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## Gender Disparities in Achieving SDG 5 (Gender Equality): A Comparative Analysis Using UN and World Bank Data

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### ABSTRACT

*The 5th Sustainable Development Goal (SDG 5) involves gender equality and empowering all women and girls. In the present paper, the topic of reviewing the latest trends and cross-country differences in the movement to SDG 5 of the United Nations (UN) and World Bank data will be discussed and will be supplemented by the results of the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), the World Economic Forum (WEF), and the Women, Business and the Law (WBL) program of the World Bank datasets. The progress is uneven across the world: the legal rights of women still do not have even the two-thirds of the legal rights of men including the safety and care of children; the proportion of women in parliament is still as much as only a quarter of the number of men; women labor participation in the workforce is still very diverse and differs between single-digit figures in some weak states and equality in some high income economies; childbirth death rates are already getting better but remain unreasonable and are not evenly distributed among all countries of the globe. We provide a regional and representative country-by-country comparison over indicators, comment on the factors which lead to it, and lay out those policy levers with the highest demonstrated effects (legal reform with enforcement, childcare systems, pay-transparency rules, and even violence-prevention frameworks). The paper ends with a research and policy agenda on how to make this kind of progress even faster in 2030.*

**Keywords:** Gender Inequality, Cross Country Comparison, Labor-Force Participation, Legal Rights, Maternal Mortality, SDG 5, Women in Parliament, Women Economic Empowerment.

### Introduction

This is because SDG 5 is part of Agenda 2030, touching on goals focused on poverty reduction, health, education, decent work, and governance. However, on various SDG 5 targets, the world is not on track as assessed by the latest gender trend measurements by the UN. The Gender Snapshot 2024 highlights ongoing kind of corruption and notifies that the lack of data itself covers the inequality in policy-making and financial planning. [UN Women+1](#)

At the same time, the 2024 WBL publication of the World Bank presented an augmented model to indicate not the de jure legal equality, but the systems and achievement of the implementation. With protection against violence and access to childcare provided, women have approximately 64% of the legal protection's men can have on the average much lower than estimates made before, and state based on average no less than 40 percent of the mechanisms necessary to enforce current legislation. [World Bank+1](#)

The research question of this paper is as follows: What are the biggest global inequalities on SDG 5-relevant indicators; what are the reasons; and which policies are best correlated with

associated progress? To answer these questions, we put together cross-country data on the basis of UN and World Bank sources and similar global data.

## Data and Methods

### Data Sources

Primary indicators were drawn from:

- **World Bank Gender Data Portal:** female labor-force participation (FLFP) and labor measures (your last available years up to 2024). [World Bank Open Data+2World Bank Gender Data Portal+2](#)
- **IPU/World Bank:** the percentage of seats of countries in the national parliaments occupied by women of the country (monthly IPU updates aggregated by the World Bank indicator SG.GEN. PARL. ZS). [World Bank Open Data+2IPU Parline+2](#)
- **WHO/UN:** SDG Target 3.1 Updates (estimates 2025): maternal mortality and SDG Target 3.1. Although maternal mortality is an SDG 3 indicator, it is a fundamental gender-equality indicator concerning SDG 5. [World Health Organization+2World Health Organization+2](#)
- **World Bank—WBL 2024:** Legal equality rating (1.0 and 2.0) and the metrics of implementation-gap up-to-date (as of October 1, 2023); press release and report pages were sources of specific factual information. [World Bank+1](#)
- **ILO Global Wage Report 2024–25:** wage-gap and salaries new knowledge, informal sector. [International Labour Organization+1](#)
- **WEF Global Gender Gap Report 2024:** composite parity score to put SDG 5 progress into perspective. [World Economic Forum+1](#)

### Approach

We conduct a comparative, descriptive analysis:

1. International comparison of every indicator (a recent value).
2. Comparison of the region (Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America & Caribbean, Middle East and North Africa, North America S and Oceania) using IPU and World Bank regional aggregates where available.
3. Country examples of good and bad performers on certain aspects (e.g. high women and low FLFP representation).
4. Synthesis proposal (which includes outcomes and enablers) (legal frameworks, enforcement, childcare, safety laws) brought into the limelight by WBL 2024.

Since multiple sources are revised with various cycles (e.g. monthly IPU v. annual model ILO estimates of FLFP), we are adding dates on all figures used and not comparing non-comparable figure.

## Results

### Global Picture

- **Legal equality & implementation:** Women on average enjoy only a little less than 64% of the legal protections afforded to men when safety and childcare are added to that; there is little less than 40 percent of the systems needed that are needed in various countries. This increases the actual disparity between legislations on the books and the lived experience of the women. [World Bank](#)
- **Political representation:** The world average of women in national parliament stands at about 26.27 percent (monthly averages of IPU 2023-2025), very big regionally. [IPU Parline+1](#)

- **Economic participation:** FLFP diverges dramatically. At one extreme the FLFP of Afghanistan stands at approximately 5.1% (2024); as a range of high-income economies hits its 50s and above with relatively less inequality. [World Bank Gender Data Portal](#)
- **Maternal mortality:** Gender inequality Percentages change over time, but approximately 260,000 women have died of pregnancy and childbirth causes in 2023, 92 percent of them most preventable in low-and-lower-middle-income countries. [World Health Organization](#)
- **Overall parity:** The WEF estimates the global gender gap 68.5–68.6% closed in 2024 progressing only +0.1 percentage points year-over-year. [World Economic Forum](#)

### Regional and Exemplar Contrasts

- **Nordics & parts of Western Europe:** One of the best concerning the number of women who hold political office around the world and general parity, has strong childcare and pay-transparency systems. However, even here, not all legal and implementation equivalence exists. [World Economic Forum+1](#)
- **Latin America & the Caribbean:** Has made strides via gender-quota laws improving parliamentary representation though wage gaps and care burdens persist; WBL notes uneven enforcement of equal-pay provisions. [World Bank](#)
- **Sub-Saharan Africa:** Some countries (e.g., Rwanda) sustain very high women's parliamentary representation, but many face high maternal mortality and gaps in safety frameworks and childcare systems identified by WBL 2024. [IPU Parline+1](#)
- **Middle East & North Africa:** As a rule, reduced FLFP and parliamentary representation; access to childcare and mobility/workplace law restriction are mandatory in various economies according to WBL 2024. [World Bank](#)
- **South Asia:** Wide intra-regional variation; Afghanistan sits at the extreme low end of FLFP; several countries show improvements in representation but persistent informality-related pay and earnings gaps. [World Bank Gender Data Portal+1](#)

### Cross-indicator Patterns

1. **Legal reform is necessary but insufficient:** Even the nations rated highly on de jure are lagging, with no enforcement, pay-transparency, and childcare facilities on them, just as WBL 2.0 anticipates in its implementation gap. [World Bank](#)
2. **Care infrastructure moves FLFP:** WBL 2024 points out that the increased childcare access results in a significant increase in labor-force participation by women whose impacts increase over five years. [World Bank](#)
3. **Safety frameworks affect mobility and earnings:** Low insurance against gender-based violence discourages the working capability of women, their commuting and the inception of companies. The average of global Safety scores is in the 36/100 range. [World Bank](#)
4. **Informality and wages:** Including non-wage workers widens gender earnings gaps across income groups; a large share of women in low- and middle-income countries is own-account workers in informal sectors with worse conditions. [International Labour Organization](#)

### Discussion

#### Why Progress Diverges

- **Institutions & enforcement:** The pairing of legal reforms (labor inspectorates, pay-equity audits, public disclosure of wage-gaps) with its actualization (a country) is more effective

in countries that implement a related reform. WBL demonstrates that although 98 economies enforce equal pay, only 35 make the same payment dependent or enforced.

[World Bank](#)

- **Public goods for equality:** Affordable, quality childcare and comprehensive violence-prevention frameworks correlate with higher FLFP and safer participation in public life. Yet <50% of economies provide financial/tax support for childcare, and only 62 have quality standards. [World Bank](#)
- **Political voice & policy:** An increase in the representation of women is usually accompanied by an increase in the strength of family policy and violence-prevention laws, although this does not necessarily imply that this is either causal or deterministic, and also depends on regime type and strength of civil society. [IPU Parline](#)
- **Macroeconomic dividends:** The World Bank estimates that closing gender gaps could lift global GDP by >20%, underscoring economy-wide returns to equality-enhancing reforms. [World Bank+1](#)

#### Implications for SDG 5 acceleration

1. **Close the law-to-practice gap:** Reimburse couple laws and norms and accountable systems of pay, disclose, and budget that track and label gender-equality spending in government. [World Bank+1](#)
2. **Invest in care systems:** Subsidized childcare, parental-leave design that promotes fathers' take-up, and early-childhood standards show strong, scalable effects on FLFP and earnings. [World Bank](#)
3. **Strengthen safety frameworks:** Comprehensive laws and services addressing domestic and public-space harassment, femicide prevention, and survivor support directly enable education, work, and political participation. [World Bank](#)
4. **Tackle informality:** Provide women-owned firms with extended social protection, formalization channels, and credit: it was found by the ILO that informal status exaggerates earnings differences. [International Labour Organization](#)
5. **Data systems:** Expand gender-disaggregated data to make women's experiences visible and fund evidence-based policy. [UN Women](#)

#### Limitations

This is a descriptive analysis that uses the latest published aggregates. Causal inference is hampered by country-level measurement lags (e.g. modeled ILO estimates of FLFP) and definite differences. The range of parliamentary shares at IPU is varying in a monthly context. Other factors (e.g. the prevalence of gender-based violence) are not drawn sufficiently in conflict-impacted environments, which biases comparisons. [World Bank Open Data+1](#)

#### Conclusion

The globe is making incremental progress in the field of gender equality; however, SDG 5 is lagging behind. The most evident opportunities exist within the implementation: the enforcement of equal-pay laws, reduction of childcare, enhancement of the frameworks of safety, and equal-pay budgeting as an institutional reality. When these factors coincide, the participation of a woman in the parliament, working in the labor market, and having better health increases in unison that brings social justice and macroeconomic benefits. Governments have only years to go to 2030 to bring their change in terms of turning their written texts into performed rights, which are supported by budgets, services, and accountability.

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## Appendix: Indicator Notes

- *Female labor-force participation (FLFP)*: World Bank/ILO modeled estimates; latest year varies by country (many report 2023–2024). [World Bank Open Data](https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.TLF.CACT.FE.ZS)
- *Women in parliament*: IPU monthly snapshot; global/regional averages are rolling aggregates and may change month-to-month. [IPU Parline+1](https://data.ipu.org/women-ranking/)
- *Maternal mortality*: WHO 2023 estimates released 2025; strongly associated with health-system capacity and socioeconomic status. [World Health Organization](https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/maternal-mortality)