

Economic Equality Fails to Match Health and Education Progress for Women Worldwide, Study Released

27 October 2011

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- Women hold less than 20% of all national decision-making positions
- India ranks lowest on gender parity among the BRICS countries
- USA continues to improve, moves up two places
- UAE ranks highest in the Arab World with Saudi Arabia improving the fastest over past 6 years
- Gender gap worsening in Nigeria, Mali, Colombia, Tanzania and El Salvador over past 6 years
- Download the [report](#) and rankings ([PDF](#), [excel](#)) or read it [online](#).
- More information about the Women Leaders and Gender Parity Programme available [here](#).

New York, USA, 1 November 2011 – Over the last six years, while 85% of countries are improving their gender equality ratios, for the rest of the world the situation is declining, most notably in several African and South American countries. The sixth annual World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Report 2011 shows a slight decline over the last year in gender equality rankings for New Zealand, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka and the United Kingdom this year, while gains are made in Brazil, Ethiopia, Qatar, Tanzania and Turkey.

Nordic countries (Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden) continue to hold top spots having closed over 80% of their gender gaps, while countries at the bottom of the rankings still need to close as much as 50%.

The Global Gender Gap 2011 Rankings - Top 20

Country	2011	Score*	2010	Change
Iceland	1	85.3%	1	0
Norway	2	84.0%	2	0
Finland	3	83.8%	3	0
Sweden	4	80.4%	4	0
Ireland	5	78.3%	6	1
New Zealand	6	78.1%	5	-1
Denmark	7	77.8%	7	0
Philippines	8	76.9%	9	1
Lesotho	9	76.7%	8	-1
Switzerland	10	76.3%	10	0
Germany	11	75.9%	13	2
Spain	12	75.8%	11	-1
Belgium	13	75.3%	14	1
South Africa	14	74.8%	12	-2
Netherlands	15	74.7%	17	2
United Kingdom	16	74.6%	15	-1
United States	17	74.1%	19	2

Canada	18	74.1%	20	2	
Latvia	19	74.0%	18	-1	
Cuba	20	73.9%	24	4	
* Scores produced on zero-to-one scale and can be roughly interpreted as percentage of gender gap that has been closed.					

For the first year, data sets analyzing national policies designed to facilitate female workforce participation have been included in the report. The data, based on information from almost 60 countries, shows that while 88% of countries have legislation prohibiting gender-based workplace discrimination, less than 45% have a national benchmarking tool. According to the report, 20% of countries surveyed have mandated female corporate board representation and 30% have mandated political participation. “ Smaller gender gaps are directly correlated with increased economic competitiveness, ” says Saadia Zahidi, Senior Director, Head of the World Economic Forum ’ s Women Leaders and Gender Parity Programme and report co-author. “ With the world ’ s attention on job creation and economic growth, gender equality is the key to unlocking potential and stimulating economies.”

“ Gender gaps close when countries recognize the economic and social imperatives. With the right policies, change can happen very quickly,” says co-author Laura Tyson, S.K. and Angela Chan Professor of Global Management, Haas School of Business, University of California at Berkeley, USA.

International scores for health and education are encouraging with 96% of the health gaps and 93% of the education gaps already closed. Around the world, economic and political participation continue to show the largest gaps.

“ Female healthy life expectancy and literacy levels remain alarmingly low across many parts of Africa and Asia. In Latin America, women have more schooling than men but marriage and motherhood are still not compatible with a fuller economic and political participation of women. We ’ ve come a long way but there is still a long road ahead of us, ” says report co-author Ricardo Hausmann, Director of the Centre for International Development at Harvard University.

The Global Gender Gap Report ’ s index assesses 135 countries, representing more than 93% of the world ’ s population, on how well resources and opportunities are divided amongst male and female populations. The report measures the size of the gender inequality gap in four areas:

- Economic participation and opportunity –salaries, participation and highly-skilled employment
- Education – access to basic and higher level education
- Political empowerment – representation in decision-making structures
- Health and survival – life expectancy and sex ratio

The index scores can be interpreted as the percentage of the gap that has been closed between women and men. Of these, 114 have been covered since the first edition of the report six years ago. Thirteen out of the 14 variables used to create the index are from publicly available hard data indicators from international organizations such as the International Labour Organization, the United Nations Development Programme and the World Health Organization.

“ A world where women make up less than 20% of the global decision-makers is a world that is missing a huge opportunity for growth and ignoring an untapped reservoir of potential, ” says Klaus Schwab, Founder and Chairman of the World Economic Forum.

Regional Analysis

At the regional level, in Latin America and the Caribbean, Cuba (20) takes back the top spot in the region due to the high number of female professional and technical workers (60%) and in parliament (43%), as well as for the high levels of primary, secondary and tertiary education enrolment. Brazil (82), while still placing on the lower half of the index, has moved up three places with improvements in perceived wage equality, women ’ s estimated earned income and the tenure of President Dilma Rousseff. Guatemala (112) continues to hold the last position in the region.

In the Arab world, the United Arab Emirates (103) continues to hold the top spot. Saudi Arabia (131) and Yemen

(135) remain the lowest-ranking Arab world countries, although Saudi Arabia is one of the highest climbers of the 114 countries that have been included in the Report since 2006.

The Philippines (8) remain the highest-ranking Asian country, primarily due to success in health and education. Thailand (60), which this year elected its first woman Prime Minister, remains well positioned with women making up more than half of tertiary education enrolled and high overall labour force participation. While China remains the third-last ranking country on the health and survival sub index (133) due to a skewed sex ratio at birth, its strength lies in high female labour force participation (74%). India (113), the Islamic Republic of Iran (125), Nepal (126) and Pakistan (133) occupy the last places in the regional rankings. India is the lowest-ranked of the BRIC economies featured in the index.

In Africa, Lesotho (9) is the only sub-Saharan African country to have no gap in education or health; the only other developing countries to achieve this are Belize and the Philippines. Burundi (24) comes in as the only country in which the labour force participation rate of women is higher than that of men. Nigeria (120), Benin (128), Côte d'Ivoire (130), Mali (132) and Chad (134) all round out the bottom of the list.

In Europe, Switzerland (10) continues to show gains in access to education, economic participation and political empowerment with Italy (74) and Turkey (122) among the lowest-ranking countries.

In North America, the United States (17) is up two places, continuing its ascent on the overall rankings, which is attributed to a modest decrease in wage gaps as well as slower growth in other countries.

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