibited by any law. And in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Tunisia, and Yemen, equal remuneration for equal work is not required by law.³²

In the past two years, though, a number of countries in the region – particularly in North Africa and the Levant – have taken steps to

Box 15 Middle East and North Africa indicator spotlight

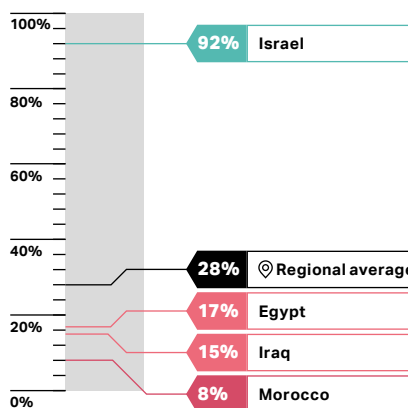
1c: The extent to which laws afford women and men equal and secure access to land use, control and ownership (score) The region is the lowest ranking region in the world on this indicator, which captures critical measures of a woman’s ability to manage land, build wealth or access credit, and pass assets to children. Nine countries in the region have at least two laws that restrict women’s land rights.

7a: Proportion of population with access to electricity The Middle East and North Africa is the world’s second highest performing region on this indicator, with countries all at or nearly at full coverage, except for Yemen.

9a: Proportion of women who have made or received digital payments in the past year Digital payments can be viewed as a measure of women’s economic agency and household decision-making power. Yet markedly low rates of women use digital payment technologies in the Middle East and

North Africa – all but two countries covered by the index are less than halfway toward the target for the indicator.

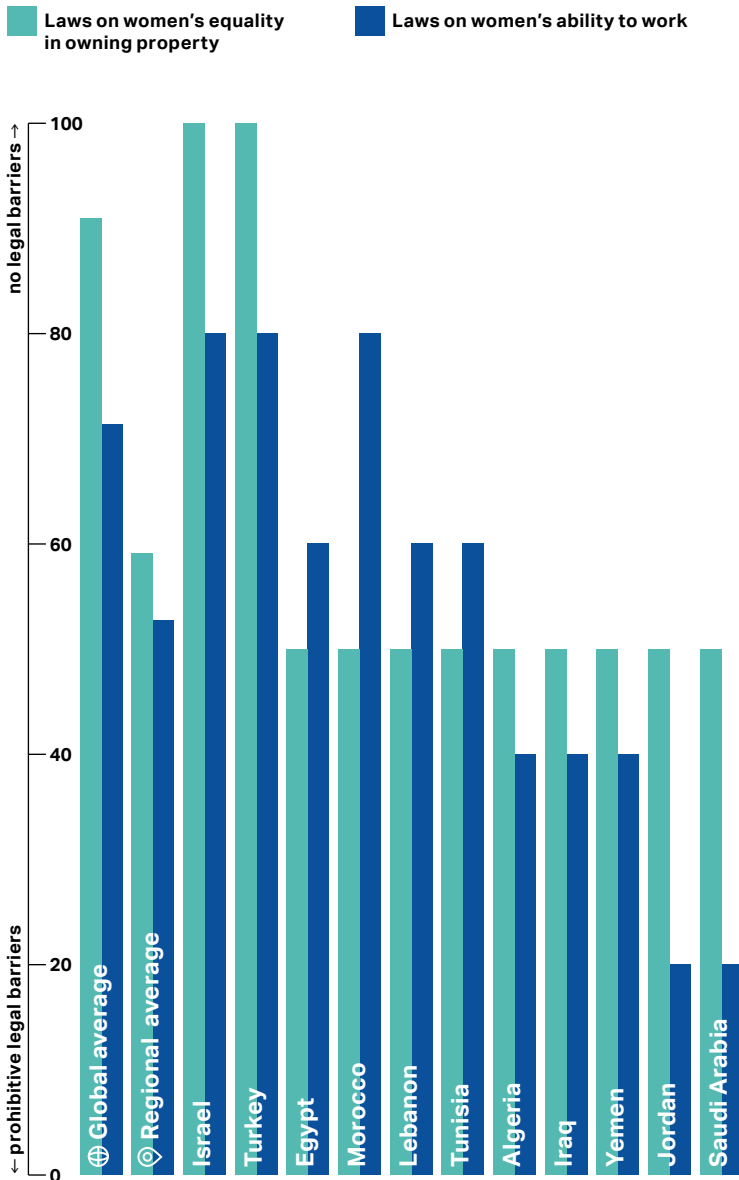
Figure 17 Proportion (%) of women who have made or received digital payments in the past year, 2018



Source: Equal Measures 2030, 2019 based on Findex, 2018

remedy discriminatory laws and enable women to work. In 2016, Israel increased the length of paid maternity leave from 98 to 105 days, more than the ILO minimum recommendation of 14 weeks' leave.³³ Iraq also passed legislation to extend maternity leave, and criminalized sexual harassment in employment.³⁴ In 2017, Algeria passed new legislation to combat domestic violence, including economic violence. Tunisia strengthened gender equality in credit reporting, and Turkey passed several reforms prohibiting gender discrimination in the workplace and improving reporting mechanisms.³⁵

Figure 18 Extent of legal barriers that women face in work and land ownership (score), 2018



Source: Equal Measures 2030, 2019 based on Women, Business and the Law, 2019





Sub-Saharan Africa



Key findings from the Sub-Saharan Africa region

With an average regional index score of 51.1, the Sub-Saharan Africa region is the lowest scoring region overall in the 2019 SDG Gender Index. The region's highest ranking country, Mauritius, is still 27 points away from meeting targets for girls' and women's equality as measured by the index. The difference between the highest ranked and lowest ranked countries in the region (Mauritius and Chad) is 40 points – the single largest gap within any region in the world. Mauritius is the only country in the region that places in the "fair" score of the overall index; three countries rank as "poor" and 29 fall into the "very poor" scores.

While no country in the region comes close to meeting targets across all goals, significant differences exist between countries in terms of overall scores on the index and in performance across goals and indicators. There are a number of stand-out issues in which the region performs fairly well relative to other regions, and even several indicators on which African nations are the world's top performers.

Sub-Saharan Africa's strongest goal performances are on SDG 2: Hunger &

Nutrition and SDG 8: Work & Economic Growth. Sub-Saharan Africa falls farthest behind other regions on goals related to development and infrastructure, including on SDG 7: Energy, SDG 3: Health, SDG 6: Water & Sanitation, and SDG 4: Education. Indicators where most of the world performs quite well – maternal mortality, access to basic drinking water, access to electricity – are still critical and persistent weak spots

across much of Sub-Saharan Africa.

Of any goal, the region performs best overall on SDG 2: Hunger & Nutrition, scoring better than the Middle East and North Africa and only a little way behind both Latin America and the Caribbean and Asia and the Pacific. However, despite rapid economic growth and increased agricultural productivity causing the proportion of undernourished people to fall by almost half in Sub-Saharan Africa since the 1990s, the UNDP finds that

Box 16 Top and bottom performers

Mauritius: 73.1
South Africa: 64.9
Namibia: 64.5

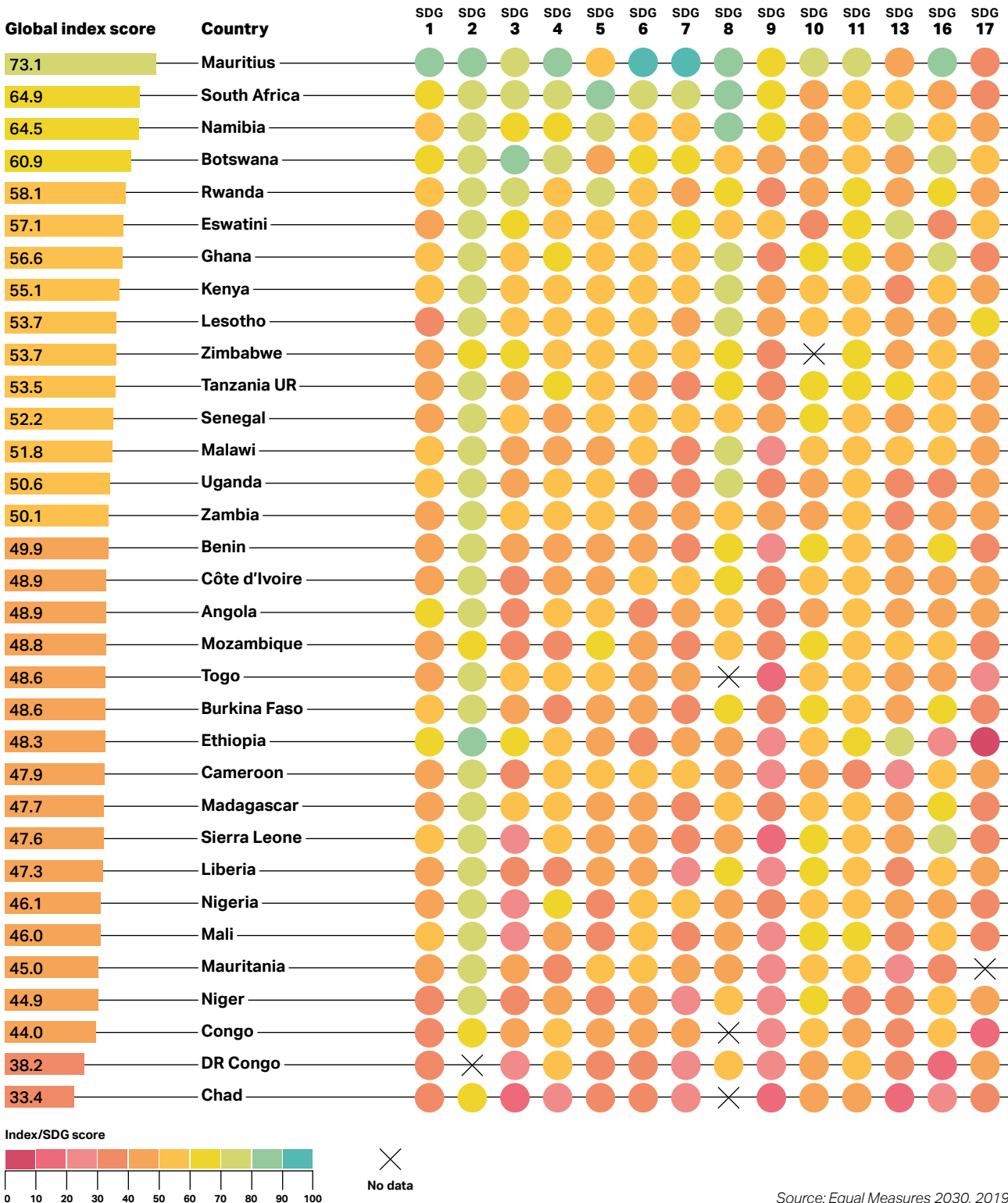
Congo: 44.0
DR Congo: 38.2
Chad: 33.4

the region has still made slower gains on hunger and nutrition issues than other regions (Asia and the Pacific and Latin America and the Caribbean) in recent decades.³⁶ The goal score is good compared to the average across Sub-Saharan Africa for other goals, but it is still far from ideal.

The region performs better than Latin America and the Caribbean and almost on par with Asia

and the Pacific on SDG 17: Partnerships, despite the goal being the weakest spot in the global index overall (see Box 17 on p.41). Sub-Saharan Africa is the only region for which SDG 17: Partnerships is not the region's lowest scoring goal. Despite Sub-Saharan Africa having the lowest average social expenditure as a percentage of GDP of any region, the region does far better than other

Figure 19 2019 SDG Gender Index scores and rankings by country – Sub-Saharan Africa



Source: Equal Measures 2030, 2019

regions on the extent to which national budgets are broken down by factors such as gender, age, income, or region (all but five African countries do this), and similar to other regions in terms of its openness of gender statistics (14 African countries outperform the global average). Similarly, while the overall regional performance on SDG 5: Gender Equality is lacking compared to

With an average regional index score of 51.1, the Sub-Saharan Africa region is the lowest scoring region overall in the 2019 SDG Gender Index



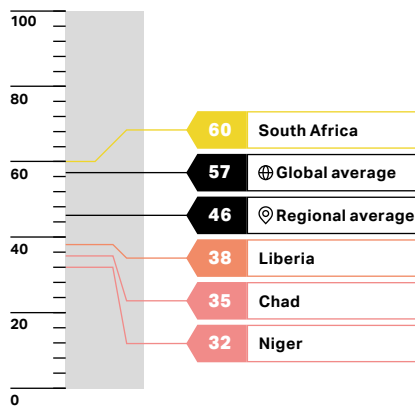
Photo: UNDP, Flickr (CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

Box 17 Sub-Saharan Africa indicator spotlight

4c: Percentage of young women (aged 15–24 years) not in education, employment or training (NEET) This indicator measures school-to-work transitions for girls. Sub-Saharan Africa has one of the bottom two regional scores on this indicator, but Angola and Madagascar are among the three highest scoring countries in the

world and a number of other Sub-Saharan Africa fall into the top half of the global ranking.

Figure 20 Climate vulnerability score in Sub-Saharan Africa, 2017



Source: Equal Measures 2030, 2019 based on ND-GAIN Index, 2017

13c: Level of climate vulnerability (score) Sub-Saharan Africa has the greatest number of countries severely threatened by climate vulnerability. Chad, Liberia, Mali, and Niger all score under 40 on the indicator and 26 countries in the region fall under 50. Multiple stresses make most of Africa highly vulnerable to environmental variability and extremes, including drought, cyclones, and flooding. Not only are girls and women more likely to die in climate disasters, but climate vulnerability and shocks can have differential impacts on their schooling, health, and livelihoods, particularly in rural areas.

17c: Extent to which a national budget is broken down by factors such as gender, age, income, or region (score) Sub-Saharan Africa outperforms every other region in the world on this means-based indicator that is critical to creating an enabling environment for gender equality; the extent to which a national budget is disaggregated by gender is the first step toward gender budgeting approaches that use fiscal policy and administration to promote equality.



Photo: Getty Images

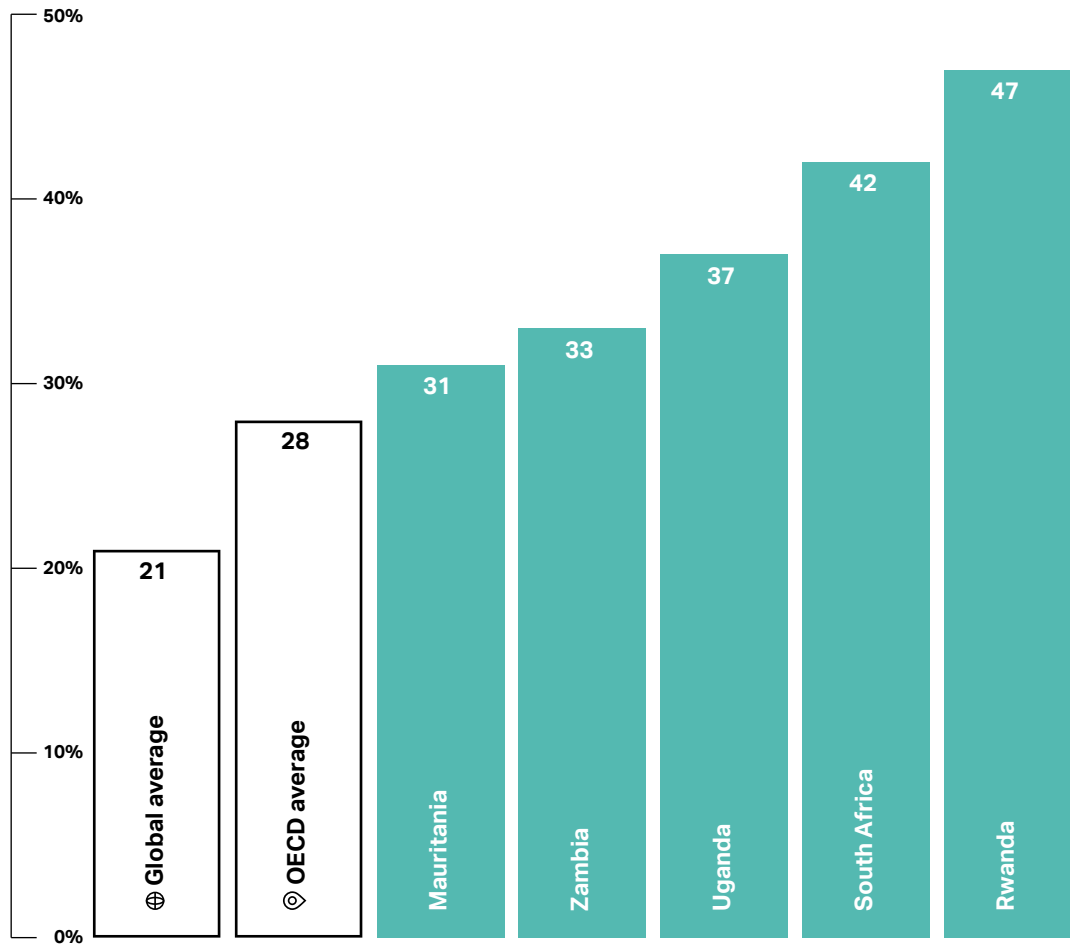
other regions, the low regional score masks several bright spots, particularly related to women's political participation (see Thematic deep dive, below).

Thematic deep dive: women in government

Within SDG 5: Gender Equality, most countries score lowest on the last two indicators (compared to the first three indicators on child marriage, intimate partner violence, and abortion) – Indicator 5d: *Proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments* and Indicator 5e: *Proportion of ministerial/senior government positions held by women*. Countries around the world – including high-income countries, OECD countries, and countries that rank in the top ten places overall in the 2019 SDG Gender Index – struggle when it comes to women's representation in governing bodies. This is even more starkly apparent in regards to positions of leadership: the global average for female ministers was just over 21 percent in 2017 (with more than five countries having no female cabinet members).

In Sub-Saharan Africa, though, the gap between performance on indicators 5d and 5e and the other indicators in SDG 5 is tighter. This is in large part due to many Sub-Saharan African countries performing relatively well, and several countries performing exceptionally well, on proportions of women in government. The region performs significantly better on *both* indicators than the Middle East and North Africa and Asia and the Pacific, and falls within ten points of Latin America and the Caribbean and Europe and North America on both indicators.

Moreover, Sub-Saharan Africa is the only region aside from Latin America and the Caribbean where any country has fully achieved or surpassed parity in a lower house of parliament. Rwanda (61 percent of parliament), Namibia (46 percent), South Africa (42 percent), and Senegal (42 percent) all rank in the top ten countries in the 2019 SDG Gender Index in terms of women in parliament, and six of the top 20 countries worldwide (including countries not covered by the index) with the highest proportions of women in parliament are in Sub-Saharan Africa as of 2018.³⁷ It is one of the very few commonly measured gender equality

Figure 21 Proportion (%) of ministerial or senior government roles held by women, 2017

Source: *Equal Measures 2030, 2019 based on Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2018*

More women in Sub-Saharan Africa than in any region (other than Europe and North America) hold ministerial positions with key strategic portfolios

indicators where Sub-Saharan African countries are amongst the highest scoring countries in the world, and evidence suggests it is linked to

gender quotas and other policy measures to improve women's representation.³⁸

In terms of women in senior positions of government, more women in Sub-Saharan Africa than in any region other than Europe and North America hold ministerial positions with key strategic portfolios, such as defence, foreign affairs, and finance, which have historically seen lower proportions of women taking office than other ministries (e.g. home, gender, education, or child and family welfare ministries).

Rwanda, South Africa, Uganda, and Zambia rank well globally in terms of women in ministerial posts, with Rwanda the only country that had essentially achieved parity as of 2017. These

figures could improve in the next iteration of the SDG Gender Index: toward the end of 2018 (after the close of the index), Ethiopia's Prime Minister Ahmed reshuffled the country's cabinet to appoint ten female ministers, or half of all cabinet posts, and parliament appointed its first female president.³⁹ Weeks afterwards, Rwanda's President Kagame announced that Rwanda's new cabinet would also be gender balanced.

There are important considerations – and cautions – to these findings. Women in government (particularly at high levels of government) can be sidelined or used as a mouthpiece for other powerful actors, especially when disconnected from grass-roots activism and gender advocacy.⁴⁰ Parity at all levels of government is nonetheless fundamental to rights of equal representation as well as to creating an enabling environment for equality and good governance – research suggests that higher proportions of female lawmakers are associated with decreased corruption, more legislation that promotes the wellbeing of women and children, and increased citizen confidence in democratic institutions and government accountability.⁴¹

6

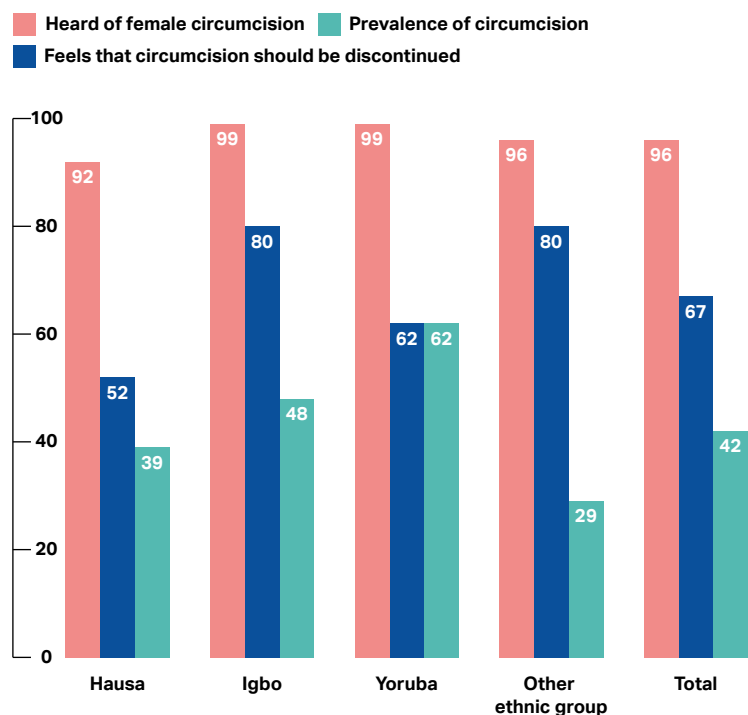
Leaving no one behind

By its nature, the SDG Gender Index captures national averages in its scores. These scores are an important snapshot and accountability mechanism for overall progress toward gender equality in the context of the SDGs – but they can also mask differences in opportunities, outcomes and rights for groups of girls and women within a country. Measuring progress based on national averages – as much of the 2030 Agenda itself does – runs the risk of failing to identify and address pockets of extreme inequality and masks the fact that multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination affect some groups of girls and women more than others.

Gender inequality is compounded by other factors. Girls and women around the world, in countries of all income levels, experience additional discrimination on the basis of age, income, ethnic or religious identity, geographic location, sexual orientation and gender identity, disability, immigration status, or HIV status, among other factors.

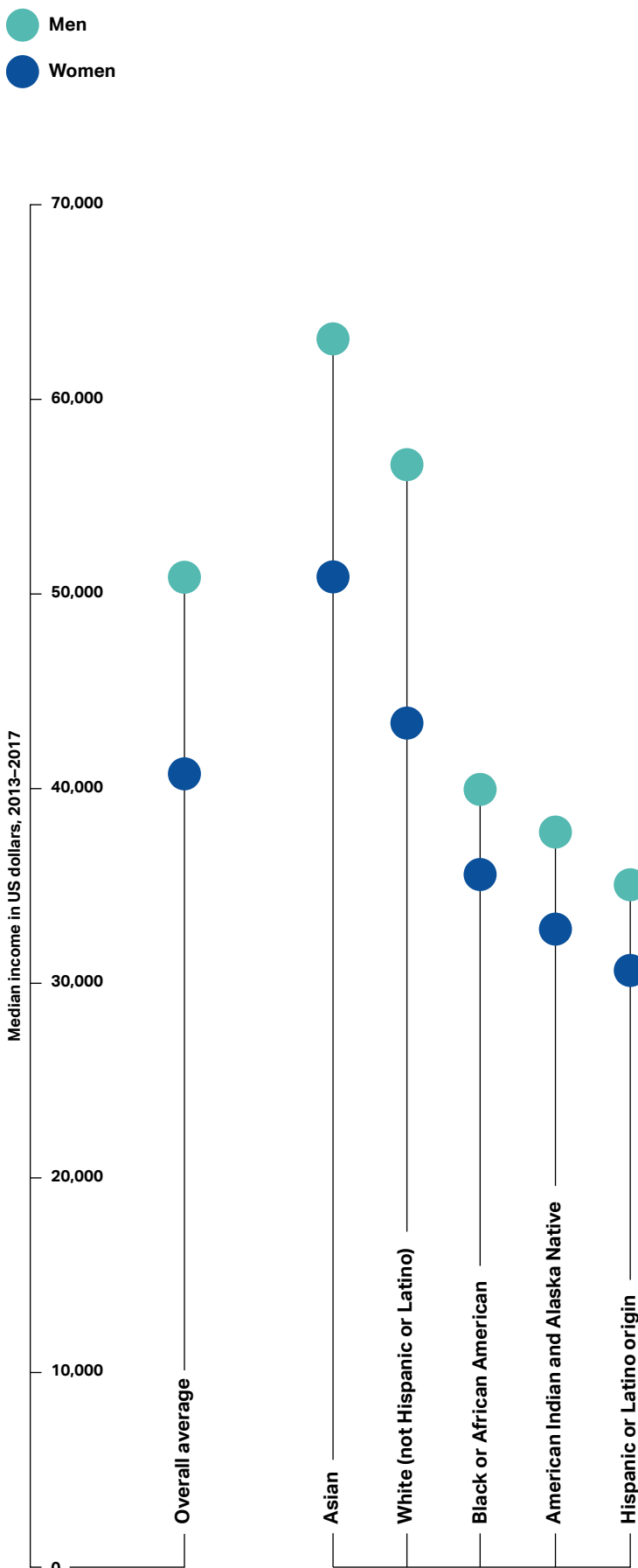
In a world where sufficiently disaggregated data were available, we could look at the SDG Gender Index scores for these different groups. If each indicator were broken down by the extent to which it covered girls and women with disabilities, for example, we could compare a country's overall index score as a national average to its score for girls and women with disabilities. We could slice and compare the index' goals and indicators in new and vital ways, identifying countries with major gaps in

Figure 22 Awareness, attitude towards, and prevalence of female circumcision (%) by ethnic group of household head in Nigeria, 2017–18



Source: *Equal Measures 2030*, 2019 based on ICF, 2012. *The DHS Program STATcompiler* [Accessed April 2019]

Figure 23 Median earnings by selected characteristics in the United States, 2013–2017



Source: Equal Measures 2030, 2019 based on US Census Bureau, 2017

gender equality measures for girls and women from different groups.

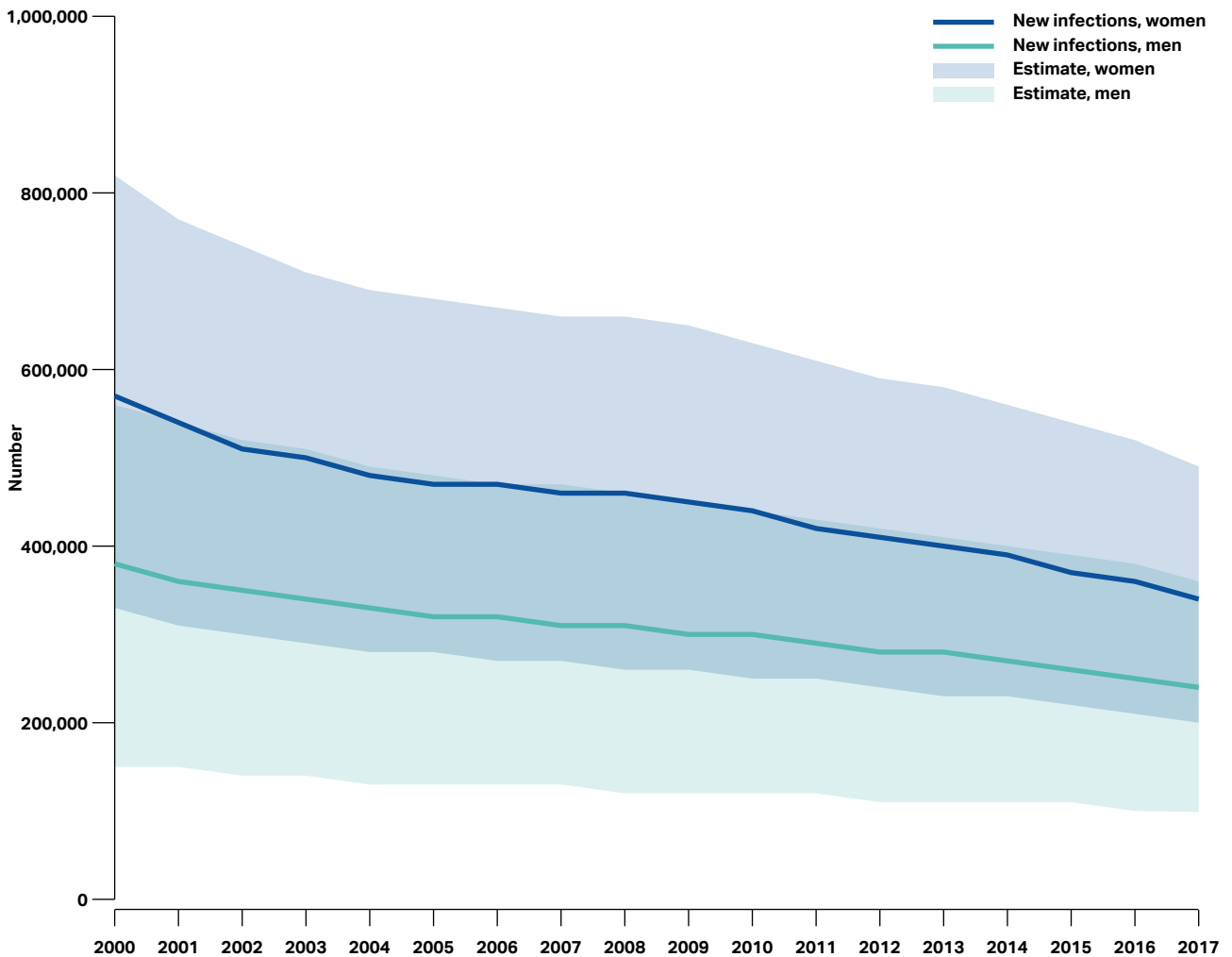
Unfortunately, the lack of data coverage and sufficient disaggregation of data makes this kind of comparison impossible, even across a smaller sub-set of the 129 countries included in the index. In some cases, the status of girls and women is inadequately captured by standard data collection instruments because of small sample sizes (for example, among a small ethnic minority) or data collection difficulties (for example, girls and women in displaced or nomadic populations), and, in other cases, because of lack of government will or technical capability. Yet examples of disaggregated national data and smaller-scale studies of key issues covered by the SDG Gender Index reveal multidimensional deprivations that are hidden by averages and aggregations.

Differential rates of female genital mutilation/cutting by ethnicity in Nigeria

Female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C, referred to as female circumcision in DHS surveys) is widely recognized as a violation of girls' human rights and a threat to their health. Yet the harmful traditional practice is deeply rooted in cultural beliefs and continues to be widely practised in 30 countries, mainly in Africa, as well as in Asia and the Middle East.⁴² Nigeria has the highest absolute number worldwide of girls who undergo FGM/C, accounting for about one-quarter of the estimated 115–130 million cut women in the world annually.⁴³ Data from Nigeria show how ethnicity significantly impacts communities' perceptions of the practice and the rate at which girls undergo FGM/C (see Figure 22 on p. 44): 62 percent of Yoruba girls undergo cutting, more than double the rate of girls who are from "Other ethnic groups." If we only look at the national average rate of FGM/C (42 percent), we fail to see the differential impact of the harmful practice on certain groups of girls in particular.

Group-based income inequalities in high-income countries

Group-based inequalities are not confined to low- and middle-income countries. An examination of median income in three high-income countries (Australia, Canada, and the United States) shows an overall pay gap between men and women in each country. But, in the United States, for example, the pay gap is significantly larger between women from historically marginalised groups and white women, Asian women, and all groups of men. African American, American Indian and Alaska Native, and Hispanic or Latino origin women earned median incomes of more than \$5,000 less per year than white women (see Figure 23 on p. 45). Similarly, in Canada, a racial median income gap exists in

Figure 24 Global estimates of new HIV infections amongst 15–24 year-olds by sex, 2017

Source: *Equal Measures 2030, 2019 based on UNAIDS, 2019*

Box 18 Hidden differences in national data

- **In Serbia**, Roma girls and young women attain two-thirds of the years of schooling of their male counterparts despite the fact that, at the national level, young women average higher educational attainment than men.^I
- **In Malawi**, women are overall less likely to have a bank account than men – but women in rural areas are more than twice as likely as women in urban areas to be unbanked.^{II}
- **In Nigeria**, nearly 70 percent of girls overall attend primary school, but only 12 percent of ethnic Hausa girls from low-income families in rural areas attend.^I
- **In Pakistan**, 41 percent of urban households have access to safely managed drinking water compared to 32 percent of rural households.^I

I "UN Women, *Turning Promises Into Action*," (2018)

II *Women's World Banking*, (2017)

every province, and even university-educated Canadian-born members of a visible minority earn on average 87.4 cents for every dollar earned by the average non-minority peer.⁴⁴ Recent census data from Australia also show differences in employment rates and median income between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians: in Queensland's remote communities, indigenous Australians are nearly 13 times more likely to be unemployed than non-indigenous Australians and the gap in median income has only widened over the past five years between the two groups, in Queensland and nationally.⁴⁵

Global HIV infection rates by age

Age is another crucial, and often overlooked, dimension on which data should be disaggregated. Age-disaggregated data show that girls and women in different age groups experience vulnerabilities in different ways: adolescent girls are particularly vulnerable to sexual exploitation and violence, for example, and older women are more likely than older men to live in poverty, ill health, and with limited access to protective resources.⁴⁶ Global

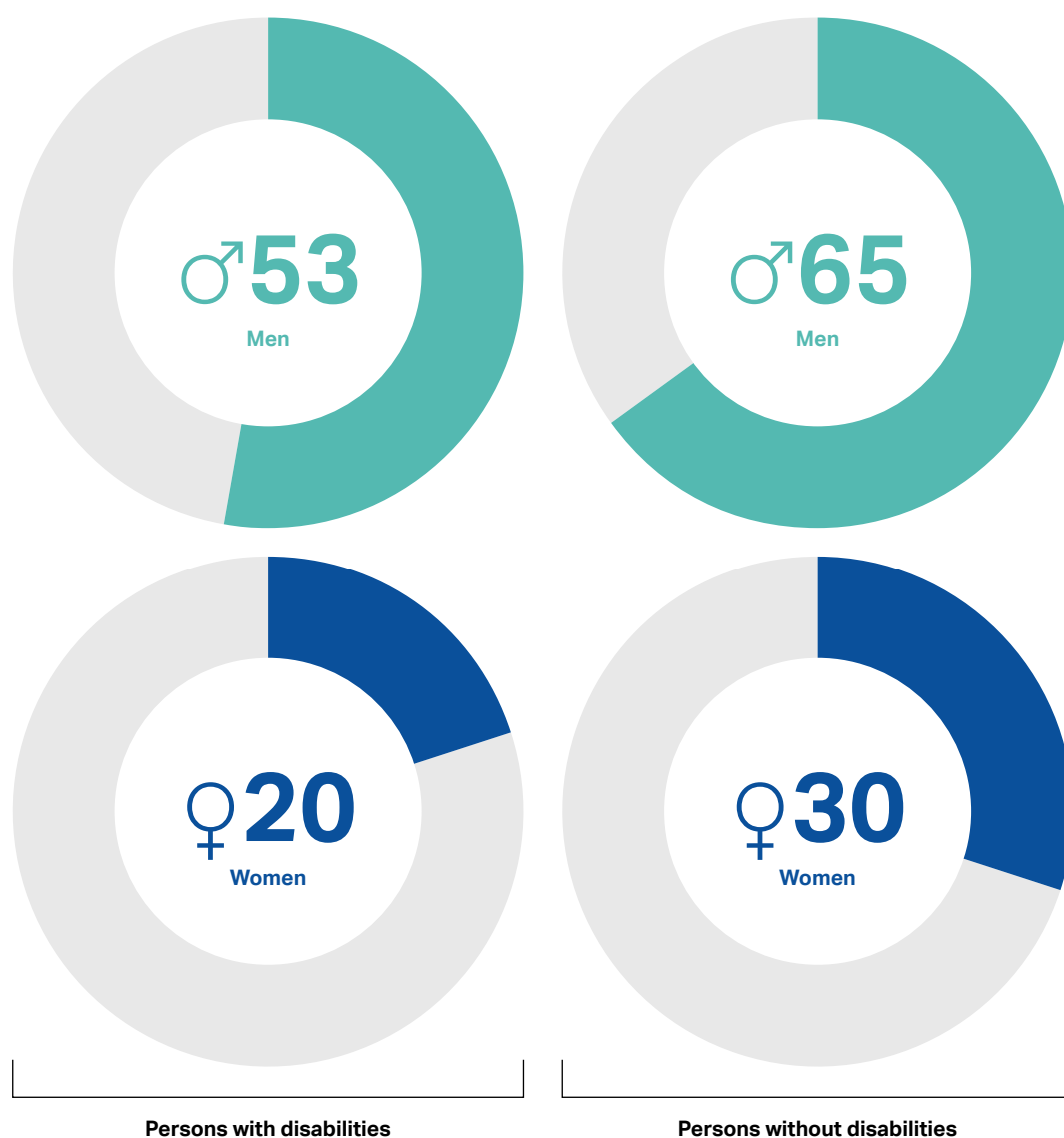
estimates of new HIV infection rates by both sex and age show how a lack of age disaggregation masks important differences. If we look at new HIV infection rates for males and females aged 15 years and older, males are more likely to have been infected globally. However, if we hone in on the age range from 15–24 years, we see that adolescent girls and young women are far more likely to have been newly infected with HIV (see Figure 24 on p. 46).

Employment rates for persons with disabilities

Disability status intersects with gender-based and other forms of discrimination. Despite the lack of standardized definitions of disability globally, as well as significant data gaps, two recent studies using comparable data and consistent disability measures across countries have shown that disability

prevalence for adults is higher among women than men: 19 percent compared with 12 percent respectively.⁴⁷ In low- and middle-income countries, women are estimated to comprise up to three quarters of all persons with disabilities. Available data show that women with disabilities are more likely to have lower socioeconomic status, higher rates of multidimensional poverty, lower educational attainment, and are at higher risk of sexual violence than women without disabilities.⁴⁸ These intertwined dimensions affect, and are also exacerbated by challenges that women with disabilities face in finding and retaining employment. Data for 51 countries show that only 20 percent of women with disabilities are employed, compared with 53 percent of men with disabilities and 30 percent of women without disabilities – disability status significantly compounds existing gender gaps in employment rates (see Figure 25 on p. 47).

Figure 25 Employment rates for persons with and without disabilities by sex in 51 countries, early 2000s



Source: *Equal Measures 2030*, 2019 based on WHO/World Bank, 2011

7

Conclusions

Much remains to be done before girls and women – across all regions of the world – enjoy full equality

Four years ago, governments, civil society and the private sector lined up behind the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda: an ambitious, universal and indivisible set of goals and targets promising to transform our world. With just 11 years to go, it is the right time to ask: will we get there?

Equal Measures 2030's 2019 SDG Gender Index – the most comprehensive SDG-aligned gender equality monitoring tool to date – shows there is much more to do in all countries, and particularly in the poorest countries who are also facing conflict, crisis, and/or fragility.

Despite the commitments made by governments, nearly 40 percent of the world's girls and women – 1.4 billion – live in countries failing on gender equality (scores of 59 or less out of 100). Another 1.4 billion live in countries that “barely pass” (scores of 60–69 out of 100).

The index shows that although many countries have achieved important

milestones towards gender equality in education, health, access to basic services, and in codifying certain legal rights, much remains to be done before girls and women – across all regions of the world – enjoy full equality and the realisation of their rights.

Even the best scoring countries have more to do, particularly on difficult issues such as climate change, gender budgeting and public services, equal representation in powerful positions, gender pay gaps, and gender-based violence. The “last mile” on gender equality has not been reached in any country. Most of the top scoring countries have “poor” or even “very poor” scores on at least one of the 14 goals covered by the index. None of the 129 countries are fully transforming laws, policies, or public budget decisions on the scale needed to reach gender equality by 2030.

Central to SDG 17: Partnerships, is the idea that the SDGs can only be achieved through collective action. The world shares the responsibility to support fragile, conflict- and crisis-affected countries. The lowest scoring ten countries in the index have an average income of just over \$2,500 (PPP) per person per year. All appear on the OECD's 2018 list of fragile states. Of the 21 countries with extremely low scores on the index (under 50, indicating the country is less than halfway to key gender equality targets) all but two (Benin and Togo) feature on the same list.

Overall the index finds that the world is furthest behind on gender equality issues related to public finance and better gender data (SDG 17), climate change (SDG 13), gender equality in industry and innovation (SDG 9), and, worryingly, the standalone gender equality goal (SDG 5). Sixty countries have

a “very poor” failing grade on SDG 5, with a score of 59 or less.

The 2019 SDG Gender Index paints a challenging picture. But it also highlights surprising findings – outliers and examples of promising policies for gender equality that can be scaled up and replicated in new contexts.

Another hopeful message emerges around the power of dedicated international efforts and investment in development. Across the board, countries have performed best on issues where coordinated and concerted policy focus and funding have been directed over the past 10–20 years, including on hunger and nutrition (SDG 2), water and sanitation (SDG 6), health (SDG 3), and education (SDG 4).

The 2019 SDG Gender index is a baseline. It will only be possible to use the index data to predict trends or forecast rates of progress when the next iteration is published in 2021. This report does not represent the complete picture of index findings, nor does it answer all of the questions it inspires. Instead, it aims to provide an entry point for advocates, decision-makers, and gender equality champions from across sectors to further explore and use the index.

Going forward, we can all use the SDG Gender Index to shine a bright and relentless spotlight on gender equality

The urgency for change cannot be overstated. Gender equality is much more than one of 17 standalone goals. Time and again, evidence shows that focusing on the advancement of girls and women compounds and accelerates progress across the entire development spectrum: we know that increasing girls’ educational attainment raises household

income and reduces infant and child mortality in future generations, reducing barriers to women’s economic participation increases gross domestic product, and equalizing women’s access to productive resources boosts overall agricultural output.⁴⁹ Governments and their partners need to ask themselves: “What are we doing differently because of the SDGs?” “What can we do today to ensure that we are moving in the right direction when the 2021 iteration of the SDG Gender Index is released?”

Advocates at all levels – from local, national, regional, and global levels – can use the data in the index to inform their daily work, holding governments and other stakeholders accountable, and building consensus around priorities for action. Going forward, we can all use the index to shine a bright and relentless spotlight on gender equality, using data to systematically track whether, where and how quickly the goal of full gender equality is being achieved.

Recommendations for action

- 1 Commit to taking steps that will ensure the world is moving in the right direction on gender equality before the next iteration of the SDG Gender Index is released in 2021. The case for investing in the rights and advancement of girls and women is clear,⁵⁰ but must continue to be strengthened and amplified.
- 2 Dedicate effective and quality funding and support for fragile, conflict- and crisis-affected countries facing the greatest gender equality challenges. This will require recognizing that girls and women are agents of change, as well as deliberate efforts to understand the underlying power relations and barriers to gender equality in the most challenging contexts.
- 3 Ensure an evidence-based, coordinated, and concerted policy focus on – and funding for – gender equality issues on which the world is falling behind. This concerns issues around the “means of implementation”, including public finance, open budgets and open data (SDG 17); climate change (SDG 13); gender equality in industry and innovation (SDG 9); as well as the standalone gender equality goal (SDG 5).
- 4 Improve the quality, relevance, and use of data and statistics, consistent with human rights norms and principles. This includes qualitative and quantitative data. Only girls and women themselves – especially those in the most marginalized communities and vulnerable groups – can tell us about their lived realities and what needs to happen to reach equality. Advocates must ensure that their voices and stories are being heard.
- 5 Prioritize funding and support for girls’ and women’s movements, advocates and champions from across sectors and at every level, from political leaders to girl- and women-led movements in the smallest villages. Support capacity to use data such as the SDG Gender Index, alongside other national, sub-national, and locally generated data.

Annex I: Indicator framework

Goal	Indicator	Official SDG/ complementary	Source(s)	
SDG 1: Poverty	1a	Proportion of the population living below the national poverty line	1.2.1	WB, OECD
	1b	Proportion of the poorest quintile of the population covered by social assistance programmes	Comp	WB, UNSD
	1c	The extent to which laws afford women and men equal and secure access to land use, control and ownership (score)	5.a.2	WB WBL
	1d	Proportion of women who report having had enough money to buy food that they or their family needed in the past 12 months	Comp	Gallup
SDG 2: Hunger & Nutrition	2a	Proportion of population below minimum level of dietary energy consumption	2.1.1	FAO (via WB)
	2b	Prevalence of obesity among women aged 18+ years	Comp	WHO
	2c	Prevalence of anaemia amongst non-pregnant women (aged 15–49 years)	Comp	WHO
SDG 3: Health	3a	Maternal mortality ratio (per 100,000 live births)	3.1.1	WHO
	3b	Adolescent birth rate (births per 1,000 women aged 15–19 years)	3.7.2	UNSD, UNFPA
	3c	Proportion of women married or in a union of reproductive age (aged 15–49 years) who have had their need for family planning satisfied with modern methods	3.7.1	UNPD
SDG 4: Education	4a	Percentage of female students enrolled in primary education who are over-age	Comp	UIS
	4b	Percentage of young women aged 3–5 years above upper secondary school graduation age who have completed secondary education	Comp	UIS
	4c	Percentage of young women (aged 15–24 years) not in education, employment or training (NEET)	Comp	ILO
	4d	Literacy rate among adult (aged 15+ years) women	Comp	UIS
SDG 5: Gender Equality	5a	Proportion of women aged 20–24 years who were married or in a union before age 18	5.3.1	UNICEF
	5b	Percentage of women who agree that a husband/partner is justified in beating his wife/partner under certain circumstances	Comp	UNICEF
	5c	The extent to which there are legal grounds for abortion (score)	Comp	CRR
	5d	Proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments	5.5.1	IPU
	5e	Proportion of ministerial/senior government positions held by women	Comp	IPU

Goal	Indicator	Official SDG/ complementary	Source(s)	
SDG 6: Water & Sanitation	6a	Proportion of population using at least basic drinking water services	6.1.1	WASH JMP
	6b	Proportion of population using at least basic sanitation services	6.2.1	WASH JMP
	6c	Proportion of women who report being satisfied with the quality of water in the city or area where they live	Comp	Gallup
SDG 7: Energy	7a	Proportion of population with access to electricity	7.1.1	WB
	7b	Proportion of population with primary reliance on clean fuels and technology	7.2.1	WHO
	7c	Proportion of women who report being satisfied with the quality of air where they live	Comp	Gallup
SDG 8: Work & Economic Growth	8a	Wage equality between women and men for similar work (score)	Comp	WB/WEF
	8b	Proportion of women recognized as "contributing family workers" (as a % of total employment for female employment)	Comp	ILO
	8c	Extent of freedom of association and collective bargaining rights in law (score)	Comp	PSU
	8d	Extent to which the country has laws mandating women's workplace equality (score)	Comp	WB/WBL
	8e	Proportion of women who hold a bank account at a financial institution	8.10.2	WB
SDG 9: Industry, Infrastructure & Innovation	9a	Proportion of women who have made or received digital payments in the past year	Comp	WB
	9b	Proportion of women who report being satisfied with the quality of roads in the city or area where they live	Comp	Gallup
	9c	Proportion of women with access to internet service	Comp	ITU
	9d	Proportion of women in science and technology research positions	Comp	UIS
SDG 10: Inequality	10a	Palma income inequality ratio (the share of income of the richest 10% of the population divided by the share of income of the poorest 40%)	Comp	UNU Wider
	10b	Level of personal autonomy, individual rights and freedom from discrimination (score)	Comp	Freedom House
	10c	Proportion of ratified human rights instruments regarding migration	Comp	OHCHR

Goal	Indicator	Official SDG/ complementary	Source(s)
SDG 11: Cities & Communities	11a	Proportion of women who report having had enough money to provide adequate shelter or housing in the past 12 months	Comp Gallup
	11b	Annual mean level of fine particulate matter	11.6.2 WHO
	11c	Percentage of women aged 15+ who report that they "feel safe walking alone at night in the city or area where you live"	16.1.4 Gallup
SDG 13: Climate	13a	Extent to which the delegation representing the country at the UNFCCC is gender balanced (score)	Comp UNFCCC
	13b	Extent to which a state is committed to disaster risk reduction (score)	Comp UNISDR
	13c	Level of climate vulnerability (score)	Comp ND-GAIN Index
SDG 16: Peace & Institutions	16a	Proportion of children under 5 years of age whose births were registered with a civil authority	16.9.1 UNSD, UNICEF
	16b	Female victims of intentional homicide (per 100,000 population)	16.1.1 UNODC
	16c	Percentage of seats held by women on a country's Supreme Court or highest court	Comp WB/WBL
	16d	Extent to which a state is viewed as legitimate, open, and representative (score)	Comp Fund for Peace, FS Index
SDG 17: Partnerships	17a	Social expenditure as a % of GDP (for all types of social assistance programmes)	1.a.2 WB, OECD
	17b	Tax revenue as a % of GDP	Comp WB, OECD
	17c	Extent to which a national budget is broken down by factors such as gender, age, income, or region (score)	Comp Intl. Budget Partnership
	17d	Openness of gender statistics (score)	Comp Open Data Watch

Annex II: Methodology

How was the SDG Gender Index designed?

In 2018, in response to the urgent need for tools to support data-driven analysis and to hold governments accountable for gender equality in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals, EM2030 and its partners launched the pilot SDG Gender Index. More information about the consultations and surveys is found in the About the SDG Gender Index section of this report starting on p. 10 (more information can also be found on www.data.em2030.org). The pilot index included **43 indicators across 12 of the 17 official goals** and was tested in six focus countries. The pilot index used a mix of official gender-related SDG indicators developed by the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators (IAEG-SDGs) and complementary indicators. Indicator scores were based on the relative position of a country to lowest and highest performing countries.

Drawing on several technical consultations and a formal review by the COIN team at the EU Joint Research Centre, EM2030 refined the initial index framework, introduced two new goals (SDG 9 and SDG 11) and revised the indicator framework. Other design issues were considered and adopted in relation to weighting, introduction of targets, and presentation issues. The resulting 2019 EM2030 SDG Gender Index includes **51 indicators across 14 of the 17 official goals** and covers 129 countries across all regions of the world.

The scale-up of the index built upon the methodological framework of the pilot index and adapted the design to increase the number of countries covered by the index as well as ensuring that it was a transparent and easy-to-use tool for gender advocates around the world.

What issues does the 2019 SDG Gender Index cover?

The index includes many official gender-related SDG indicators developed by the IAEG-SDGs and

adopted by the UN, along with 33 complementary indicators. Most indicators have an obvious rationale for inclusion in an index tracking gender equality – indicators such as maternal mortality and child marriage rates, for example. Yet 7 of the 17 official Sustainable Development Goals lack a single official gender-specific indicator.⁵¹ The approach of the index is that examining gender-focused issues and data under each goal, even where no gender-specific official indicator exists, provides a more complete picture of both the goal itself and its relationship to gender equality.

With the scale-up of the index from the pilot phase, existing indicators were assessed. In addition to new indicators for SDG 9 and SDG 11, the index includes 15 new or adjusted indicators. Some indicators from the pilot index were dropped due to poor data coverage (e.g. lacking coverage in higher income countries), some were altered to make use of improved data sources (e.g. the index includes a revised measure of women's participation in senior government roles), and others are wholly new indicators (e.g. indicator on the proportion of female justices).

The design of the index

The index builds upon a standalone set of between three and five indicators for each goal. In the spirit of our approach that all indicators – even those not included in the official SDG framework or not traditionally considered “gendered” issues – capture important dimensions of gender equality, and the importance of country-generated data, the overall index is calculated based on the individual indicators, based on a threshold of at least 85 percent of the indicators (or 44 of the 51 indicators). The index scores for each of the 14 goals are calculated based on a threshold of 75 percent available data. The goals are calculated separately due to the need not to impute missing data, but to rely on data provided by national governments. A country could miss one goal and still be included in the index (e.g. China, Iraq, and Ireland).

If the index is to serve as

an accountability tool, it needs to enable users to measure distance to SDG targets for indicators, make regional comparisons, and trace scores over time. The approach to setting targets was to use official SDG targets where they existed and to set ideal high threshold targets for others (e.g. the target for women's participation in parliament is gender parity or 47–53 percent). Categorical variables (none of which were binary) were adapted into composite indicators and assigned scores. Actual percentages and composite scores were normalized on a 1–100 scale to generate indicator scores on a common scale – where a higher number is closer to reaching the target.

What makes the SDG Gender Index distinct from other tools?

The SDG Gender Index goes beyond existing gender indices that, for the most part, focus on a few key domains of gender equality. While these issues are crucial for gender equality, they do not reflect the impact of a wide range of interrelated and vital issues for girls and women, including nutrition, water, sanitation, energy and fiscal and tax policies. Indeed, some of these areas are relatively or entirely ‘gender blind’ in the official SDG framework, with no gender-specific indicators. The more holistic approach of the SDG Gender Index to monitor gender progress across the SDGs is one of its key distinguishing features.

Three existing gender indicator frameworks were consulted in the design of the index:

- UN Women's SDG Indicator Framework maps gender-related indicators in the SDGs, and more recently, the UN Women *Turning Promises into Action* report noted that only 54 of the 232 SDG indicators explicitly target girls or women, or call for reporting that is disaggregated by sex, and that sufficient and regular data are available for only ten of these at present. While UN Women is exploring gender issues across

all of the SDGs, it has no current plans to create a gender index on these issues.

- The UN Minimum Set of Gender Indicators agreed by the UN Statistical Commission in 2013 to guide national production and international compilation of gender statistics is a collection of 52 quantitative indicators and 11 legal/policy indicators addressing relevant issues related to gender equality. It covers seven SDGs and 11 of its 52 indicators

are included in the 2019 SDG Gender Index.

- The Ready to Measure study produced by Data2X is another helpful tool. It presents 20 indicators (16 identical to or closely related to the official SDG indicators and four complementary indicators) that are currently ready to report. It covers gender issues in five SDGs. Seven of the 20 indicators in the Ready to Measure are included in the 2019 SDG Gender Index.

Endnotes

- 1 This report groups countries by region according to UN conventions.
- 2 Resources available online at www.data.em2030.org.
- 3 On terminology: This report uses sex to refer to biological sex or sex-disaggregated as a descriptive term for data broken down by biological sex; gender to refer to the social attributes and opportunities associated with being male or female; gender equality to refer to the equal rights and opportunities of women and men and girls and boys; and gender equality advocates to refer to organizations or individuals from all sectors who work to ensure progress for girls and women at the community, national, regional, or global level.
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