Gender equality
Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

Laws are a first step in helping women and girls achieve gender equality. About half of all countries have laws against gender-based discrimination in hiring.

Does the law mandate nondiscrimination based on gender in hiring? 2017

17 of the 20 countries with the lowest female employment to population ratios don’t have nondiscrimination laws.


Laws may help protect women from violence, but two out of five countries have no clear penalties for domestic violence.

Are there clear criminal penalties for domestic violence? 2017

Despite penalties existing in Kiribati, the Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu, about 40 percent of women in these countries report violence from an intimate partner.

In Afghanistan, where there are no penalties, over 45 percent of women reported violence from an intimate partner.

Although the legal age of marriage is 18 in most countries, a large share of women are married at an earlier age.

Age at first marriage, most recent value in 2008–16 (% of women ages 20–24)

Girls from poorer households are more likely to become teenage mothers than are girls from wealthier households.

Had a child or is currently pregnant, most recent value in 2008–16 (% of women ages 15–19)

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Firms with female participation in ownership, by country and regional median, most recent value in 2010–17 (%)

Note: Aggregates are based mostly on low- and middle-income countries.


In political life, men are overrepresented. Across regions, women on average occupy less than a quarter of parliamentary seats.

Proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments, by country and regional median, 2017 (%)

Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union. World Development Indicators (SG.GEN.PARL.ZS).

Women average 2.6 times as much time on unpaid care and domestic work as men do.

Proportion of time spent on unpaid care and domestic work, most recent value in 2007–15 (% of 24 hour day)

Note: 2.6 times estimate from UN Women (2018) http://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/sdg-report. Data may not be strictly comparable across countries as the method and sampling used for data collection may differ.

Source: UN Statistics Division. World Development Indicators (SG.TIM.UWRK.MA; SG.TIM.UWRK.FE).
Many women in Sub-Saharan Africa are not free to make their own decisions about reproductive health and sexual relations.

Women making their own informed decisions regarding sexual relations, contraceptive use, and reproductive healthcare, most recent value in 2007–15 (% of women ages 15–49)

For women to be considered free to make their own decisions regarding sexual and reproductive health, they must answer affirmatively to three questions in surveys. These are being free to: refuse sexual intercourse with their husband or partner if they do not want it, decide on the use of contraception, and decide on their own healthcare.

Women with greater decision making power are more likely to use modern contraceptive methods and to have fewer children.

Most recent value in 2007–15

Note: All countries plotted are in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Source: Household surveys (DHS, MICS) and UN Population Division. WDI (SP.DYN.CONM.ZS; SG.DMK.SRCR.FN.ZS; SP.DYN.TFRT.IN).