



The Gender Inequality Index (GII)



The Gender Inequality Index (GII) is an important tool used to measure and highlight gender disparities in various countries around the world. Developed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the GII aims to reflect the inequalities between men and women in three key dimensions: reproductive health, empowerment, and labor market participation.

How is the GII Measured?

The GII is calculated using five indicators grouped into the three aforementioned dimensions:

1. Reproductive Health:

- **Maternal Mortality Ratio:** The number of maternal deaths per 100,000 live births.
- **Adolescent Birth Rate:** The number of births per 1,000 women aged 15-19.

2. Empowerment:

- **Parliamentary Representation:** The proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments.
- **Educational Attainment:** The proportion of adult women and men aged 25 and older with at least some secondary education.

3. Labor Market Participation:

- **Labor Force Participation Rate:** The proportion of the working-age population that is actively engaged in the labor market, either by working or looking for work.

These indicators are combined to produce a single score, ranging from 0 to 1. A score of 0 indicates perfect gender equality, while a score of 1 signifies maximum gender inequality.

Regions with High and Low Gender Inequality

Gender inequality varies significantly across different regions of the world. Generally, countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region tend to have higher GII scores, indicating greater gender disparities. For example, countries like Niger, Chad, and Yemen often rank high on the GII due to factors such as high maternal mortality rates, low female educational attainment, and limited political representation for women.

On the other hand, countries in Northern Europe, such as Norway, Sweden, and Denmark, consistently rank low on the GII, reflecting their strong commitment to gender equality. These countries have implemented policies such as generous parental leave, subsidized childcare, and gender quotas in politics, which have significantly reduced gender disparities.



Benefits of the GII

One of the main benefits of the GII is that it provides a clear and quantifiable measure of gender inequality, making it easier to identify areas where improvements are needed. For example, countries with high maternal mortality rates and low female parliamentary representation can use the GII to prioritize healthcare reforms and political empowerment initiatives. Additionally, the GII allows for comparisons between countries, helping to highlight best practices and successful policies that can be replicated elsewhere.

Gender equality is a crucial component of sustainable development. By highlighting the importance of gender equality, the GII supports the broader development agenda, including the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 5). Achieving gender equality can have a positive ripple effect on other development outcomes, such as poverty reduction, improved health, and economic growth.

The GII allows for comparisons between countries, helping to identify best practices and successful policies that can be replicated to achieve SDG 5. Countries with low GII scores, such as those in Northern Europe, often serve as models for other nations striving to achieve gender equality. These comparisons can inspire and inform policy changes that contribute to the achievement of SDG 5.

Criticism of the GII

Despite its usefulness, the GII is not without criticism. One major critique is that it relies on national-level data, which can mask regional and local variations in gender inequality. For example, while a country may have a high overall score, certain regions or communities within that country might still experience significant gender disparities.

India is a good example to showcase regional differences of the GII: While upper-caste women may have better access to education and healthcare, lower-caste women, particularly Dalits, experience severe discrimination and violence, compounded by their socio-economic status. Regional variations further complicate the landscape, with southern states like Kerala or Tamil Nadu generally faring better in terms of gender equality due to higher female literacy rates, better healthcare, and greater political representation for women. Northern states such as Bihar or Uttar Pradesh tend to have higher levels of gender inequality, with lower female literacy rates, higher maternal mortality rates, and fewer women in political and economic spheres. Patriarchal norms are more deeply entrenched, and practices like child marriage and dowry are more common.

Another criticism is that the GII does not account for unpaid work, which is disproportionately performed by women. Activities such as childcare, eldercare, and household chores are essential for the functioning of society but are often undervalued and excluded from traditional economic measures. This omission can lead to an incomplete picture of women's contributions and the full extent of gender inequality.

Moreover, some argue that the GII's focus on specific indicators might overlook other important aspects of gender inequality, such as violence against women, access to reproductive rights, and cultural norms that perpetuate gender biases. While the GII

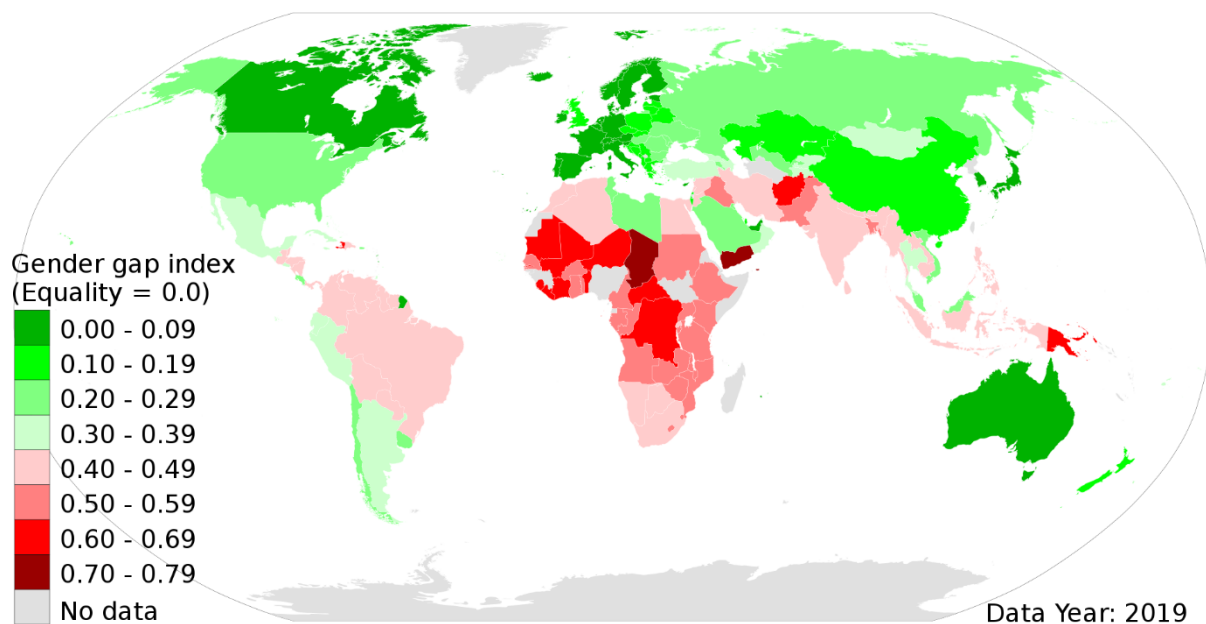


provides a useful snapshot of gender inequality, it should be complemented by other measures and qualitative research to capture the full complexity of the issue.

Acceptance as an Indicator of Development

While the GII is widely recognized by international organizations, researchers, and many governments as a crucial indicator of development, it is not universally accepted. Indeed, in some regions, particularly in parts of Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and the Middle East, there may be resistance to fully embracing the GII due to cultural, religious, and political factors that influence attitudes towards women's rights. In these regions, traditional norms and values may conflict with the principles of gender equality, leading to a lack of political will to address gender disparities.

For example, in some countries, women's rights activists face significant challenges and even hostility when advocating for gender equality. This resistance can hinder the implementation of policies aimed at improving gender equality and reduce the effectiveness of the GII as a tool for driving change.





Fact Sheet

Gender Inequality Index

About...

Strengths:

Weaknesses:

Conclusion: