2 Results of the fifth edition of the Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI)

This chapter presents an overview of the global results of the fifth edition of the OECD Development Centre's Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) launched in March 2023. Looking at formal and informal laws, social norms and practices, it summarises the main areas where progress has been accomplished since 2019 and where challenges remain towards achieving Sustainable Development Goal 5 of the 2030 Agenda. Building on the four dimensions of the SIGI's conceptual framework and adopting a global perspective, the chapter explores (i) how discrimination within the family sphere is the highest; (ii) why violence against women remains a global pandemic underpinned by its social acceptance; (iii) to what extent discriminatory laws and restrictive norms of masculinities hamper women's economic empowerment; and (iv) why women's and girls' agency in the public sphere remains limited despite the progress accomplished.

In Brief

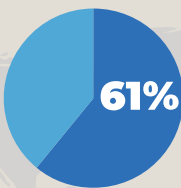## Change in discriminatory social institutions is underway but must accelerate

- The number of both developed and developing countries committing to ending gender-based discrimination is on the rise thanks to legal reforms, the implementation of policies in favour of gender equality and positive changes in discriminatory attitudes.

- Nevertheless, challenges continue to severely hamper the empowerment of women and girls. Globally, 40% of women and girls live in countries where levels of discrimination in social institutions are high or very high; and in 18 countries, levels of discrimination in social institutions are very high. Although the SIGI global average score is 29,[1] denoting a low level of discrimination, situations are very diverse with ample variation across and within regions.

- Since the fourth edition of the SIGI in 2019, many countries have enacted legal reforms that protect women's rights and grant them equal opportunities, notably to comprehensively address gender-based violence, to prevent child marriage and to increase women's political representation. Yet, progress and challenges are not homogeneous. Changes in social norms paint a mixed picture and practices such as girl child marriage, imbalances in unpaid care and domestic work or intimate-partner violence have improved but at a very limited pace.

- In this context, gender equality remains a distant goal, and the world is not on track to achieve Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 by 2030.

### Discrimination in social institutions spans all aspects of women's and girls' lives

- Discrimination is the highest within the family sphere. Social norms confining women to care and reproductive roles translate into women dedicating 2.6 times more time to unpaid care and domestic work than men. Women's lack of agency in the household, which is particularly acute in the context of inheritance, aggravates their vulnerabilities to economic deprivations.

- Despite better legal protections, girl child marriage remains far from eradicated. Multiple and simultaneous shocks – COVID-19, climate change, global food crisis, etc. – together with persisting discriminatory informal laws put millions of girls at risk of early and forced marriage.

- Violence against women and girls remains a global pandemic. In 2023, nearly one in three women has experienced intimate-partner violence at least once in her lifetime; and one in ten has survived it over the last year. While fundamentally underpinned by harmful social norms "normalising" men's use of violence, addressing violence against women requires establishing strong and comprehensive legal frameworks, as part of robust systems, that cover all its forms.

- Globally, the gender gap in labour force participation stands at 25 percentage points. These differences take root in discriminatory social norms that establish men as the main breadwinner – giving them priority over women in the workplace – and confine women to their motherhood and caregiving role – hampering their ability to work for a pay. Discriminatory social norms on the social definition of jobs and on women's leadership abilities also lead to a more segregated labour market – both horizontally and vertically.

- With 27% of members of parliament who are women in 2023, women's and girls' agency in the public sphere is improving, but slowly. At the current pace, it will take at least 40 years to reach parity in national parliaments. Progress has been substantially driven by gender political quotas, particularly in a context where social norms and stereotypes of women's ability to be political leaders continue to limit their agency and opportunity to be elected in parliaments.

Infographic 2.1. Change in discriminatory social institutions is underway but must accelerate

Discriminatory social institutions: a mixed picture of progress and setbacks

61%

In 85 countries out of 140, levels of discrimination in social institutions are low or very low
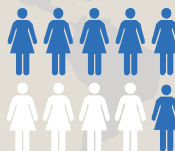
But 40% of women and girls live in countries where discrimination is high or very high

Girl child marriage decreased, but global crises threaten to reverse the trend

Girls married before 18

2000

2023

2020-30 +10 million child brides compared to pre-pandemic projections

Women shoulder most of the unpaid care and domestic work

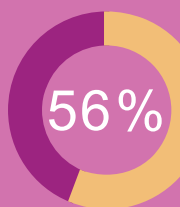4.7 — Hours per day — 1.8

Women — Men

1 in 3 women has experienced intimate-partner violence at least once in their lifetime
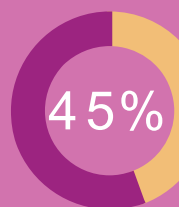
30% of women think that it is acceptable for a husband to beat his wife under certain circumstances

56% of people believe that when women work, their children suffer

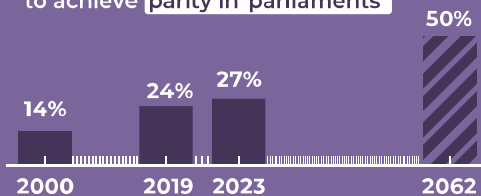Only 25% of managers are women

45% of people think that men should have more right to a job than women

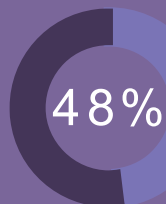## Women's and girls' agency in the public sphere is improving, but slowly

It will take 40 more years to achieve parity in parliaments

14% (2000) 24% (2019) 27% (2023) 50% (2062)

Women's political representation

48% of people believe that men make better political leaders

What are the fundamental underlying causes of gender inequality, and why have we not been able to eradicate discrimination against women and girls? Since 2009, this question has been the focus of the work of the OECD Development Centre. The analysis produced over the course of 15 years has revealed that discriminatory social institutions – the established set of formal and/or informal laws, norms and practices that govern behaviour in society – are at the heart of differences between women and men. The inequalities observed and experienced by women and girls are just the tip of the iceberg: discriminatory norms and social institutions rest below the surface, reinforcing the status quo. Social institutions fundamentally dictate what women and men are allowed to do, what they are expected to do and what they do. The OECD Development Centre measures this "invisible part of the iceberg" through the SIGI. The fifth edition of the Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI), in 2023, sheds light on the structural and multiple barriers that affect women's and girls' lives in developing and developed countries, highlighting the progress achieved since the fourth edition and the challenges remaining.

Global results of the fifth edition of the SIGI underline that change is underway but must accelerate

The number of both developed and developing countries committing to ending gender-based discrimination is on the rise. Legal reforms and policies in favour of gender equality, and the evolution of attitudes are starting to pay off. Discrimination in social institutions is being eliminated, albeit at a very slow pace and with some setbacks in certain areas, which dangerously puts the world at risk of not achieving SDG 5. Between 2019 and 2023, the number of countries in which the level of discrimination is low or very low[2] has increased by 10, to reach 85 countries out of 140 that obtained a SIGI score in 2023 (Figure 2.1 and Annex A). Progress has occurred across all regions of the world, and developing countries are bridging the gap with developed countries. In 2023, among the 55 countries for which the level of discrimination in social institutions is estimated to be very low, 25 (45%) are non-OECD countries.

Yet, numerous challenges remain, and discrimination in social institutions continues to severely hamper the empowerment of women and girls. Globally, 40% of women and girls live in countries where the level of discrimination in social institutions is estimated to be high or very high. In 18 countries, all located in Africa and Asia, the levels of discrimination in social institutions are measured as very high. Moreover, levels of discrimination may be underestimated because countries not classified by the SIGI due to missing datapoints also tend to display high level of discrimination in the variables and indicators for which data are available. The lack of data prevented the calculation of SIGI scores for 39 countries out of the 179 covered by the fifth edition, which were nevertheless included in the Gender, Institutions and Development Database (GID-DB) (see Annex B). In particular, for 38 of these 39 countries, a full set of legal data was collected.[3] Among these 38 countries that have legal data but that did not obtain a SIGI score, 17 have legal frameworks for which discrimination is assessed as very high, and 3 have legal frameworks for which discrimination is assessed as high.[4] Had these countries been included, it would likely have substantially increased the number of countries with high and very high levels of discrimination in social institutions. Conversely, only 4 of these 38 countries have legal frameworks for which discrimination is assessed as very low.

Figure 2.1. Discrimination in social institutions continues to hamper women's empowerment in many countries

Classification of countries according to their SIGI score

Very low (55 countries)	Albania Argentina **Australia** **Austria** **Belgium** Belize Bulgaria **Canada**	**Costa Rica** Côte d'Ivoire Croatia **Czech Republic** **Denmark** Dominican Republic Ecuador El Salvador **Estonia** **Finland**	**France** **Germany** **Greece** **Hungary** **Ireland** **Italy** Jamaica **Korea** **Latvia** **Lithuania**	Malta Moldova Mongolia Montenegro Mozambique **Netherlands** **New Zealand** **Norway** Panama Peru	**Poland** **Portugal** Romania Rwanda Serbia **Slovak Republic** **Slovenia** **Spain** **Sweden** **Switzerland**	Chinese Taipei Ukraine **United Kingdom** **United States** Uruguay Venezuela Zimbabwe
Low (30 countries)	Angola Armenia Azerbaijan Bolivia	Bosnia and Herzegovina Brazil Burkina Faso Cambodia **Chile**	China **Colombia** Georgia Guatemala Honduras Hong Kong (China)	Kazakhstan Kosovo Kyrgyzstan Lao PDR **Mexico** Namibia	Nicaragua North Macedonia Paraguay South Africa Thailand Trinidad and Tobago	**Türkiye** Uganda Viet Nam
Medium (18 countries)	Benin Bhutan Botswana	Ethiopia Gabon Ghana	Guinea Indonesia **Israel**	**Japan** Kenya Lesotho	Liberia Malawi Nepal	South Sudan Togo Zambia
High (19 countries)	Bangladesh Burundi	Central African Republic Chad DRC	Gambia Haiti India Madagascar	Morocco Myanmar Nigeria Philippines	Senegal Sierra Leone Singapore Tajikistan	Tanzania Tunisia
Very high (18 countries)	Cameroon Comoros	Egypt Iran Iraq Jordan	Lebanon Malaysia Mali Mauritania	Niger Pakistan Qatar Saudi Arabia	Somalia Sri Lanka Sudan	West Bank and Gaza Strip
Not classified (39 countries)	Afghanistan Algeria Antigua and Barbuda Bahamas Bahrain Barbados	Brunei Darussalam Cabo Verde Congo Cuba Cyprus Djibouti Dominica	Equatorial Guinea Eritrea Eswatini Fiji Grenada Guinea-Bissau Guyana	**Iceland** Kuwait Libya **Luxembourg** Maldives Mauritius Oman	Papua New Guinea Samoa Sao Tome and Principe Seychelles Solomon Islands Suriname	Syria Timor-Leste Turkmenistan United Arab Emirates Uzbekistan Yemen

Note: Scores range from 0 to 100, with 0 indicating no discrimination and 100 indicating absolute discrimination. Countries are classified into five groups according to their SIGI score: (1) very low level of discrimination (0 < SIGI < 20); (2) low level of discrimination (20 < SIGI < 30); (3) medium level of discrimination (30 < SIGI < 40); (4) high level of discrimination (40 < SIGI < 50); and (5) very high level of discrimination (50 < SIGI < 100). Countries not classified have missing data which prevented the calculation of SIGI scores. Bolded countries are OECD countries.
Source: (OECD, 2023[1]), "Social Institutions and Gender Index (Edition 2023)", *OECD International Development Statistics* (database), https://doi.org/10.1787/33beb96e-en.

Progress and challenges are not homogeneous and certain regions lag behind others

The SIGI global average score is 29,[5] indicating that levels of discrimination in social institutions across the world are estimated to be low and close to medium. This result hides very diverse situations with ample variation across regions and within countries themselves. In Europe and the Americas, SIGI scores respectively attain 14 and 21, denoting very low and low levels of discrimination. In Asia and Africa however, SIGI scores reach 37 and 40 respectively, indicating medium and high level of discrimination.

Wide variations also exist within regions (Figure 2.2, Panel A). In Africa, for instance, there is a substantial number of countries in all categories of the SIGI classification, but with only four African countries in the very low category: Côte d'Ivoire, Mozambique, Rwanda and Zimbabwe. Likewise, in Asia, levels of discrimination range from very low to very high, with countries classified in all categories (Figure 2.2, Panel B). In countries that do not fare well, these wide variations may reflect the lack of political will to address the root causes of discrimination and/or weak governance or conflict. Entrenched social norms can also pose challenges to implementing laws, policies and programmes, even in contexts where political support for gender equality exists. For countries that fare better, the variations highlight their strong commitments to eradicating gender discrimination, including through legal reforms, implementation of laws, and programmes and policies aimed at challenging discriminatory social norms.

Figure 2.2. Levels of discrimination in social institutions vary widely across regions

Distribution of SIGI scores (Panel A) and levels of discrimination (Panel B) by regions and selected sub-regions
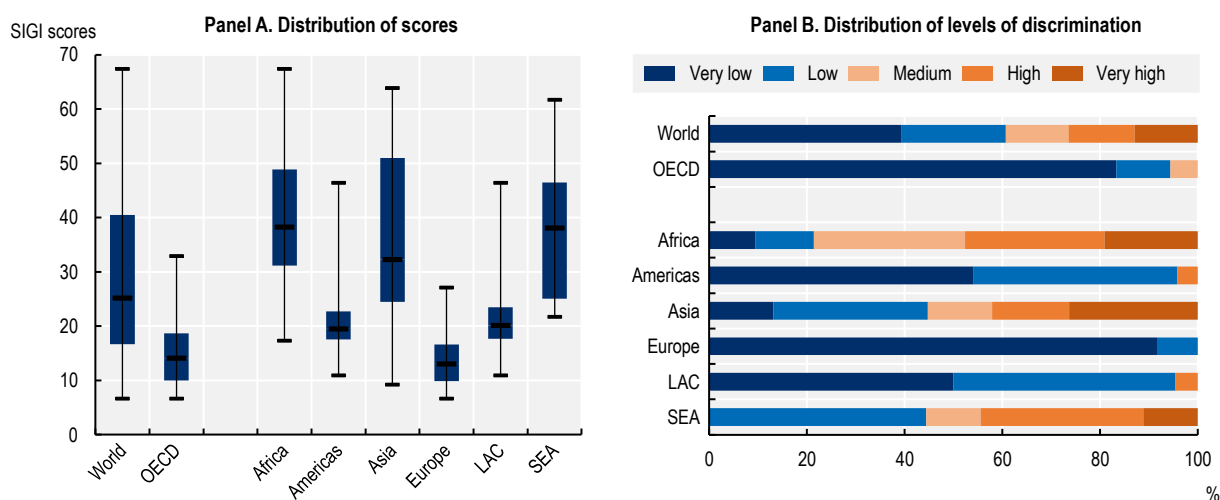
Note: LAC refers to Latin America and the Caribbean, and SEA refers to Southeast Asia. Panel A presents the statistical distribution of SIGI scores across regions and selected sub-regions. For each geographical area, the lower bar corresponds to the lowest SIGI score of the area, the upper bar the highest SIGI score of the area and the intermediary bar to the median SIGI score of the area. For each area, the box contains SIGI scores ranging between the first and the third quartile. The median and variance of SIGI scores obtained for each area reveal to what extent levels of discrimination are low or high (median) and whether areas are very heterogenous (large variance or inter-quartile range). Scores range from 0 to 100, with 0 indicating no discrimination and 100 indicating absolute discrimination. Panel B presents the distribution of countries by levels of discrimination across regions and selected sub-regions. Countries are classified into five groups according to their SIGI score: (1) very low level of discrimination (SIGI < 20); (2) low level of discrimination (20 < SIGI < 30); (3) medium level of discrimination (30 < SIGI < 40); (4) high level of discrimination (40 < SIGI < 50); and (5) very high level of discrimination (SIGI > 50). At the global level, data cover 140 countries for which SIGI scores were calculated in 2023. Data cover 36 OECD countries, 42 countries of Africa, 24 countries of the Americas (including 22 countries of Latin America and the Caribbean), 38 countries of Asia (including 9 countries of Southeast Asia) and 36 countries of Europe.
Source: (OECD, 2023[1]), "Social Institutions and Gender Index (Edition 2023)", *OECD International Development Statistics* (database), https://doi.org/10.1787/33beb96e-en.

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Since 2019 and the fourth edition of the SIGI, many countries have enacted legal reforms that protect women's rights and grant them equal opportunities. These legal reforms have covered all areas and spheres of women's lives. Policy makers have increasingly addressed gender-based violence through comprehensive legal reforms that not only aim to eradicate physical and sexual violence against women but also to eliminate girl child marriage and female genital mutilation and cutting. With the objective of preventing child marriage, countries have also taken steps to strengthen their laws governing marriage by establishing 18 years as the minimum age of marriage for women and men, with no exceptions. More

countries have enacted legislated quotas at the national level to increase women's representation in national parliaments.

Transforming social norms fundamentally takes time as they relate to the core beliefs of individuals, and these changes are not immune to backlash and regression. Global and local challenges such as socio-economic crises and uncertainty can trigger social resistance to progress and potentially induce a backlash against gender equality. Based on 37 countries[6] that account for 50% of the world's population aged 18 years and more and for which attitudinal data are available for both wave 6 (2010-14) and wave 7 (2017-22) of the World Values Survey (Inglehart et al., 2022[2]), results paint a mixed picture of progress and setbacks (Figure 2.3):

- Attitudes towards intimate partner violence and women's leadership in both economic and political spheres have seen positive changes. Between 2014 and 2022, discriminatory attitudes towards women's leadership in politics and in the economic sphere have decreased by 4 and 6 percentage points respectively. Over this period, the share of individuals holding such discriminatory views decreased in 31 countries out of 37. Likewise, the share of people thinking that it is always or sometimes acceptable for a man to beat his wife decreased by 12 percentage points between 2014 and 2021.

- However, social norms related to women's equal rights and ability to work have become more negative. Between 2014 and 2022, the share of individuals thinking that men should have more right to a job than women when jobs are scarce increased in 19 countries and by more than 5 percentage points in 14 of them. Overall, it increased by 4 percentage points. Likewise, the share of the population thinking that it is almost certain to cause problems if a woman earns more money than her husband went up by 6 percentage points, increasing in 24 countries while decreasing in only 13 countries.

Figure 2.3. Changes in social norms are a mixed picture of progress and setbacks

Change in discriminatory attitudes between 2014 and 2022
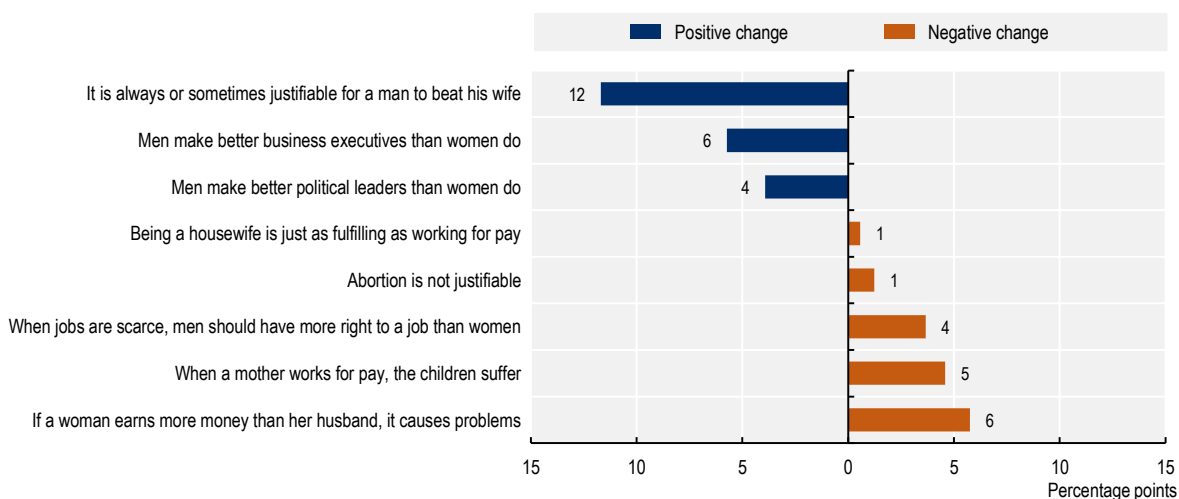
Note: For each statement, the figure presents the change in percentage points between the share of the population holding discriminatory views in 2014 and 2021. A positive change indicates that the share of the population holding discriminatory attitudes decreased between 2014 and 2021; a negative change indicates that the share of the population holding discriminatory attitudes decreased between 2014 and 2021. Depending on the statement, data are calculated over a sample of 36 or 37 countries for which data are available for both consecutive waves 6 and 7 of the World Values Survey, which correspond to the periods 2010-14 and 2017-22, respectively. These countries account for 50% of the population aged 18 years and more.
Source: (Inglehart et al., 2022[2]), World Values Survey: All Rounds, https://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSDocumentationWVL.jsp.

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Against this backdrop, gender gaps have been reduced and harmful practices have declined but at a very limited pace. The slow progress jeopardises the achievement by 2030 of SDG 5 as well as the 102 indicators of the SDG framework (out of 247) that are gender-relevant (Cohen and Shinwell, 2020[3]). Estimates from the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) suggest that girl child marriage dropped from one in four women married before the age of 18 in 2010, to less than one in five in 2022 (UNICEF, 2023[4]; UNICEF, 2022[5]; UNICEF, 2018[6]). Whereas women dedicated 3.3 times more time to unpaid care and domestic work than men in 2014, it has decreased to 2.6 times more in 2023. Likewise, the share of women who have survived intimate-partner violence during the last 12 months has dropped from 19% in 2014 to 10% in 2023. On the political side, the share of women in national parliaments has increased from 24% in 2019 to nearly 27% in 2023 (OECD Development Centre/OECD, 2023[7]; OECD Development Centre/OECD, 2019[8]; OECD Development Centre/OECD, 2014[9]). Yet, despite these advances, gender equality remains a distant goal, and the world is not on track to achieve SDG 5 by 2030 (Box 2.1). Moreover, recent crises may have further derailed efforts to achieve gender equality. For instance, evidence suggests that the COVID-19 crisis has increased the amount and intensity of women's unpaid domestic work, although the full impact of the crisis will remain unclear until proper time-use surveys are conducted (UN Women, 2020[10]).

Box 2.1. Gender equality and the Sustainable Development Goals: Where does the world stand?

Eradicating discrimination against women and girls is a stand-alone objective of the SDGs under Goal 5. Composed of 9 targets and 18 indicators, SDG 5 covers a large range of issues including discriminatory legislation, all forms of violence against women and girls, unpaid care and domestic work, representation in decision-making positions, universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights, and access to productive resources (United Nations, 2015[11]). Since 2018, the OECD's SIGI is one of the official data sources for monitoring SDG Indicator 5.1.1 on "[w]hether or not legal frameworks are in place to promote, enforce and monitor gender equality and women's empowerment", together with UN Women and the World Bank Group's Women Business and the Law. Beyond SDG 5, gender equality is also embedded in nearly all 17 goals. In total, around 45% of indicators of the SDG framework (102 out of 247) are gender-relevant (Cohen and Shinwell, 2020[3]).

Current trends show that the world is not on track to achieve gender equality by 2030. The socio-economic consequences of recent crises, including the COVID-19 pandemic and the global food crisis, have exacerbated existing gender inequalities and, in some countries, worsened the situation (United Nations, 2022[12]).

In 2022, an analysis from Equal Measures 2030 carried out across 56 gender-related indicators, covering 14 of the 17 SDGs, revealed that only about 68% of gender targets had been achieved in 2020 (Equal Measures 2030, 2022[13]). If current trends continue, only 71% would be achieved by 2030. The analysis highlighted that, between 2015 and 2020, about two-thirds of countries with comparable historical data made progress towards more gender equality, and one-third showed no progress or moved in the opposite direction, towards more gender-unequal societies.

Figure 2.4. The world is not on track to achieve gender equality by 2030

Change in Equal Measures 2030 global scores between 2015 and 2020, by Sustainable Development Goal
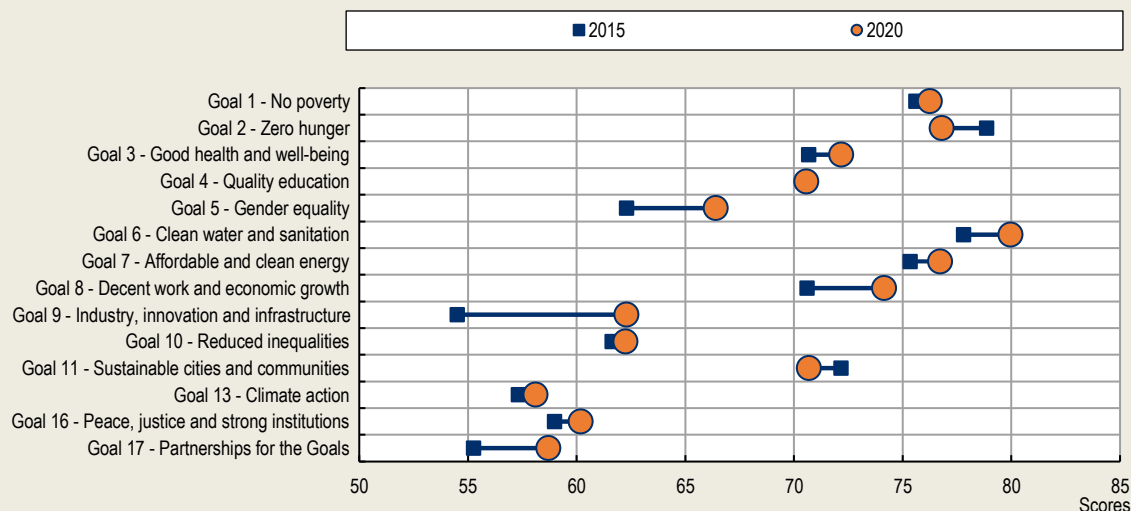
Note: Scores range between 0 and 100 points, with 0 being the worst and 100 being the best score. A higher score means that the world is closer to achieving gender equality targets in the corresponding SDG.
Source: (Equal Measures 2030, 2022[13]), 2022 SDG Gender Index, https://www.equalmeasures2030.org/2022-sdg-gender-index/.

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At the global level, the highest levels of gender equality in terms of achievement were found in specific SDGs, namely SDG 1 on poverty, SDG 2 on nutrition, SDG 6 on water, and SDG 7 on clean energy. Conversely, lower levels of gender equality were found in SDG 9 on industry, innovation and infrastructure, SDG 10 on reduced inequalities, SDG 13 on climate action, SDG 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions and SDG 17 on partnerships for the Goals. The greatest progress, between 2015 and 2020, was recorded in SDG 9, SDG 5, SDG 8 and SDG 17 (Figure 2.4).

Gender-based discrimination is multiform and often overlaps across different dimensions

The fifth edition of the SIGI shows where challenges remain and what still needs to be done to achieve a world free of gender-based discrimination. Results at the dimension level paint a complex picture composed of a mix of global issues and localised challenges. The persistence of high levels of discrimination in certain areas across all regions and countries suggests that some issues, such as violence against women, are truly global. In other areas, levels of discrimination vary widely across regions and countries, highlighting the fact that problems may be more specific to and contingent on local contexts, legal structures or customs. Despite this duality, results across the SIGI dimensions and indicators suggest that interlinkages remain strong and that different forms of discrimination often overlap, inequalities in one area often translating into inequalities in others.

Worldwide, results at the dimension level show that discrimination is the highest in the family dimension of the SIGI framework (Figure 2.5). In Africa and Asia, levels of discrimination are found to be very high in this dimension of the SIGI, with respective scores of 52 and 50. These high levels of discrimination that women face in the private sphere often constitute the primary barrier that prevents women and girls from

exercising their voice and participating in the public sphere. Women's and girls' lack of agency and decision-making power regarding their time, bodies and resources, as measured at the family level by the "Discrimination in the family" dimension, directly hinders their empowerment.

Figure 2.5. Levels of discrimination vary widely across regions, and discrimination is the highest in the family dimension

SIGI and dimensions scores
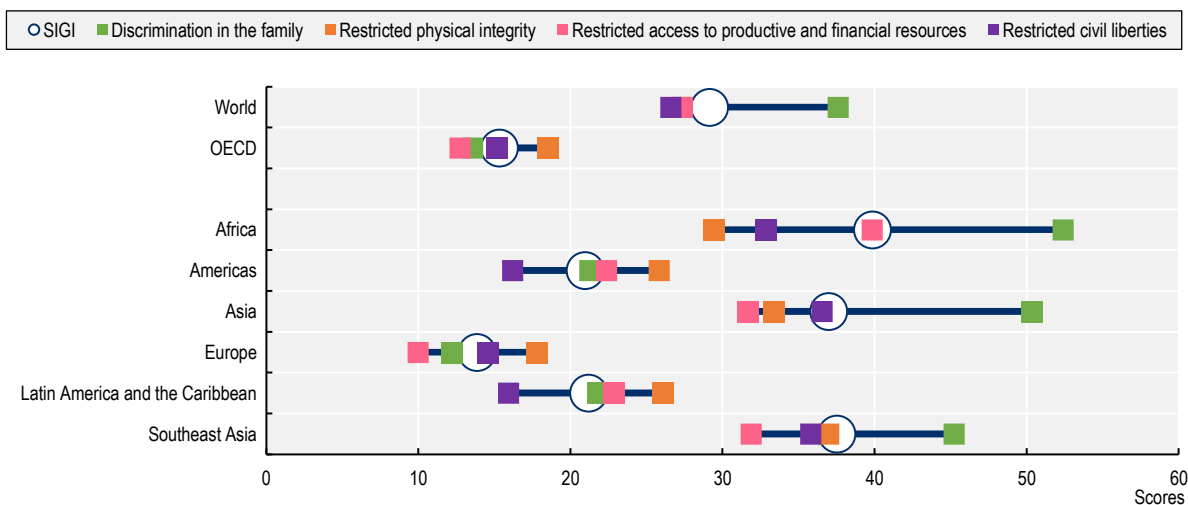
Note: Scores range from 0 to 100, with 0 indicating no discrimination and 100 indicating absolute discrimination.
Source: (OECD, 2023[1]), "Social Institutions and Gender Index (Edition 2023)", *OECD International Development Statistics* (database), https://doi.org/10.1787/33beb96e-en.

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The results also highlight that violence against women and women's control over their own bodies remain issues prone to legal pushbacks and that they affect all countries – developing and developed ones alike. "Restricted physical integrity" is the dimension where differences between regions are the smallest (Figure 2.5). Violence against women, which remains a global pandemic, is underpinned by its widespread social acceptance and deep-rooted notions of masculinities (Box 2.2) (OECD, 2021[14]), whereas restrictive laws across the world continue to prevent women from seeking a safe abortion under extreme circumstances, sometimes at the cost of their own lives. Worldwide, 8% of women of reproductive age (aged between 15 and 49 years), representing about 140 million women, cannot seek a safe and legal abortion even if it is necessary to save the mother's life, and less than 40% of women of reproductive age, representing about 710 million women, are legally authorised to seek a safe abortion at least under essential grounds – i.e. to save the mother's life, to preserve the mother's physical and/or mental health, and in cases of rape, statutory rape or incest and foetal impairment (OECD Development Centre/OECD, 2023[15]) (see Chapter 3).

Levels of discrimination in the economic and civil liberty spheres are relatively lower but remain important in absolute terms, notably in certain regions. Compared to the other dimensions, the levels of discrimination found in the dimensions "Restricted access to productive and financial resources" and "Restricted civil liberties" tend to be lower. Issues in these dimensions appear to be more localised, with certain specific regions facing high levels of discrimination in one of them. For instance, Africa and Asia display medium levels of discrimination in the "Restricted civil liberties" dimension compared to very low levels in the Americas and Europe (Figure 2.5). In Asia, this dimension is the second highest, behind "Discrimination in

the family". In the economic sphere, Africa displays high levels of discrimination in the "Restricted access to productive and financial resources" dimension (Figure 2.5), highlighting women's profound economic disempowerment in many countries of the region. Conversely, in Europe, the economic dimension is the lowest one, and the region has attained very low levels of discrimination, showcasing the large gains achieved since 2000, including in terms of economic rights, access to maternity and paternity leave and women's representation in management.

Box 2.2. What are masculinities?

Masculinities are social constructs that are both shaped by and part of social institutions – formal and informal laws, social norms and practices. They relate to perceived notions, shared by both men and women, about how "real" men behave and, importantly, how men are expected to behave in specific settings in order to be considered "real" men.

Masculinities are diverse and differ across cultures, geographical locations and time periods but also within cultures. They are informed by factors such as age, socio-economic background, race, and religion. They also develop and operate at different levels, including the interpersonal, communal, institutional and societal levels.

The impact of masculinities on gender equality runs both ways. Masculinities can promote women's empowerment and gender equality or can obstruct it when they encourage men to develop beliefs, behaviours and attributes which undermine these goals. In this context, in 2021, the OECD Development Centre defined the following terminology to inform its work and guide its analysis:

- "Gender-equitable masculinities" describes masculinities that are supportive of women's empowerment and gender equality and that undermine patriarchal structures and unequal gender power dynamics.
- "Restrictive masculinities" describes masculinities that confine men to their traditional role as the dominant gender group, undermining women's empowerment and gender equality.

Source: (OECD, 2021[14]), *Man Enough? Measuring Masculine Norms to Promote Women's Empowerment*, Social Institutions and Gender Index, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/6ffd1936-en.

Discrimination is the highest within the family sphere at the global level

As mentioned above, discrimination in the family remains the most challenging dimension of the SIGI framework. High levels of discrimination found in the family sphere highlight the persistence of deep-rooted unequal power relations between women and men within the household. They also reflect the existence, in many countries, of discriminatory civil and personal status laws which grant different rights to men and women. These discriminatory laws have impacts throughout their entire lives, affecting their rights to contract marriage, their status within the household, their ability to seek and obtain a divorce, or their opportunities to inherit from their parents or husband on equal grounds with men. Because perceptions, attitudes and behaviours are formed at an early age, notably through education and human interactions taking place in the immediate family environment, high levels of discrimination in the family have lifelong repercussions on women's and men's attitudes towards gender equality and on their perception of traditional roles of men and women.

Despite better legal protections, girl child marriage remains far from being eradicated

Between 2019 and 2023, 21 countries have enacted legal reforms aimed at combatting child marriage. Reforms and amendments have primarily focused (i) on ensuring that the minimum legal age of marriage is set at 18 years for both men and women, and (ii) on eliminating any legal provisions that established exceptions under which individuals were allowed to marry below the minimum legal age – for instance with the consent of the parents or of a judge. More precisely, six countries[7] raised the minimum age of marriage of girls to 18 years old; 13 countries[8] eliminated legal exceptions; and two countries[9] did both at the same time.

Since 2000, legislative progress that better protects girls and boys from child marriage has been instrumental in slowly reducing the number of children married before the age of 18 years. Whereas in 2010, one in four women aged between 20 and 24 years reported they had been married as children, the rate had fallen to less than one in five in 2022 (UNICEF, 2023[4]; UNICEF, 2022[5]; UNICEF, 2018[6]). Data from the OECD Development Centre and based on household surveys from multiple years estimate that, in 2023, 26% of women aged between 20 and 24 years had been married before the age of 18 years (OECD Development Centre/OECD, 2023[7]).

However, trajectories and dynamics differ across regions. Gains have been primarily concentrated in Asia, and more particularly in South Asia. While the sub-region remains home to the largest number of child brides, it is the place that reports the fastest progress (mostly in India), and girl child marriage rates are expected to continue to decline. Conversely, in Latin America and the Caribbean, child marriage rates have stagnated at around 25% (OECD Development Centre/OECD, 2023[7]), whereas in sub-Saharan Africa there is a risk of an increase in the absolute number of girl brides. This is because population growth rates outpace the decline in girl child marriage rates, particularly in Central and West Africa (Liang et al., 2019[16]; UNICEF, 2018[6]). In 2023, 33% of women from sub-Saharan Africa aged between 20 and 24 years have been married before the age of 18 years (OECD Development Centre/OECD, 2023[7]). The practice is closely intertwined with adolescent pregnancy: on the one hand, out-of-wedlock early pregnancies may force parents to marry their daughters to avoid the social stigma, while, on the other hand, marrying off early increases the likelihood of getting pregnant. Together, these dynamics have disastrous consequences on adolescent girls' health and yield long-term physical, social and economic effects (see Chapter 3).

Girl child marriage is closely associated with socio-economic factors, notably the social view of a woman's role and the economic uncertainty that families may face. Traditional views tend to confine women to their reproductive roles. In this regard, customary and religious laws often use physical and biological milestones such as puberty and the onset of the first menstrual period as the *de facto* age of majority of a girl. At the same time, in contexts of poverty and economic hardship, parents may choose to marry off their daughter as soon as possible to spare limited resources and cut spending by reducing household size (UNICEF, 2021[17]). The practice of bride price[10] may also create further incentives. In places where the groom or his family must pay a bride price to the bride's family, parents may marry off their daughters as a source of income.

Against this backdrop, the economic pressure caused by COVID-19 and the global food crisis may have exacerbated the risk of more girls being married before the age of 18 years. Lockdowns, reduced economic activity, school closures and mounting uncertainties have likely all contributed to increasing the incentives for families to marry off their daughters at a young age (UNICEF, 2021[17]). Estimates suggest that the pandemic has increased the number of child brides compared to the pre-COVID-19 projections by 10 million over the period 2020-30. The ongoing food crisis triggered by the invasion of Ukraine has dramatically aggravated the share of the global population exposed to food insecurity and poverty, increasing the risks of girls being exposed to child and forced marriage, early pregnancy, and other sexual and reproductive health and rights violations (Wright et al., 2023[18]; WFP, 2023[19]).

In a more general global context of climate change where shocks destroy lives, crops and livelihoods and undermine people's ability to feed themselves, young girls are highly vulnerable to child marriage (see Chapter 4). Recent evidence from the Horn of Africa suggests that in regions most affected by droughts, child marriage has more than doubled in the space of one year, with lifelong consequences in terms of health and human capital (UNICEF, 2023[20]). These setbacks and threats put the world, collectively, at high risk of not meeting the SDG target 5.3 which aims at "eliminating all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilations" by 2030.

Women continue to undertake a disproportionate share of unpaid care and domestic work

Across all countries of the world, social norms and traditional views tend to assign men and women strict roles within the household and societies. These social constructs relate to perceived notions – shared by both men and women – about how men and women should behave, and how society, communities and other individuals expect them to behave in order to be considered "real" men and "real" women (OECD, 2021[14]). They are the two faces of the same coin, norms of restrictive masculinities often mirroring traditional views on the roles of women. Whereas men are expected to be the main breadwinner of the household, discriminatory social norms tend to confine women to their care and reproductive roles, putting them in charge of raising the children and fulfilling house chores. Worldwide, 45% of the population thinks that when jobs are scarce, men should have more rights to them than women, and 35% of the population believes that when a woman earns more than her husband, it causes problems. At the same time, mirroring these norms of restrictive masculinities, 65% of the population believes that being a housewife is just as fulfilling as working for pay, and 56% declares that when a mother works for pay, the children suffer (OECD Development Centre/OECD, 2023[7]).

The consequence of these discriminatory norms is that women shoulder most of the unpaid care and domestic work. At the global level, women dedicate, on average and every day, 4.7 hours of their time to unpaid care and domestic tasks, compared to 1.8 hours for men.[11] In other words, women spend 2.6 times more hours on unpaid care and domestic work than men do (OECD Development Centre/OECD, 2023[7]). In Africa, the female-to-male ratio of time spent on unpaid care and domestic work reaches 4.1, which reflects both the large number of hours that women dedicate to it and the very limited participation of men in unpaid activities. In contrast, in Asia, women dedicate slightly more hours per day to unpaid care and domestic work than in Africa, but the female-to-male ratio is substantially lower (2.7) because of men's higher involvement in unpaid work (Figure 2.6). These systemic differences in unpaid care and domestic work have deep implications for women's labour engagement and outcomes, such as women's overrepresentation in low-wage sectors, in the informal economy or among part-time workers, as well as women's underrepresentation in leadership and management positions (see section "Discriminatory laws and restrictive norms of masculinities hamper women's economic empowerment globally").

Figure 2.6. Women undertake a disproportionate share of unpaid care and domestic work

Female-to-male ratio of unpaid care and domestic work (UCDW) and daily amount of time spent on unpaid care and domestic tasks by women and men, 2023
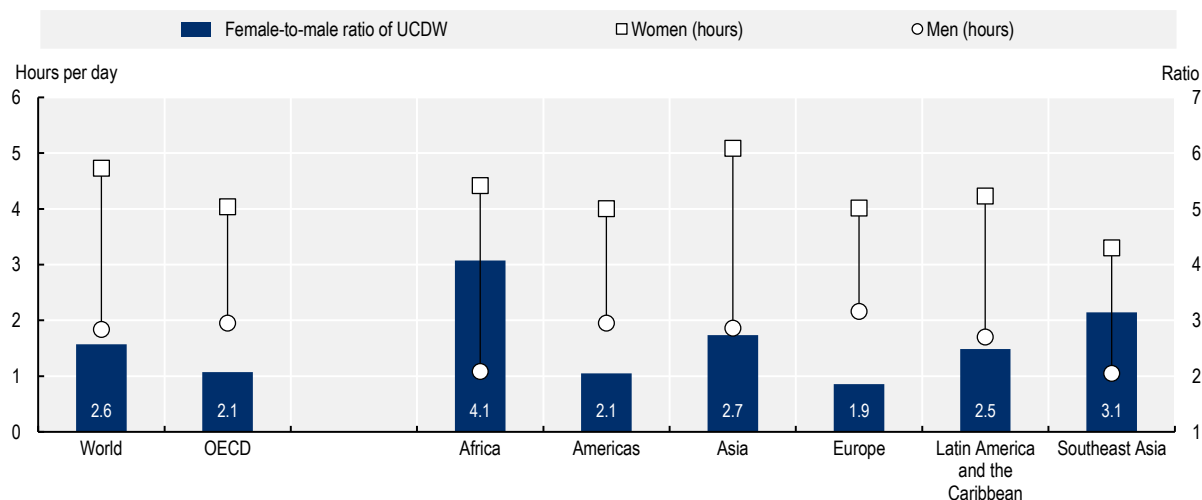
Note: Unpaid care and domestic work refers to activities related to the provision of services for own final use by household members or by family members living in other households. Activities are listed in the International Classification of Activities for Time-Use Statistics 2016 (ICATUS 2016) under major divisions 3 (unpaid domestic services for household and family members) and 4 (unpaid caregiving services for household and family members). Unpaid care work refers to activities related to childcare and instruction, care of the sick, elderly, or disabled household and family members, and travel related to these unpaid caregiving services. Unpaid domestic work refers to activities including food and meals management and preparation, cleaning and maintaining of own dwelling and surroundings, do-it-yourself decoration, maintenance and repair of personal and household goods, care and maintenance of textiles and footwear, household management, pet care, shopping for own household and family members, and travel related to the previous listed unpaid domestic services. The female-to-male ratio of UCDW is calculated as the amount of time dedicated by women to UCDW per day divided by the amount of time dedicated by men to UCDW per day. Aggregates are calculated based on available data extracted from time-use surveys and covering 90 countries at the global level. Available data include 34 OECD countries, 16 countries from Africa, 19 countries from the Americas, 25 countries from Asia and 30 countries from Europe, as well as 17 countries from Latin America and the Caribbean and 4 countries from Southeast Asia.
Source: (OECD Development Centre/OECD, 2023[7]), "Gender, Institutions and Development (Edition 2023)", *OECD International Development Statistics* (database), https://doi.org/10.1787/7b0af638-en.

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The full understanding of these imbalances is hampered by the lack of available data and the time necessary to collect them, which makes it difficult to monitor sudden changes, notably in contexts of crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Worldwide, harmonised data on time-use, collected through household-based time-use surveys (TUS), are available for only half of the countries (90 out of 179), with many data points lacking recent updates. The scarcity of data underlines the need for renewed efforts to adequately measure time allocation and to normalise regular production of gender-responsive statistics. Moreover, although they constitute the main and most reliable statistical tool available to measure women's and men's allocation of time, TUS are complex, costly and require an extended amount of time for planning, preparation, collection and treatment of data.

Crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, have direct and immediate impacts on the amount of time dedicated to unpaid care and domestic work. Yet, in this context, the effectiveness of TUS is jeopardised by their relative lack of timeliness and the fact that a crisis may impede traditional in-person data-gathering. In the wake of the COVID-19 crisis, rapid gender surveys have been developed to rapidly collect data on the gendered impact of the crisis on unpaid care and domestic work (UN Women, 2020[10]). However, these new statistical instruments pose challenges of their own. The data collection method implemented

is often phone- or Internet-based, which may introduce biases, particularly in developing contexts where phone and Internet penetration remains limited. Limited access to phones or the Internet can exclude entire segments of the population from being surveyed, and they are often the most vulnerable groups – poor, rural population, women, adolescents, and so forth. The reduced size of the sample, compared to household-based surveys, can also lead to issues of representativeness.

Discriminatory social norms and practices within the household weaken women's agency

Women's role in the household and ability to make decisions is limited

Discriminatory social norms that confine women and men to stereotypical roles affect women's ability to take decisions at the household level. Men being perceived as the main breadwinner and women being confined to care and reproductive roles result, at the household level, in power being concentrated in the hands of men. Within the logic of norms of restrictive masculinities, being the main financial provider confers to men the right to be financially dominant – therefore controlling household assets – and to have the final say in household spending and decisions, including relationships and activities of other household members (OECD, 2021[14]).

Being the primary earner in a household is a powerful position that underpins traditional notions of power and authority, including over the education and the health of children (OECD, 2021[14]). Women's lack of involvement in decision-making processes has far-reaching implications, as women are more likely to invest in health and education, more particularly in that of girls (Saleemi and Kofol, 2022[21]; Pratley, 2016[22]; Branisa, Klasen and Ziegler, 2013[23]). For instance, in 2022, in Côte d'Ivoire, evidence showed that households in general, and men in particular when they are solely in charge, have higher educational aspirations for boys than for girls and, in contexts of limited resources, tend to prioritise the education of the former over that of the latter (OECD, 2022[24]). Similar conclusions were found in Tanzania, where differences in educational outcomes between men and women were found to partly stem from norms favouring the education of boys over that of girls (OECD, 2022[25]). In this regard, women's increased empowerment at the household level holds implications for countering harmful gender norms in the future by enabling education for women and girls and creating a valuable pathway towards more sustainable livelihoods.

The inequities generated by norms and traditional views that limit women's agency within the household are further reinforced by discriminatory formal and informal laws which restrict women's role in the family. Only a few legal frameworks make women's and men's differences of status in the household explicit. Worldwide, 28 countries,[12] by law, do not grant women the same rights as men to be recognised as the head of the household, and in 21 countries[13] married women must obey their husbands. Likewise, in six countries,[14] married women do not have the same rights as married men to own land, whereas in 11 countries[15] they do not have the same rights to use land or non-land assets as married men do. Yet, beyond formal and codified laws, informal and uncodified laws – that is customary, traditional, and religious laws and rules – play a key role in limiting women's agency within the household. In more than half of the countries (90 out of 178), informal laws create different rights or abilities between men and women when it comes to being recognised as the head of household. In many instances, informal laws, stemming from traditions, patriarchal values and deep-rooted cultural practices, establish men as the dominant figure of the household, in charge of all important decisions, including how to spend money.

Discriminatory inheritance practices constrain women's empowerment

The nexus between limits on women's agency at the household level and the economic deprivations they face is particularly acute in the context of inheritance. In developing contexts and countries where agriculture continues to represent a significant share of economic output and employment, individuals'

ability to own and use assets such as agricultural land is a key factor in their economic empowerment. Historically, individuals have obtained access to assets, particularly land, through purchase, inheritance or state intervention (Kabeer, 2009[26]). In that perspective, any legal or social limitation placed on women's and girls' ability to inherit has negative direct and indirect implications for women's economic empowerment. Not only does it limit their access to productive assets, but it also deprives them of valuable capital that could be leveraged to finance other non-agricultural income-generating activities (OECD, 2021[27]). These indirect channels can have severe consequences for women's entrepreneurship (see section "Discriminatory laws and restrictive norms of masculinities hamper women's economic empowerment globally").

Legal restrictions that hamper women's inheritance rights remain widespread in certain regions. Worldwide, 36 countries, which account for 17% of women globally and are all located in Africa and Asia, do not grant daughters and sons the same rights to inherit. Likewise, 37 countries comprising 18% of women do not grant equal rights to widows. Moreover, in more than half of the countries (95 out of 178), informal laws create different rights or abilities between sons and daughters or widows and widowers when it comes to inheritance.

Violence against women and girls remains a global pandemic

Violence against women refers to a wide range of harmful acts that are rooted in unequal power relations between men and women and that result in – or are likely to result in – physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering to women (United Nations, 1993[28]). In this regard, violence against women is part of the broader concept of gender-based violence, which refers to violence directed against a person because of that person's gender or violence that affects persons of a particular gender disproportionately (European Union, 2023[29]). Violence against women is ubiquitous – it can take place anywhere, in public or in private spheres, offline or online. In most situations, it is carried out within the family environment and is perpetrated by women's current or former male intimate partners – a phenomenon known as intimate-partner violence (IPV) (OECD, 2020[30]; Garcia-Moreno et al., 2006[31]). Violence against women and IPV can take many forms, ranging from physical or economic abuse to rape and female genital mutilation and cutting in its most extreme forms (Box 2.3). It affects women of all ages, races, religions and socio-economic backgrounds.

Box 2.3. How does the SIGI 2023 Legal Survey define violence against women?

The SIGI framework adopts the life cycle approach to better understand violence against women and girls. In line with the updated SIGI framework developed in 2019 (Ferrant, Fuiret and Zambrano, 2020[32]), the SIGI 2023 Legal Survey covers different types of violence against women and measures the degree of legal protection against these abuses on different counts (OECD Development Centre/OECD, 2023[15]).

The SIGI 2023 Legal Survey looks at violence against women and girls through five main channels: child marriage, female genital mutilation and cutting (FGM/C), domestic violence or IPV, rape, and sexual harassment. For each of these types of violence, the SIGI 2023 Legal Survey assesses legal frameworks on three primary counts: (i) national laws themselves; (ii) their execution, enhancement and monitoring through the existence of dedicated national action plans, programmes and policies; and (iii) informal (customary, traditional and religious) laws and rules that encourage discriminatory practices and/or hinder the application of formal laws.

The impact of violence on women's lives is devastating. Women who have survived violence are more likely to suffer from physical and mental health problems, including depression, anxiety and post-traumatic

stress disorder (WHO, 2021[33]). They are also at an increased risk of developing chronic health conditions such as cardiovascular diseases or the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). Children who grow up in violent homes may experience a wide range of behavioural and emotional disturbances, putting them at risk of acting violently themselves once they reach adulthood, which perpetuates the cycle of violence (WHO, 2021[33]). By affecting women's health and well-being, violence against women, particularly IPV, has long-lasting consequences on all other areas of women's lives (OECD, 2023[34]). For instance, acts of violence against women may affect women's ability to work or induce significant losses in revenues. Women's economic dependence on their partners may also hinder their ability to leave an abusive relationship, as they may lack the necessary resources or financial independence to do so. Overall, violence against women bears enormous direct and indirect social and economic costs for societies. In 2021, the European Institute for Gender Equality estimated that gender-based violence across the European Union yielded a yearly cost of EUR 366 billion (EIGE, 2021[35]).

Combatting violence against women requires the establishment of strong laws supported by comprehensive policy frameworks

Addressing violence against women requires first and foremost to establish strong and comprehensive legal frameworks that take into account and respond to the experiences of all victims/survivors. Although not sufficient, enacting laws that protect women against all forms of violence constitutes a necessary step to putting an end to impunity and societal acceptance of violence against women. Their implementation entails vertical and horizontal co-ordination mechanisms, review mechanisms, sufficient funding, and a clear identification of roles and responsibilities of state actors and relevant stakeholders (OECD, 2023[36]). In line with the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (United Nations, 1993[28]), the General recommendation No. 35 of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW, 2017[37]), and the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, better known as the Istanbul Convention (Council of Europe, 2011[38]), comprehensive legal frameworks imply that girls and women are protected from all forms of violence including domestic violence and IPV, rape and marital rape, honour crimes, and sexual harassment – without any exceptions or legal loopholes. A comprehensive approach also includes legally codified provisions for the investigation, prosecution and punishment of these crimes, as well as protection and support services for victims/survivors (OECD, 2019[39]). Worldwide, according to the SIGI methodology, only 12 countries[16] out of 178 have such comprehensive laws that address all types and forms of violence against women (OECD Development Centre/OECD, 2023[7]).

In contrast, too many countries fail to criminalise domestic violence or to take into account all forms of domestic abuse. Since 2017, only 14 additional countries[17] have enacted legal provisions that criminalise domestic violence, whereas, as of 2023, 46 countries accounting for 16% of the world's population of women, fail to do so (OECD Development Centre/OECD, 2023[15]). Moreover, legal definitions of domestic violence tend to ignore key types of abuse, creating loopholes that prevent the prosecution of certain acts of domestic violence and leave women vulnerable. In nearly all countries, the definition of domestic violence covers physical abuse (148 out of 178 countries) or psychological abuse (142 out of 178 countries). Legal protection is weaker regarding sexual abuse, with only 131 countries integrating it into their definitions of domestic violence. Finally, only 121 countries worldwide include economic violence – the action of limiting a partner's or spouse's access to economic resources or preventing him or her from getting a job – in their definitions of domestic violence. Domestic economic violence can trap victims/survivors in abusive homes through economic dependency on the perpetrator.

Likewise, legal definitions of rape often fail to include a consent-based approach or to cover the specific case of marital rape. Worldwide, 70 countries, accounting for 44% of women, do not have a definition of rape based on the lack of consent (OECD Development Centre/OECD, 2023[15]).[18] Even when the definition of rape is based on the lack of consent, legal provisions that require proof of physical force or proof of penetration may weaken the ability of survivors to obtain the perpetrator's conviction, and the legal

definition of rape may exclude a large range of situations or acts. Among the 108 countries whose definition of rape is based on the lack of consent, 21 require proof of physical force to establish that rape has been committed; and 63 of them require proof of penetration. The legal challenge surrounding rape is particularly acute regarding marital rape. Beyond the difficulty to prove that rape occurred and social views that tend to think that a husband is entitled to sexual intercourse (OECD, 2023[36]), many legal frameworks fail to explicitly cover the act. Worldwide, 86 countries, accounting for 65% of women globally, do not explicitly mention marital rape in their definition of rape, jeopardising married women's ability to seek redress when they have not consented to sexual intercourse.

Sexual harassment is largely prohibited by countries, though not necessarily a crime nor taken into account outside the workplace. Worldwide, 22 countries still do not legally define and prohibit sexual harassment, and 48 countries, accounting for 33% of women, do not criminalise sexual harassment. (OECD Development Centre/OECD, 2023[15]) A key issue related to the prohibition and criminalisation of sexual harassment is the places to which legal protections extend. Most laws define sexual harassment in the framework of their labour codes or legislation, establishing a strong link between sexual harassment, the labour environment and hierarchical relations. For that reason, in nearly all countries that prohibit sexual harassment, the legal protections from sexual harassment specifically apply to the workplace. However, in doing so, they often fail to specifically extend this protection to other critical places such as educational places and/or the Internet. Defining sexual harassment solely based on labour relations therefore tends to weaken the reach of the law and to create legal uncertainty as to whether the provisions contained in the labour legislation can also apply to acts of sexual harassment that occur in a school, online or in any other non-work-related place.

Since 2017, countries that have strengthened laws addressing violence against women have taken a comprehensive approach to reform. For instance, in 2020, Mexico introduced a "General Law on Women's Access to a Life Free of Violence" which recognises several types of violence against women, including psychological, physical, patrimonial, economic and sexual violence, as well as femicide. The law targets all spheres of women's lives by covering the workplace, educational institutions and unions. It also provides an extensive overview of the roles and responsibilities of governmental agencies, ministries and public service providers in relation to implementation, co-ordination, capacity-building and data collection (OECD, 2023[36]). In 2020, Spain introduced several legal reforms which have expanded the protection of victims/survivors of violence, strengthened existing protection mechanisms for victims/survivors of IPV and extended them to survivors of other forms of violence against women, including sexual violence, forced marriages, and female genital mutilation and cutting, and introduced new provisions covering psychological violence, stalking, online violence and other forms of violence in the digital environment. Through training and professional specialisations, the new legislation has also reinforced the capacities of professionals from the educational field, health and social services, security forces, and the judiciary and the prison system, while mandating the formulation of a State Prevention Strategy aimed at evaluating and monitoring the legal framework (OECD, 2023[36]).

In general, the legislation in place needs to be accompanied by a comprehensive policy framework which ensures that enough resources are available and that guidelines are in place. Successful policies aimed at eradicating violence against women build on long-term commitments from governments and the implementation of a whole-of-government approach. These increasingly take the form of stand-alone dedicated national action plans. As of August 2022, 111 countries had a national action plan or policy in force to support the implementation of the legislation addressing violence against women, and 83 countries had a dedicated national action plan or policy that set forth as a priority the integration and co-ordination of services and mechanisms for survivors of violence against women (OECD Development Centre/OECD, 2023[15]). To be effective, these policy frameworks and roadmaps for action must address multiple forms of violence in all settings, contain various ways of addressing these forms of violence, bring together different ministries, agencies and levels of government (horizontal vs. vertical co-ordination), and establish clear budgetary commitments (OECD, 2023[36]). Specific components of national action plans often include

guidelines for the different stakeholders involved in providing integrated service delivery, including medical and judicial personnel, police officers and social workers (OECD, 2023[34]).

Violence against women is a true global pandemic, underpinned by its social acceptance and restrictive norms of masculinities

Despite the progress accomplished on the legal front, violence against women remains a global issue that affects millions worldwide and that is likely underestimated. Globally, in 2023, nearly one in three girls and women (28%) aged 15 to 49 years have survived IPV at least once in her lifetime; and one in ten women aged more than 15 years have survived IPV over the last year (OECD Development Centre/OECD, 2023[7]). In absolute terms, this means that more than half a billion girls and women have been subjected to violence at the hands of their current or former spouse, partner or boyfriend at some point in their lives (Figure 2.7, Panel A). It also means that nearly 300 million women have been physically, sexually or psychologically abused by their intimate partner during the last year. Challenges associated with measuring violence against women – difficulty to recognise what violence is, fear of retaliation, lack of resources to escape it – mean that the prevalence of violence against women is likely underreported and that the real figures may be well above the ones recorded by official surveys (OECD, 2020[30]). These challenges have been further compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic which trapped abused women at home and disrupted support services (OECD, 2023[34]).

The causes of violence against women are complex and multi-faceted. It is often rooted in gender inequality, which is perpetuated by discriminatory social norms and beliefs that reinforce the subordination of women to men. Poverty and the stress that results from the lack of income, as well as social isolation, can also contribute to violence against women, particularly IPV (Capaldi et al., 2012[40]; Jewkes, 2002[41]).

The prevalence and perpetuation of violence against women are fundamentally underpinned by its social acceptance, including by women themselves. Worldwide, in 2023, 30% of women aged 15 to 49 years think that it is acceptable for a husband to beat his wife under certain circumstances, namely if she burns the food, argues with him, goes out without telling him, neglects the children or refuses sexual relations (OECD Development Centre/OECD, 2023[7]). It ranges from 9% of women in Europe and 17% of women in the Americas to 32% and 38% in Asia and Africa, respectively. Globally, attitudes justifying IPV are strongly associated with more women experiencing it during the last year (Figure 2.7, Panel B). Such social acceptance of IPV is often deeply ingrained and perpetuated from generation to generation. It primarily stems from the belief that domestic violence is a private matter whose consequences and handling should remain within the household or the family. In this perspective, social norms also tend to establish that no one – particularly public or judicial authorities – should intervene in the violence that takes place between spouses (Nnyombi et al., 2022[42]).

Figure 2.7. Violence against women is a global pandemic, underpinned by its social acceptance

Share and number of women who have survived intimate-partner violence (IPV) during their lifetime (Panel A) and relationship between the share of women who have survived IPV during the last 12 months and attitudes condoning IPV (Panel B)

Panel A. Prevalence of lifetime IPV

Panel B. Correlation between 12-month IPV and social acceptance of IPV
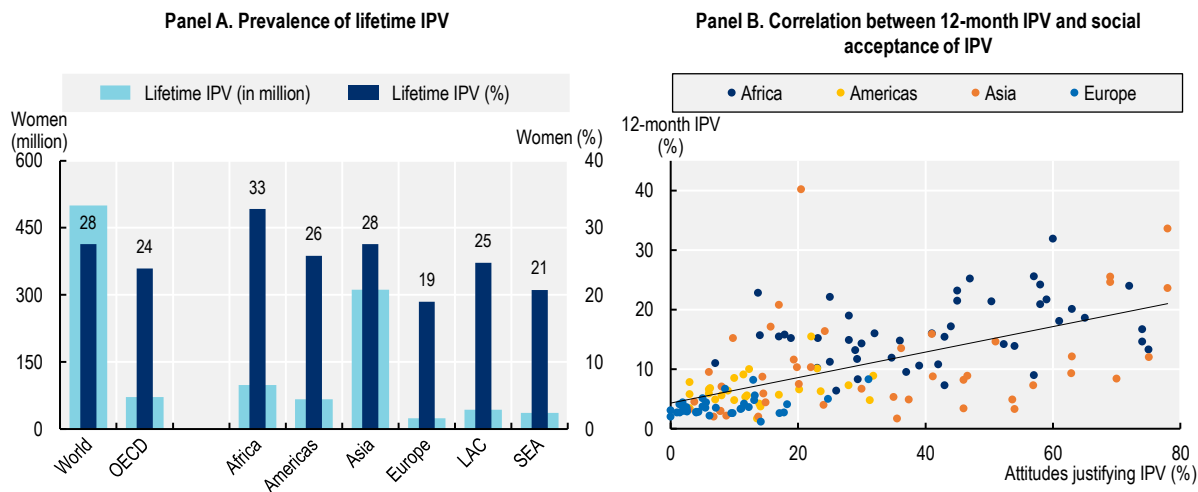
Note: LAC refers to Latin America and the Caribbean, and SEA refers to Southeast Asia. In Panel A, the population of reference for the lifetime IPV rate and the number of women is girls and women aged 15 to 49 years. In Panel B, the population of reference for the 12-month IPV rate is women aged over 15 years. For attitudes justifying IPV, the primary source is the World Health Organization, with attitudinal data calculated as the share of girls and women aged 15 to 49 years who think a husband to be justified in hitting or beating his wife for at least one of the specified reasons, i.e. if his wife burns the food, argues with him, goes out without telling him, neglects the children or refuses sexual relations. When data are missing, they are complemented by alternative sources of data, namely the World Values Survey and Eurobarometer. For the World Values Survey, data reflect the share of girls and women aged 15 to 49 years who think it is at least somehow justifiable for a husband to beat his wife. For Eurobarometer, data reflect the share of girls and women aged 15 to 49 years who think domestic violence acceptable under certain circumstances or in all circumstances.

Source: (OECD Development Centre/OECD, 2023[7]), "Gender, Institutions and Development (Edition 2023)", *OECD International Development Statistics* (database), https://doi.org/10.1787/7b0af638-en.

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At the heart of the social acceptance of violence against women lie norms of restrictive masculinities that perpetuate male dominance in the private sphere as well as acceptance and entitlement to perpetrate physical, sexual, psychological and economic violence. These norms dictate that a "real" man should protect and exercise guardianship over women in the household. In this perspective, domestic violence may constitute a way for men to exercise this guardianship and may emerge as a means to reaffirm men's control over women (OECD, 2021[14]). Symmetrically, these norms of restrictive masculinities establish that women should be "obedient, silent and good" and should accept the violence inflicted by men and in some cases by other women. In this context, violence can also be perceived as a means to sanction a woman who deviates from the norm and fails to fulfil her role or duty. In contexts of poverty, the stress induced by men failing to live up to the idea of "successful" manhood – for instance, by providing for their household – can result in episodes of intra-family violence (Jewkes, 2002[41]).

The extreme case of female genital mutilation and cutting highlights the central role of laws and social norms

The continuous practice of female genital mutilation and cutting (FGM/C)[19] often stems directly from social norms around womanhood. Social pressure from community members and customs is particularly strong, including the perception that mutilation can prevent sexual promiscuity, constitutes a rite of passage for

young girls transitioning into adulthood and is an essential condition for marriage (UNDP, 2016[43]; UNICEF, 2013[44]). Women themselves play a central role in upholding these social norms. The role of elder women and grandmothers in perpetuating mutilation of their own daughters' and granddaughters' genitals has been largely documented. Finally, norms of restrictive masculinities establishing that a "real man" should marry a woman who has been excised or cut also contribute to perpetuating the practice, which signals the need to work with men when it comes to the unacceptability of FGM/C practices (OECD, 2021[27]).

The practice of FGM/C, although rooted in specific customs that are largely present in African countries, is no longer only a developing country issue. Worldwide, mutilations are traditionally concentrated in a limited number of countries that have been well-identified and documented by international organisations at the forefront of the fight against FGM/C (Equality Now, End FGM European Network and US End FGM/C Network, 2020[45]; OHCR et al., 2008[46]). In these countries located in Africa and Asia, the share of women who have been mutilated, excised or cut varies widely. Globally, it is estimated that as many as 200 million women have been victims/survivors of FGM/C. In nine African countries,[20] more than three in four girls and women aged 15 to 49 years have experienced FGM/C. Yet, recent evidence has highlighted that FGM/C takes place across all regions, including in many American and European countries, among indigenous and/or diaspora communities originating from countries where FGM/C is known to be common (28 Too Many, 2021[47]). In some contexts, girls are taken across national borders to undergo FGM/C in a country where the legislation against the practice is either non-existent or less strict, a phenomenon known as cross-border FGM/C.

To eradicate FGM/C, including in countries for which it is not a local custom but where the practice occurs nevertheless in certain communities, it is essential to establish strong legal frameworks that provide enough grounds to prosecute acts of mutilation beyond borders. Among the 30 countries where data on FGM/C are collected because it is documented as a historical traditional practice, 24 have enacted specific laws criminalising FGM/C (OECD Development Centre/OECD, 2023[7]; World Bank, 2020[48]). Conversely, in countries where FGM/C is not a customary practice but where many girls from migrant communities are at risk of it, legislative reform has been slower. Historically, these countries have criminalised FGM/C through general provisions of their criminal codes covering acts of mutilation or prohibiting violence, acts against bodily integrity, assault, harm and so forth. Only recently, since the early 2000s, have they started to enact specific laws or legal provisions against FGM/C. In Europe, for instance, data from the SIGI show that 22 countries out of 38 (58%) have laws that criminalise FGM/C on narrow grounds;[21] and 28 out of the 38 OECD members now have legislation in place that specifically addresses FGM/C (OECD Development Centre/OECD, 2023[15]).

Cross-border FGM/C also requires specific legal frameworks that take a comprehensive approach. In Australia, for example, each state or territory has legal provisions on cross-border FGM/C. In Germany, not only performing but assisting or persuading others to perform FGM/C is a criminal offence, even if committed abroad (OECD, 2023[36]). While prevalence data remain extremely scarce, the European Commission, based on analysis carried out in 17 European countries, estimates that there are over 600 000 FGM/C survivors living in Europe and around another 190 000 women and girls who are at risk of it (EIGE, 2023[49]; European Commission, 2021[50]; End FGM European Network, 2020[51]).

Although acts of mutilation can still be prosecuted in countries that do not have specific legislation – for instance under provisions on bodily injury, harm or assault – the existence of specific laws or provisions constitutes a strong political commitment towards ending the harmful practice (Equality Now, End FGM European Network and US End FGM/C Network, 2020[45]). Establishing such a legal framework is a first step to putting in place more specific and comprehensive policies, including the provision of specialised services for survivors of FGM/C, counselling and shelters. It can also help ensure that the legislation provides an adequate framework to prosecute FGM/C acts, including when they are committed abroad. For instance, the Netherlands – within the framework of its pioneering so-called "chain approach"[22] to eradicate FGM/C – amended legal provisions covering these harmful acts in 2013 to extend the country's jurisdiction to acts of FGM/C performed abroad in case the victim/survivor is a Dutch citizen or has a

permanent place of residence in the Netherlands, but also when the offender is a foreign national and/or is not a resident of the Netherlands (Pharos, n.d.[52]).

Discriminatory laws and restrictive norms of masculinities hamper women's economic empowerment globally

The economic dimension is central to women's empowerment. It focuses primarily on women's capacity to make strategic choices and exercise agency in the economic sphere and, more precisely, their ability to participate in the labour market, earn an income, and access and control key resources such as land. This perspective is at the core of the SDGs and directly embedded into SDG target 5.A, which calls on all governments to "[u]ndertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws" (United Nations, 2015[11]). It also encompasses a wider set of issues, including women's control over their own time, lives and bodies, as well as their meaningful participation and representation in economic decision-making processes at all levels – from within the household to the highest economic and political positions (UN Women, 2020[53]). Women's economic empowerment also paves the way for changes in other dimensions of their lives, such as well-being, social empowerment, health or education (Kabeer, 2009[26]).

Results from the fifth edition of the SIGI show that restrictive laws and discriminatory social norms continue to profoundly hamper women's economic empowerment. In particular, they restrict women's rights and ability to enter the labour force, weaken their labour status when they work, and limit their access to key economic assets such as land.

Women's participation in the labour market remains limited compared to men's

Since 2019, improvement in women's position in the labour market has stagnated, while gender inequalities continue to persist. Worldwide, women's labour force participation rate has remained steady at approximately 47%, and the female employment rate has not changed significantly, standing at around 45% (ILO, 2023[54]). Gender gaps in the labour market remain a major concern, with women still less likely than men to be active members of the labour force. In 2022, at the global level, men's participation rate was 25 percentage points higher than women's (Figure 2.8), and the gender gap was ranging from 11 percentage points in Europe to 30 percentage points in Asia (ILO, 2023[54]).

Figure 2.8. Worldwide, women are less likely than men to participate in the labour market

Labour force participation rates of men and women and gender gap, 2022
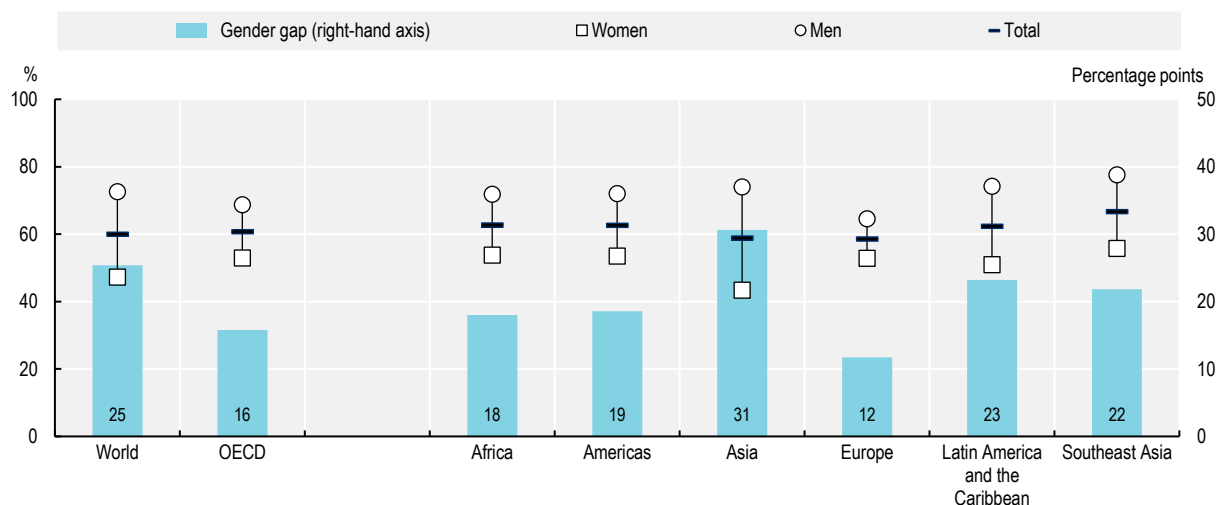
Source: (ILO, 2023[55]), "Labour force participation rate by sex (ILO modelled estimates)", *Statistics on the population and labour force, ILOSTAT*, https://ilostat.ilo.org/data/.

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The International Labour Organization's "Jobs Gap" indicator reveals important gender disparities compared to traditional measures of unemployment, highlighting women's disadvantage. The "Jobs Gap"[23] considers all individuals who would like to work but are not necessarily actively looking for a job or available immediately due to various constraints. It reached 12.3% in 2022, more than twice the global unemployment rate (5.8%). About two-thirds of women included in the "Jobs Gap" measure are not included in the traditional unemployment count because they do not meet the required criteria – being available to work and/or actively looking for a job; this is the case of less than half of men (ILO, 2023[56]). Contrary to what is observed in traditional measures of unemployment, the gender gap in the "Jobs Gap" indicator is significant. It reaches nearly 11 percentage points in Latin America and the Caribbean – with a jobs gap rate of 22% for women compared to 12% for men, 9 percentage points in Africa – with a jobs gap rate of 26% for women compared to 17% for men, and 3 percentage points in Southeast Asia – with a jobs gap rate of 9% for women compared to 6% for men (ILO, 2023[54]). These differences between traditional and alternative measures of labour indicators illustrate the need for more gender-transformative approaches to statistical production, analysis, and reporting.

Men's and women's unequal standing in the labour force often takes root in discriminatory laws that restrict women's economic empowerment in many different dimensions. For instance, it can limit their freedom of decision. In 2023, in 11 countries,[24] women are still required to obtain their husband's or guardian's permission to take a paid job, while in 6 countries[25] they need consent to start their own business (OECD Development Centre/OECD, 2023[15]). Legal discrimination can also encourage wage imbalances between men and women. In 2023, 52 countries fail to mandate, by law, equal pay for work of equal value, and in 13 countries,[26] most of them located in Asia, the law does not prohibit discrimination in employment on the basis of sex. Moreover, because legal discrimination tends to be primarily concentrated in certain highly populated countries, a very large number of women face restrictions in their economic opportunities (Hyland, Djankov and Goldberg, 2020[57]). For instance, while 29% of countries (52 out of 178) fail to mandate, by law, equal pay for work of equal value, these countries account for 48% of women worldwide. Likewise, 42% of countries (74 out of 178) prohibit, by law, women from entering certain professions, but these legal prohibitions affect 67% of women worldwide (OECD Development Centre/OECD, 2023[15]).

Beyond laws, restrictive social norms impose severe limitations on women's economic empowerment. Conservative gender roles assign women the role of caregivers and make them responsible for all domestic chores (Ferrant, Pesando and Nowacka, 2014[58]). Conversely, being the main breadwinner is perceived as a masculine trait which gives men priority over women in the workplace. As mentioned above, in 2023, 45% of the world's population believes that when jobs are scarce, men should have more right to a job than women; the number increases to 55% in Africa and Asia (OECD Development Centre/OECD, 2023[7]).

Discriminatory social norms may create structural barriers and discourage women from entering the labour market. For instance, motherhood is often seen as a central dimension of women's identity, especially in rural areas. Globally, 52% of the population thinks that when women work, the children suffer (OECD Development Centre/OECD, 2023[7]). In certain contexts where traditional gender roles dictate that the care of the children should not be delegated, these views can even justify the absence or low provision of childcare services and facilities (Halliday and Little, 2001[59]). Women's own internalisation of sexist and patriarchal cultural values and views constrain their participation in the labour market, despite women having the necessary skills or qualifications – as evidenced by the reversal of gender gaps in favour of girls and women across primary, secondary and tertiary education (Encinas-Martín and Cherian, 2023[60]; UNESCO, 2019[61]). In these cases, discriminatory attitudes often outweigh the positive effect of human capital characteristics, such as education, that should theoretically lead to a greater labour inclusion of women (Contreras and Plaza, 2010[62]).

Furthermore, when women join the labour market, they often face a double burden of paid and unpaid work. This double burden faced by women tends to exist in all settings, developed and developing countries alike. When resources are limited, especially in low-income countries, it often reflects the fact that working and contributing to the household's income is a necessity. In this context, women are expected to work in order to support themselves and their families. Women's paid activities often come in addition to their existing care and household responsibilities, which can cause substantial "role overload" – that is the tension that arises from trying to respond simultaneously to conflicting commitments (Oropesa, 1993[63]). As a result, women work significantly longer hours than men, which provokes a vicious cycle of income and time poverty, together with a deterioration of their physical and mental well-being (ActionAid, 2017[64]; Chopra and Zambelli, 2017[65]). For instance, data across 29 OECD countries show that women work about one hour more per day than men while dedicating 3.5 hours more than men to unpaid care and domestic work (OECD, 2023[66]; World Economic Forum, 2016[67]). Likewise, in Côte d'Ivoire and Tanzania, data show that women work, on average, two hours more per day than men do, dedicating half of their time to paid activities and the other half to unpaid care and domestic tasks (OECD, 2022[24]; OECD, 2022[25]).

Social norms and structural biases weaken women's status in the labour market

Discriminatory social institutions and restrictive norms often push women towards the informal sector. Because traditional gender roles dictate that women should prioritise domestic work, it limits their mobility and time-allocation options, leading to reduced employment opportunities. Women are often compelled to seek part-time and home-based jobs that are compatible with their caregiving responsibilities and offer greater flexibility to manage both paid and unpaid work (ILO, 2018[68]; Hoyman, 1987[69]). These jobs are mostly available in the informal market, where working conditions are often precarious, with low salaries and a lack of social protection (Mohapatra, 2012[70]). Although more men than women work in informal employment at the global level, women are more likely than men to work in the informal sector in developing countries. For example, in Africa, the share of women in informal employment (90%) surpasses that of men (83%) (ILO, 2018[71]).

Gender-based occupational segregation is a pervasive issue, where women are often concentrated in specific sectors. For instance, men are overrepresented in jobs traditionally associated with physically demanding activities. Worldwide, men account for 92% of total employment in the construction sector, as well as 86% of employment in the mining sector. Conversely, women are over-concentrated in the service

sector. Women account for 71% of workers employed in health and social care activities, 63% of workers employed in the education sector, and 59% of the workers employed in other services,[27] which include, among others, domestic workers (Figure 2.9). ILO data based on household surveys and covering 114 countries[28] show that women account for 77% of workers employed as domestic workers or household-based employees (ILO, 2022[72]). In certain specific sectors, horizontal segregation stems from discriminatory provisions that are based on what society deems to be inappropriate for women's perceived physical capacities. For instance, in 74 countries around the world, laws prohibit women from entering certain professions (OECD Development Centre/OECD, 2023[15]). Most of these laws prohibit the employment of women in industrial jobs characterised by heavy and dangerous working conditions, as well as in subterranean tunnels, mines and other underground work.

Figure 2.9. Gender-based occupational segregation remains substantial

Share of employed women and men by sector of occupation, 2021
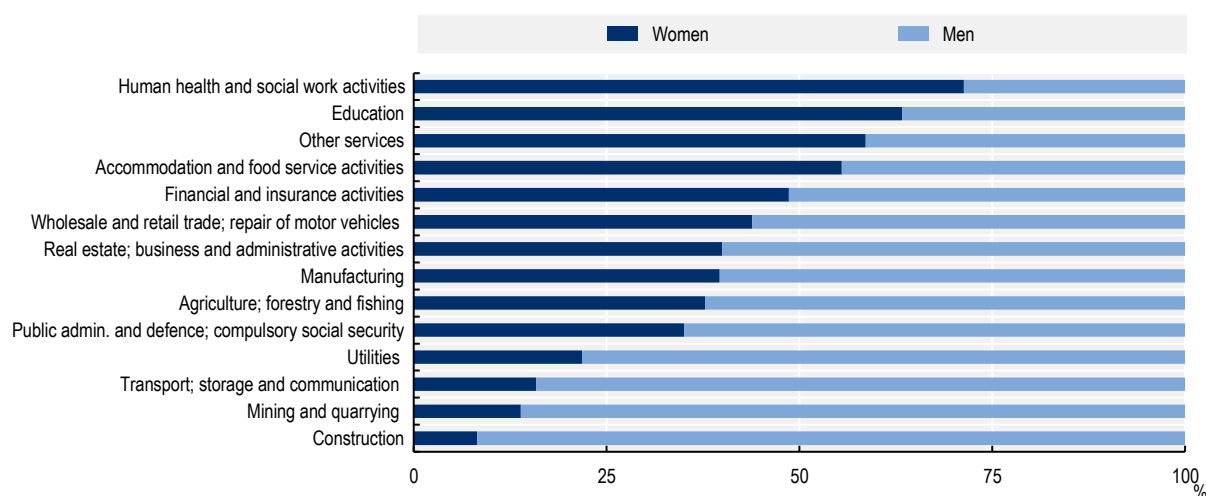
Note: Economic activity is classified using the International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities, revision 4 (ISIC rev 4). Category "Other services" aggregate workers from categories R, S, T and U of ISIC rev 4, corresponding respectively to "Arts, entertainment and recreation" (R), "Other service activities" (S), "Activities of households as employers; undifferentiated goods- and services-producing activities of households for own use" (T), and "Activities of extraterritorial organizations and bodies" (U).
Source: (ILO, 2021[73]), "World: Employment by sex and economic activity - ILO modelled estimates, Nov. 2022 (thousands)", *Statistics on employment, ILOSTAT*, https://www.ilo.org/shinyapps/bulkexplorer45/?id=X01_A&indicator=EMP_2EMP_SEX_ECO_NB.

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At the heart of gender-based occupational segregation lie restrictive norms of masculinities. Gender norms play a crucial role in promoting and sustaining the social definition of tasks as either "masculine" or "feminine". The belief that men should work in physically and mentally challenging jobs, while women should focus on jobs associated with feminine traits influences the allocation of men and women across occupations. Biases tend to manifest themselves both on the side of job seekers (e.g. through internalisation of discriminatory beliefs or self-selection bias during the application process) as well as on the side of employers or hiring persons (e.g. unconscious bias during the selection process and assessment of skills and abilities) (Henningsen, Eagly and Jonas, 2021[74]; OECD, 2021[14]). These stereotypes are often formed during childhood and adolescence, at the early stages of identity development, and can persist throughout adulthood. Parents' perceptions of gender roles and stereotypes of boys' and girls' innate abilities can influence children's self-perceptions and activity choices. In this regard, parents' emotional reactions to their children's performance in various activities play a critical role, as well as the importance they attach to their children acquiring various skills or even the activities and

toys they provide. In turn, parents' perceptions affect children's confidence in their abilities, interest in mastering different skills, and the amount of time and effort they devote to developing and demonstrating those skills (OECD, 2022[24]; Eccles, Jacobs and Harold, 1990[75]).

In this perspective, education plays a major role in shaping gender norms and self-perception, which dictate future life decisions, such as career choices. Data from the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2018 indicate that the internalisation of discriminatory social messages about gender and employment starts at a very young age. For instance, 15% of boys aged 15 years declared that they wanted to work in jobs with science and engineering backgrounds (e.g. engineers, architects, physicists, etc.), compared to only 7% of girls aged 15 years who declared planning to work in these areas (OECD, 2019[76]). Moreover, the interest gap in careers related to science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) has widened between boys and girls in recent years. Between 2015 and 2018, the proportion of boys wanting to work in information and communications technology fields increased by 1.1 percentage points, while, at the same time, the proportion of girls only increased by 0.2 percentage points (OECD, 2019[76]). Teachers' expectations and biases can have a significant impact on students' performance by affecting their beliefs in their own competences (Wang and Degol, 2013[77]), increasing the gender gap in STEM-related career aspirations (Wang, 2012[78]). In this context, increasing the presence of female teachers in the classrooms, particularly in scientific fields, can encourage girls to pursue STEM-related career paths (Chen, Sonnert and Sadler, 2019[79]).

Women's participation in the labour market is also characterised by vertical segregation, with women being largely excluded from senior decision-making positions and power roles. In 2023, only 15% of firms worldwide are headed by a woman, and women account for 25% of managers (Figure 2.10). Regional disparity is important. Whereas women account for 38% of the managers in the Americas, this share falls to 19% in Asia. Very little progress has been accomplished since the fourth edition of the SIGI in 2019, when the share of women among managers stood at 24% worldwide (OECD Development Centre/OECD, 2019[8]).

Figure 2.10. Women are underrepresented in positions of power in the economic sphere

Share of women and men in managerial positions (Panel A) and as heads of firms (Panel B)
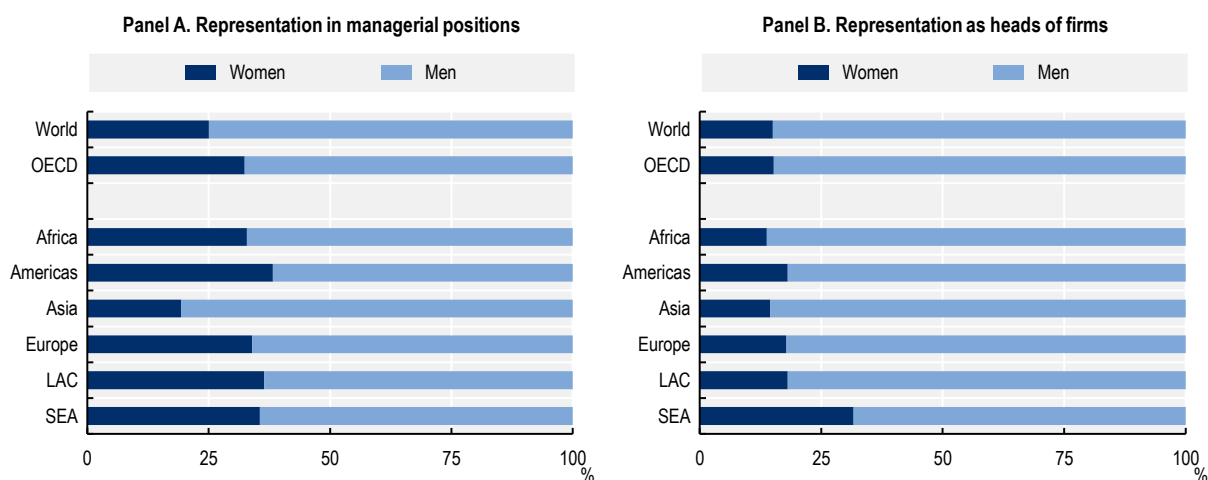
Note: LAC refers to Latin America and the Caribbean, and SEA refers to Southeast Asia. Data of Panel B are based on the World Bank's Enterprise Surveys, which cover 191 000 firms across 154 countries, and data on the share of women and men in senior and middle management positions are from the SDG Indicators Database.
Source: (OECD Development Centre/OECD, 2023[7]), "Gender, Institutions and Development (Edition 2023)", *OECD International Development Statistics* (database), https://doi.org/10.1787/7b0af638-en.

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Vertical segregation is deeply rooted in norms of restrictive masculinities that perpetuate the notion that men are inherently better leaders than women. Effective leadership is often associated with traits traditionally perceived as masculine, such as toughness, aggressiveness and dominance (OECD, 2021[14]; Cann and Siegfried, 1990[80]). In 2023, 45% of the global population believes that men make better business executives than women, and 56% in Africa (OECD Development Centre/OECD, 2023[7]). Furthermore, because successful managers are understood to possess characteristics more commonly ascribed to men, it may encourage women to emulate men and to adopt a masculine leadership style to succeed as leaders (Kawakami, White and Langer, 2000[81]). Additionally, restrictive masculinities dictate that men must be the financial leader of the household and therefore earn more than women, thereby creating unequal bargaining power within the household. These views promote seeing women's wages as complementary and can discourage women from negotiating their wages and aspiring to raises, unconsciously limiting their decision making (OECD, 2021[14]).

Both horizontal and vertical segregation in the labour market contribute to a deepening of the wage and revenue gap between men and women. On the one hand, sectors in which women are concentrated tend to have lower added value and lower productivity and to offer lower wages compared to sectors in which men are overconcentrated (OECD, 2023[82]; OECD, 2021[83]; Macpherson and Hirsch, 1995[84]). For instance, industrial jobs often require specialised engineering skills or education and tend to offer higher wages. Conversely, jobs in the service sectors, such as retail or hospitality, typically have lower entry requirements and therefore offer lower salaries (Nelson, 1994[85]). On the other hand, within sectors, enterprises or household-based businesses, women tend to occupy lower positions than men, characterised by lower wages or revenues. The combination of these two dynamics results in large income differentials between men and women (OECD, 2021[83]). In 2019, at the global level, women earned approximately 20% less than men, although wide variations exist across countries.[29] Voluntary or involuntary part-time employment, in which women tend to be overrepresented and concentrated, is one of the main contributory factors to this pay gap (ILO, 2019[86]; Eurostat, 2023[87]).

Men's traditional status and roles, household decision-making practices and discriminatory inheritance practices limit women's access to land

In contexts where agriculture continues to represent a significant share of the economy, women's low ownership of and ability to use land hampers their economic empowerment and opportunities. Worldwide, agriculture represents a limited share of the economic output: about 4% of global gross domestic product in 2021 (World Bank, 2021[88]). However, in spite of the progressive global transition of countries towards industry and services, the agricultural sector continues to function as a primary source of employment, accounting for 26% of global employment in 2021 (World Bank, 2021[89]). Moreover, in certain regions, agriculture is still a critical sector, both in terms of value and employment. For instance, in 2021, the sector accounted for 17% of sub-Saharan Africa's and South Asia's outputs, while employing 52% and 42% of their workforce, respectively (World Bank, 2021[89]; World Bank, 2021[88]). Against this backdrop, women account for only 35% of landowners at the global level. The inequalities in ownership and control have essential implications for women's empowerment, not only for food security and income generation but also in the optic of using assets as credit collateral for saving for the future, for acquiring other assets or for starting a business (Namubiru-Mwaura, 2014[90]; Niethammer et al., 2007[91]). Agricultural land is a social asset which, historically, has brought political power, especially in agrarian societies (Holcombe, 2020[92]). In this regard, restrictions on women's ownership of land can shape their lack of agency, political influence and decision-making power (OECD, 2021[27]).

Unequal ownership of and control over land between men and women is rooted in discriminatory social institutions. For instance, in Africa, as discrimination in social institutions increases, the average share of women among owners of agricultural land decreases (OECD, 2021[27]). Multiple underlying factors come into play, ranging from discriminatory laws that limit women's rights to hold or control land assets to customary laws and social norms that undermine existing statutory laws.

The legislation may restrict women's control over land, notably through laws that regulate rights and duties within married couples. Worldwide, there are virtually no countries with laws that explicitly restrict unmarried women's rights to own, control or use land. However, 12 countries[30] out of 179 have legal provisions that limit married women's ownership and/or use of land, often granting the administration of the couple's assets to the husband. Moreover, in 28 countries,[31] the law establishes that the husband is the head of the family, with implicit control and ownership over the management and administration of assets and properties, including agricultural plots and land (OECD Development Centre/OECD, 2023[15]).

Imbalances between men and women are rooted in the powerful social belief that land belongs to men and that they should be the primary decision-makers regarding important family matters, including large family assets such as land property. In many settings, the occupation of land and the associated rights depend on kinship and other social and political relationships among people using the land (Higgins and Fenrich, 2011[93]). These informal dynamics often supersede existing civil or common law. In such instances, rules and customary laws that tend to favour men over women become the primary determinant of who owns, manages, inherits and has access to land. These informal laws take root in traditional and customary views transmitted from generation to generation, which assume that men undertake the bulk of agricultural work and grant them ownership of the land on this basis. At the same time, customary rules and laws, in many countries, often establish men as the primary decision makers in the household with the power to administer key assets (OECD Development Centre/OECD, 2023[15]).

Inheritance legislation and informal practices also play a central role in denying women access to land. Because inheritance is one of the primary means to acquire assets, particularly land, legal restrictions on women's rights and ability to inherit have severe consequences on their ownership of land and non-land assets (see section "Discrimination is the highest within the family sphere at the global level"). Moreover, because these restrictions and ensuing limitations span generations, they hold implications not only today, but for space to empower women over time. In many instances, these restrictive laws are compounded by discriminatory laws and practices that can circumvent the codified law and further constrain women's and girls' ability to enforce their rights. The fifth edition of the SIGI shows that in more than half of the countries (95 out of 178), informal laws create different rights or abilities between sons and daughters, or widows and widowers, when it comes to inheritance.

Against this backdrop, social practices governing household assets in marriage may further constrain women's ownership of land and restrict their inheritance rights. In many African countries, a woman traditionally leaves her family upon marriage and joins her husband's family. Under this premise, any property she might own would be lost to the family of her clan. It therefore becomes crucial for the members of the woman's family to ensure that land stays in the family through inheritance and preferences for sons. In other words, women's ability to inherit assets is intrinsically linked to customary practices which favour boys' inheritance rights over girls' (OECD, 2022[24]; Niava et al., 2022[94]; OECD, 2021[27]). These practices sometimes circumvent the law that establishes equal inheritance rights between men and women. Evidence from Côte d'Ivoire shows that, in 2021, 35% of widows did not receive any inheritance shares compared to only 8% of widowers. At the same time, 36% of the population believed that girls should not inherit land, and an additional 9% thought that girls should be authorised to inherit land but not on equal footing with boys (OECD, 2022[24]). Likewise, evidence from Tanzania showed that men perceived themselves as the rightful candidates within the family to own land and other assets. In this context, sons are valued as the only members of the family able to become leaders and to perpetuate the clan's name (OECD, 2022[25]; Mbuyita, 2021[95]). The consequences for women themselves are severe during a marriage but also afterwards, as they are often left with very few assets in cases of divorce or following the death of the husband.

The lack of potential financial collateral induced by women's lack of access to productive assets constitutes a substantial obstacle to their access to credit, particularly when they engage in entrepreneurial activities. (Niethammer et al., 2007[91]) show that women often face challenges in securing loans due to their limited ownership of land and other property that can serve as collateral. Estimates from the limited number of

countries for which data are available reveal that only 37% of women own a house alone, compared to 64% of men, and 28% of women are landholders, compared to 51% of men (OECD Development Centre/OECD, 2023[7]). Women's relative poverty in assets means that their small businesses, particularly in contexts of low-income households, face challenges in securing loans or financing, leading to a vicious cycle of poverty (Jaka and Shava, 2018[96]).

Beyond the lack of collateral, other constraints placed on women's access to financial services further hamper women's entrepreneurship. Physical distance to banking branches – notably in rural areas – and lack of financial literacy play a key role in limiting both men's and women's access to credit, although women tend to be more disadvantaged. In addition, gender-based discriminatory practices by loan providers can be a powerful deterrent to accessing basic financial services. In this regard, loan officers often assess borrowers not only on the grounds of the merits of their individual cases but also based on their personal perceptions of traditional gender roles, which leads to women being categorised as high-risk borrowers even if they meet the necessary criteria (Carter et al., 2007[97]; Rouse and Jayawarna, 2006[98]).

Women's and girls' agency in the public sphere is improving, but slowly

Without adequate representation of women in politics it is difficult, if not impossible, for women to help reform laws and ensure policies are designed to build more inclusive societies. Women's representation in parliament goes beyond their democratic right to be elected or their ability to hold the highest level of decision-making positions – it is a fundamental lever to ensure women's potential and perspectives are an integral part of political and development priorities that benefit societies and the global community. The COVID-19 crisis has highlighted the positive role that women can play in decision-making bodies and the benefit of having decision-making bodies that are gender-balanced with diverse experiences and backgrounds (UN Women, 2020[99]). Women's involvement during the crisis led to a more inclusive policy response that took into account the specific needs of women and other marginalised groups. Yet, while the positive impact of gender-balanced decision-making bodies has been recognised during the pandemic, women only made up 24% of the members of ad-hoc decision-making structures globally (UN Women and UNDP, 2022[100]). The ongoing aftermath of the crisis therefore constitutes an opportunity to build back better and to increase and strengthen women's representation in positions of power. Conversely, keeping women out of the prevention of and response to ongoing and/or future global crises may exacerbate the gendered impact of these challenges (see Chapter 3 and Chapter 4).

### Women are underrepresented in political and public life

Women's political representation has made progress but, at the current pace, it will take 40 more years to achieve parity in parliaments. In 2023, among the 179 countries included in the fifth edition of the SIGI, the proportion of members of parliament who are women reached 26.6%, compared to 24.1% in 2019,[32] representing an increase of 2.5 percentage points (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2023[101]). Although the increase may appear slow, it also means that if the average rate of progress recorded between 2012 and 2022 remains the same, gender parity in parliaments could, in theory, be achieved by 2062, in about 40 years (Figure 2.11). In practice, it will likely take more time to achieve parity, as marginal gains tend to decrease as the world gets closer to the objective of parity, and future potential crises may trigger unforeseen setbacks.

Gains have been uneven across regions but have been shared equally by developing and developed countries alike. In the Americas, the share of women among members of parliament has reached 34.1% in 2023, compared to 28.5% in 2019 – representing an increase of 5.6 percentage points (OECD Development Centre/OECD, 2019[8]; OECD Development Centre/OECD, 2023[7]). Over the same period, women's representation in parliaments in Europe increased by 4.1 percentage points to reach 33.1%. In contrast, progress has been slower in Africa and Asia. In the former, the share of women in parliaments

rose from 23.4% in 2019 to 25.4% in 2023 (+2 percentage points), whereas, in the latter, the share went up from 18.7% in 2019 to 20.6% in 2023 (+1.9 percentage points). Worldwide, 12 countries[33] out of 179 have attained parity or near-parity[34] in political representation, up from 4 countries[35] in 2019. Among these 12 countries, half are OECD countries.

Figure 2.11. Women's political representation in parliaments is increasing, albeit at a slow pace

Share of women in national parliaments, 1945-2062
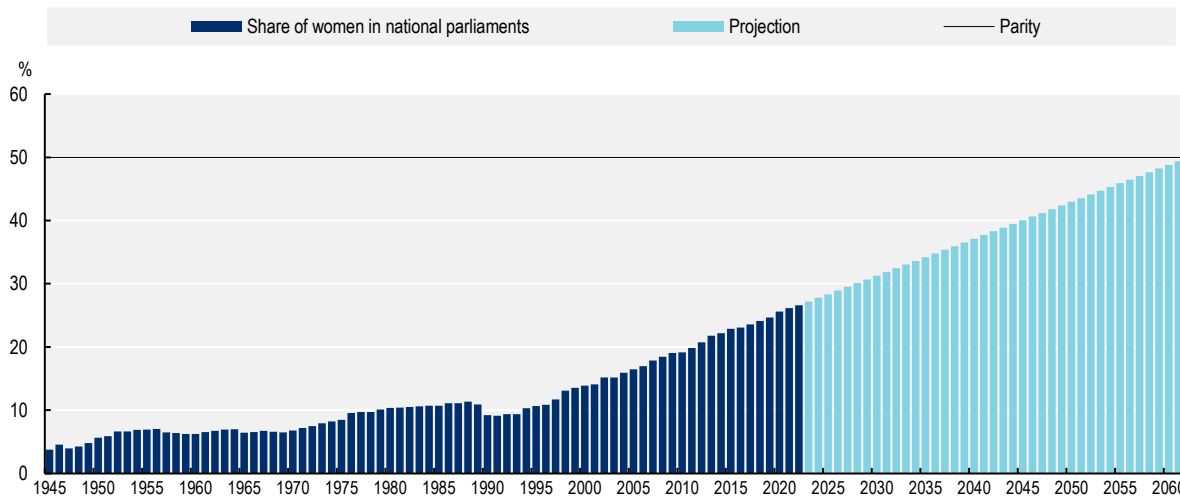
Note: Projections are calculated using the average yearly increase in women's share in national parliaments in percentage points, over the period 2012-22 (+0.58 percentage points per year).
Source: (OECD Development Centre/OECD, 2023[7]), "Gender, Institutions and Development (Edition 2023)", *OECD International Development Statistics* (database), https://doi.org/10.1787/7b0af638-en.

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Beyond their representation in parliaments, women are underrepresented at both ends of the political spectrum – among heads of state or government and at the local level. In 2023, women account for only 11% of heads of state and 10% of heads of government (Inter-Parliamentary Union and UN Women, 2023[102]). Wide variations exist across countries. In 13 countries,[36] women represent more than 50% of the Cabinet members who head ministries, and in an additional 17 countries,[37] they account for 40-50% of the Cabinet members. Conversely, in 9 countries, there are no women at all among Cabinet members, whereas in 22 countries, less than 10% of Cabinet members are women (Figure 2.12, Panel A).

The allocation of portfolios among Cabinet members also tends to follow social norms and stereotypes related to gender differences. Women's portfolios are often related to policy areas perceived as better fitted to their innate abilities. For instance, in 2023, at the global level, women account for 84% of the ministers of women and gender equality, 68% of the ministers of family and children affairs, and more than 40% of the ministers of social inclusion and development, social protection and social security, and indigenous and minority affairs. Conversely, women make up only 17% of the ministers of financial and fiscal affairs, 14% of the ministers of home affairs, 12% of the ministers of defence, and only 7% of the ministers of religious affairs (Figure 2.12, Panel B).

At the other end of the political spectrum, women's representation in deliberative bodies of local government is higher than in parliament but still not on equal terms with men. In 2021, at the global level, only 36% of elected members in deliberative bodies of local government were women (Berevoescu and Ballington, 2021[103]).

Figure 2.12. Women are underrepresented in governments and confined to social, gender and children affairs

Number of countries by share of women among Cabinet ministers (Panel A) and share of women Cabinet ministers by type of portfolio (Panel B)
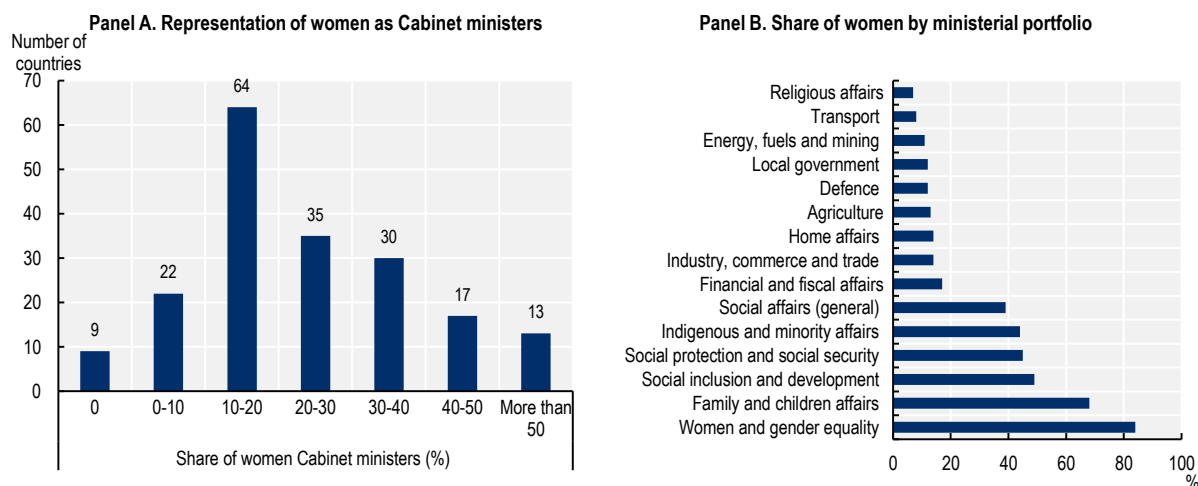
Note: Panel A presents the number of countries grouped by the share of women among Cabinet members across 190 countries for which data are available, as of 1 January 2023. The portfolios presented in Panel B are selected based on the largest and lowest shares of women. Classification of ministerial portfolios is based on the ministerial titles of Cabinet members who head ministries.
Source: (Inter-Parliamentary Union and UN Women, 2023[102]), "Women in politics: 2023" map, https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2023/03/women-in-politics-map-2023.

StatLink 🔗 https://stat.link/bpqgu5

Laws – particularly quotas – are fundamental to improving women's representation

An increasing number of countries are enacting laws and implementing policies which establish legislated gender quotas in politics, with the aim of promoting women's political representation. The *2015 OECD Recommendation of the Council on Equality in Public Life* highlights the importance of quotas as one of the main measures to achieve gender-balanced representation in decision-making positions in the public sphere (OECD, 2023[104]; OECD, 2022[105]; OECD, 2016[106]). Worldwide, in 2023, more than half of countries (93 out of 178) have established constitutional and/or legislated gender quotas at the national level. Since the fourth edition of the SIGI, eight additional countries[38] have done so. Moreover, nine countries without gender quotas have, nevertheless, implemented other types of special measures such as disclosure requirements, parity laws, the obligation to alternate the sexes on party lists or financial incentives for political parties.

Legislated gender quotas have been instrumental in guaranteeing a more balanced representation of men and women in parliaments. Among the 12 countries out of 178 that have achieved parity or near-parity in parliaments, 7 have legislated gender quotas, and 5 have implemented other special measures, including 4 that have established both binding quotas and other types of measures. In contrast, among the 17 countries of the world that have less than 10% of women in their parliaments, only 4 have legislated gender quotas, and none of them has established special measures (Figure 2.13, Panel A). At the global level, the difference in women's representation in parliaments between countries where quotas exist and countries where they do not is found to be significant. More precisely, gender quotas have had a positive and significant effect on women's representation in parliaments in the Americas and Asia (Figure 2.13, Panel B). Yet, the effectiveness of gender quotas as a legal and policy instrument is weakened by the lack of sanctions for failure to implement them. Worldwide, among the 93 countries that have national-level quotas, only half

(47 countries) have enacted legal provisions or mechanisms that foresee legal or financial sanctions for parties or candidates when they fail to implement the rule set by the law. Binding quotas and voluntary targets have also shown tangible results in the private sector, for instance contributing significantly to increasing the representation of women on the boards of listed companies (OECD, 2023[104]).

Figure 2.13. Legislated gender quotas can help guarantee a more balanced representation of men and women in parliaments

Share of women in national parliaments in selected countries (Panel A) and share of women in national parliaments by existence of gender quotas (Panel B)
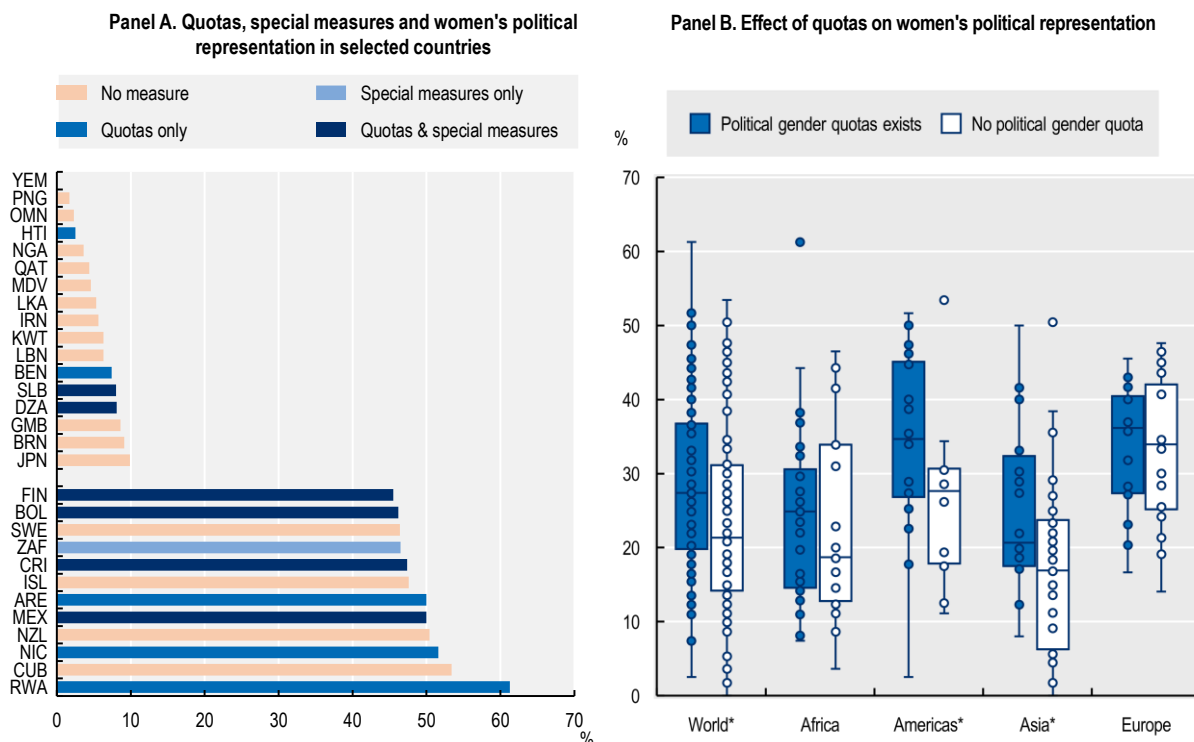
Note: In Panel A, the countries selected are those for which the share of women in national parliaments is lower than 10% or superior to 45%, which corresponds to near-parity. Near-parity in political representation is attained when the share of women among the members of parliament is superior or equal to 45%. Panel B presents the share of women in parliaments in the 178 countries for which data are available distributed according to the existence of legislated gender quotas or not and by geographical area. Each dot corresponds to a country. For each geographical area, the box contains countries located between the first and the third quartile. The horizontal line within each box corresponds to the median share of women in parliaments. The lower and upper whiskers indicate variability in the share of women in parliaments outside the first and third quartiles. Geographical areas marked with an asterisk (*) are those for which the difference in the average share of women in national parliaments between countries with gender quotas and countries without any quota is significant, at 5%.
Source: (OECD Development Centre/OECD, 2023[7]), "Gender, Institutions and Development (Edition 2023)", *OECD International Development Statistics* (database), https://doi.org/10.1787/7b0af638-en.

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Discriminatory social norms and stereotypes of women's and men's ability to be political leaders are at the heart of the barriers that continue to limit women's agency and opportunities to be elected in parliaments. This, in turn, affects the policy space for gender equality reforms. Worldwide, nearly half of the population[39] (48%) believes that men make better political leaders than women. In Africa and Asia, the share of the population holding these views reaches 60% and 56% respectively. The ideals of men's dominance and power over both women and men, which is behind these attitudes, are deeply embedded within restrictive

masculinities (OECD, 2021[14]). These discriminatory views have been held throughout history and stem from deeply ingrained ideas such as that women are too kind and caring to be leaders, women are too emotional or women are too erratic and irrational. They are strongly associated with a lower representation of women in political leadership (Figure 2.14). Moreover, women leaders themselves suffer from stereotypes attached to being leaders and, when they reach positions of political power, society expects them to behave as male leaders (OECD, 2021[14]). These norms, together with women's low political representation and scarcity of existing role models, can send a strong signal to younger generations of women and disincentivise them to pursue a political career.

Figure 2.14. Discriminatory social norms and stereotypes limit women's political empowerment

Relationship between women's representation in national parliaments and attitudes towards women's political leadership
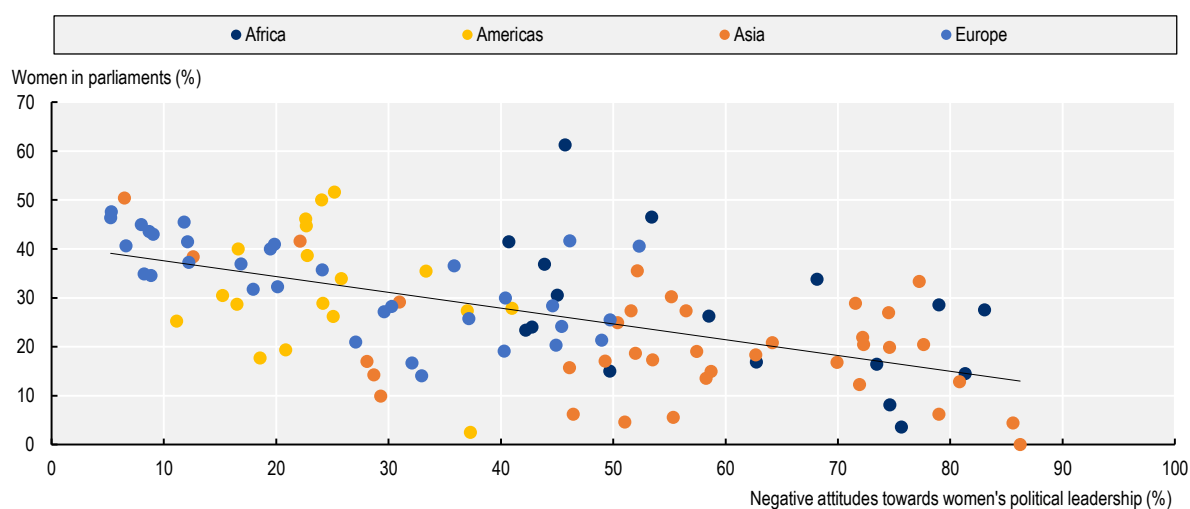
Note: Negative attitudes towards women's political leadership are calculated as the share of the population who agree or strongly agree with the statement: "Men make better political leaders than women." Data cover 105 countries for which both indicators are available and which account for 92% of the world's population aged 18 years and more.
Source: (OECD Development Centre/OECD, 2023[7]), "Gender, Institutions and Development (Edition 2023)", *OECD International Development Statistics* (database), https://doi.org/10.1787/7b0af638-en.

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Notes

[1] Scores range from 0 to 100, with 0 indicating no discrimination and 100 indicating absolute discrimination.

[2] Countries are classified into five groups according to their SIGI score: (1) very low level of discrimination (SIGI < 20); (2) low level of discrimination (20 < SIGI < 30); (3) medium level of discrimination (30 < SIGI < 40); (4) high level of discrimination (40 < SIGI < 50); and (5) very high level of discrimination (SIGI > 50).

[3] Overall, SIGI scores could not be computed for 39 countries out of 179 because of missing data. Among these 39 countries, no legal data were collected for Afghanistan (see Annex B for more details).

[4] As SIGI scores can only be computed if a given country has data points for all variables of the SIGI framework, countries that lacked at least one data point related to practices or attitudinal variables could not obtain a SIGI score. Nevertheless, as legal data points are available for all countries except Afghanistan, it is possible to calculate a SIGI legal score for 178 countries that follows the same methodology as the SIGI – scores range from 0 to 100, with 0 indicating no discrimination and 100 indicating absolute discrimination.

[5] Scores range from 0 to 100, with 0 indicating no discrimination and 100 indicating absolute discrimination.

[6] Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Brazil, Chile, China, Colombia, Cyprus, Ecuador, Egypt, Germany, Hong Kong (China), Iraq, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Korea, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Libya, Malaysia, Mexico, Morocco, New Zealand, Nigeria, Pakistan, Peru, Philippines, Romania, Singapore, Chinese Taipei, Thailand, Tunisia, Türkiye, Ukraine, United States and Zimbabwe.

[7] Gabon, Guinea, Samoa, Saudi Arabia, Uzbekistan and West Bank and Gaza Strip.

[8] Antigua and Barbuda, Côte d'Ivoire, Dominican Republic, Estonia, Finland, Ireland, Mauritius, Mexico, Mozambique, Norway, Philippines, São Tomé and Principe, and Zimbabwe.

[9] Chinese Taipei and Japan.

[10] Marriage-related payments are of two main types: bride price and dowry. Bride price refers to a situation where the groom and/or his family makes a wedding payment to the bride's family in the form of livestock, money, commodities or other valuables. Dowry refers to the opposite, whereby the bride's family provides a payment, such as property or money, to the groom or his family at the time of marriage. Globally, the bride price tradition is significantly more common than the tradition of dowry, the latter being mostly present in South Asia (Nyyssölä, 2022[107]).

[11] Data are extracted from time-use surveys available across 90 countries. Available data include 16 countries from Africa, 19 countries from the Americas, 25 countries from Asia and 30 countries from Europe.

[12] Bahrain, Brunei Darussalam, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Republic of the Congo (Congo), Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Djibouti, Guinea-Bissau, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Oman, Qatar, Senegal, Somalia, Sudan, Tanzania, Tunisia and Yemen.

[13] Bahrain, Brunei Darussalam, Djibouti, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Malaysia, Mali, Mauritania, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, West Bank and Gaza Strip, and Yemen.

[14] Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Mauritania, Niger and Sudan.

[15] Cameroon, Chad, Chile, Congo, DRC, Guinea-Bissau, Mauritania, Niger, Philippines, Sri Lanka and Sudan.

[16] Benin, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, El Salvador, France, Madagascar, Malta, Mexico, Peru, Türkiye and Uruguay.

[17] Armenia, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Chad, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Eswatini, Kosovo, Lesotho, Liberia, New Zealand, Seychelles, United Arab Emirates and United Kingdom.

[18] In a consent-based approach, the definition of rape is based on voluntary, genuine and willing consent and recognises a broad range of coercive circumstances where consent cannot be voluntary, genuine or willing and where the victim/survivor is incapable of giving consent. In contrast, definitions of rape that do not follow the consent-based approach are often based on force or the threat of force, as opposed to lack of consent (Equality Now, 2021[108]).

[19] FGM/C refers to all procedures that involve partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or other injuries to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons. The practice has no health benefits for girls or women and can cause severe bleeding, problems urinating, cysts, infections, as well as complications in childbirth and increased risk of newborn deaths (OHCR et al., 2008[46]).

[20] Burkina Faso (76%), Eritrea (83%), Mali (83%), Sierra Leone (83%), Sudan (87%), Egypt (87%), Djibouti (94%), Guinea (95%) and Somalia (99%).

[21] The SIGI methodology assesses laws on FGM/C according to two scenarios: (1) criminalisation on *narrow grounds* includes laws that contain criminal penalties for acts of "female genital mutilation", "permanent altering/removal of external genitalia", "female circumcision", "excision", "infibulation" and "genital mutilation"; (2) criminalisation on *broad grounds* includes "mutilation", "harming of a person's organs", "serious bodily injury" and "bodily injury/hurt/assault."

[22] The inception of the Dutch "chain approach" dates back to 1993. The policy is aimed at (i) preventing girls and women living in the Netherlands from being circumcised, and (ii) providing good-quality medical and psychosocial care to women and girls who have been circumcised. The national policy focuses on legal measures, prevention, education and health care. It is the product of close co-ordination between governmental entities and agencies and non-governmental organisations (Pharos, n.d.[52]).

[23] The "Jobs Gap" indicator developed by the International Labour Organization intends to go beyond traditional measures of unemployment, which require jobseekers to be available to work and to be looking for a job in order to be accounted for. Therefore, to be considered unemployed, it is not enough to be jobless and have an interest in working. An unemployed person must have been recently seeking work and available to take up a job at very short notice, typically a week. This situation may exclude many potential workers from the official statistics, notably women because of their disproportionate involvement in unpaid care work which may not allow them to be immediately available for work or may not leave them enough time to actively look for employment. To go beyond traditional measures of unemployment and account for individuals not covered by official statistics, the jobs gap rate captures all persons who would like to work but do not have a job, regardless of their availability or actions to find a job (ILO, 2023[56]).

[24] Cameroon, Chad, Iran, Jordan, Lebanon, Mauritania, Qatar, Sudan, Syria, West Bank and Gaza Strip, and Yemen.

[25] Cameroon, Mauritania, Sudan, Syria, Venezuela and Yemen.

[26] Belize, Brunei Darussalam, Congo, Cuba, Dominica, Iran, Jordan, Myanmar, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Solomon Islands, Sri Lanka and Sudan.

[27] Category "Other services" aggregate workers from categories R, S, T and U of ISIC rev.4, corresponding respectively to "Arts, entertainment and recreation" (R), "Other service activities" (S), "Activities of households as employers; undifferentiated goods- and services-producing activities of households for own use" (T), and "Activities of extraterritorial organizations and bodies" (U) (ILO, 2023[109]).

[28] Data are based on Labour Force Surveys (LFS), Household, Income and Expenditure Surveys (HIES), Household surveys (HS) and Population Census (PC). Data cover 114 countries and cover the period 2012-22, with 73% of data covering the period 2019-22 (ILO, 2022[72]).

[29] Calculations are based on data collected across 73 countries that account for 80% of the global population. See (ILO, 2019[86]) for more details.

[30] Cameroon, Chad, Chile, Congo, DRC, Equatorial Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Mauritania, Niger, Philippines, Sri Lanka and Sudan.

[31] Bahrain, Brunei Darussalam, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Congo, DRC, Djibouti, Guinea-Bissau, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Oman, Qatar, Senegal, Somalia, Sudan, Tanzania, Tunisia and Yemen.

[32] All figures on the share of women among members of parliament refer to the share as of 1 January of the stated year.

[33] Bolivia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Finland, Iceland, Mexico, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Rwanda, South Africa, Sweden and United Arab Emirates.

[34] Near-parity in political representation is attained when the share of women among the members of parliament is superior or equal to 45%.

[35] Bolivia, Cuba, Nicaragua and Rwanda.

[36] Albania (67%), Finland (64%), Spain (64%), Nicaragua (63%), Liechtenstein (60%), Chile (58%), Belgium (57%), Mozambique (55%), Andorra (50%), Colombia (50%), Germany (50%), Netherlands (50%) and Norway (50%).

[37] Canada (49%), South Africa (48%), Sweden (48%), Rwanda (48%), Peru (47%), Costa Rica (46%), New Zealand (45%), Australia (44%), Estonia (43%), Latvia (43%), Lithuania (43%), Switzerland (43%), Iceland (42%), Mexico (42%), Ethiopia (41%), Portugal (41%) and Monaco (40%).

[38] Benin, Chad, Chile, Côte d'Ivoire, Georgia, Guinea-Bissau, Malta and United Arab Emirates.

[39] Data cover 105 countries which account for 92% of the world's population aged 18 years and more.

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