



The Gender Equality and Governance Index

Empowering Women for the Prosperity of Nations

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Executive Summary

Gender inequality has myriad faces: archaic laws that codify sexism, male control of joint income and household assets, exclusion from governance, trafficking and violence against women, denial of education and adequate health care, and gender segregation in the work force, to name a few. The scope of inequality is vast and its costs to society are mounting.

COVID-19 has prompted new awareness around this topic, as the effects of the pandemic have exacerbated existing gender inequalities and revealed the importance of female inclusion in governance and decision-making. The evidence linking gender equality to economic and social well-being and prosperity is clear. Now more than ever, we must prioritize the role of women in fostering communities' and countries' well-being and economic health by developing policies that guard against gender discrimination.

The Gender Equality and Governance Index (GEGI; Figure 1 provides the index structure and its various components) was built with the understanding that indexes—despite their limitations—are tools to generate debate on key policy issues, to precipitate remedial actions, and to track progress. A well-designed composite indicator thus provides a useful frame of reference for evaluation, both between countries and over time. The GEGI analyzes data from a variety of international organizations and valuable survey data to achieve a broad-based and comparative understanding of gender discrimination on a global scale, using five critical “pillars”: governance, education, work, entrepreneurship, and violence. By breaking scores down into pillars, the GEGI allows policymakers to pinpoint specific areas for improvement.

The GEGI rankings for 2020 indicate a clear correlation between gender equality, economic prosperity, and inclusive leadership. Iceland ranks first in the world among the 158 countries included in the index, followed by Spain and Belgium. Canada (9) and New Zealand (16) are the only non-European countries to rank in the top 20. The highest-ranking country in East Asia is Taiwan (21), and Canada scores highest in the Americas. (See Appendix II for the rankings for the 158 countries included). Much further down the rankings, we find China (82) and India (100). Given that one out of three women on the planet lives in these two countries, gender inequality there is particularly troublesome. Sub-Saharan Africa makes up nearly one-half of the 50 lowest-ranking countries, and the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) comprise another one-third. Gender equality correlates strongly with higher levels of economic prosperity per capita, as 47 of the countries in the top 50 are either high or upper middle income. Rwanda (55) is the highest-scoring low-income country.

For the countries included in the index, higher levels of discrimination against women coincide with lower rates of labor force participation for women, lower rates of school enrolment for girls at the secondary level, lower numbers of women-owned businesses, and larger wage gaps between women and men. These findings should come as no surprise. Nobel laureate Amartya Sen has argued that decreasing work-related gender inequalities can make “a positive contribution in adding force to women’s voice and agency,” thereby empowering women within both the public and private spheres.¹ Countries that have integrated women into the workforce more rapidly have improved their international competitiveness.

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2020 marks the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action, which envisioned gender equality in all dimensions of life – and yet not a single country has yet achieved it. Worse still, only eight countries have a legal framework that does not discriminate against women in some way, with a body of legislation supporting women’s economic equality, which benefits everyone. Achieving gender equality requires more than simply removing barriers to opportunity. Many decades after the women’s suffrage movement, women are still grossly underrepresented in executive and policymaking bodies. For gender equality to become a reality, with all its attendant benefits, the first step is ensuring women are equally represented at the highest levels of decision-making across a country.

Gender equality in governance requires both *de jure* and *de facto* progress. The GEGI evaluates the legal framework of a country and measures the extent of female inclusion in governance. Less than 5% of countries have gender balance in political governance. Female leadership in the justice system, the central bank, and the ministerial and executive levels of government is crucial, but notably lacking. Only 21 countries currently have a female head of state or government; only 14 have female central bank governors. Only one in four Parliamentarians is female and one in five a Minister. In the private sector, despite well-documented research on

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the financial benefits of the diversity dividend, a third of global boards have no women at all. To remedy this, countries have begun implementing quotas, often as temporary special measures, that reserve representation for women. For instance, after Argentina saw success with a quota requiring a minimum number of female candidates in national elections, many other Latin American countries followed suit.

While attempts to solve gender inequality through legislation, inclusion in decision-making, and quotas are necessary, they are by no means sufficient. A critical prerequisite for female leadership in governance is education. Since inequalities in

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¹ Sen (1999), *Development as Freedom*, p. 191.

education artificially reduce the pool of talent from which companies and governments can draw, a direct way to boost economic growth is to improve both the quality and quantity of human capital by expanding educational opportunities for girls. Cultural attitudes against female education continue to prevail, and investment in girls' education is still far below that of boys. For instance, the World Bank reports that only 38 percent of girls in low income countries enroll in secondary school, and nearly 500 million women remain illiterate. Research has conclusively proven the importance of education in expanding opportunities for women outside the home and the positive multiplier impact for families, communities and economies. The most competitive economies in the world are those where the educational system does not put women and girls at a disadvantage.

Gender inequalities in employment are also toxic to economic growth because they constrain the labor market, making it difficult for firms and businesses to scale up efficiently. Globally, only 47 percent of women are employed in the labor force, compared to over 70 percent of men. This gap is most stark in South Asia and the MENA region, where just over 20 percent of women are in formal employment. Including women in the work force requires a multifaceted approach. Incentives to work, including paid parental leave and childcare services, have proven effective in increasing female labor force participation. However, many working women remain segregated in female-dominated fields that tend to be lower paid and have fewer opportunities for advancement. Women continue to be excluded from managerial positions, and no country has succeeded in ensuring equal remuneration for work of equal value.

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Given that just 7 percent of women in low income countries are employed as wage workers, entrepreneurship and self-employment is an equally important avenue for female empowerment. Women entrepreneurs could contribute significantly to

economic innovation and growth if given access to the same training, capital, credit, and rights as men. Women face severe difficulty accessing financial accounts and securing credit; in fact, estimates from the International Finance Corporation suggest that women entrepreneurs face a financing deficit of \$1.5 trillion. Because women tend to earn less and have fewer property rights than men, they have a harder time providing collateral to obtain a loan. Restrictions on mobility and cultural disapproval of women in business further discourage women from pursuing entrepreneurship.

Despite—and perhaps in response to—the progress that women have made in governance, education, and employment, they are experiencing violence at staggering rates. Women are most vulnerable to violence in cultures where long-held customs and fundamental prejudices place the culpability for violence on the women themselves. The cost that society incurs from violence against women is high. Gendercide has become an epidemic enacted through sex-selective abortions, female infanti-

cide, and neglect and abuse of women throughout their lives. The result is a destabilizing gender imbalance in many countries—in India and China alone, men outnumber women by around 70 million. Furthermore, abuse of women has direct economic consequences, as it increases absenteeism and lowers productivity. Domestic violence is estimated to cost the United States \$460 billion annually, more than any other crime. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated this phenomenon, as reports of intimate partner violence have risen exponentially under mandatory lockdowns and quarantine.

COVID-19 has shone an uncompromising search light on global gender inequality, reminding us that gender discrimination has been undermining economic growth and wasting our human and planetary resources for far too long. The Gender Equality and Governance Index provides a scientifically evidence based, objectively verifiable diagnosis—now, action can no longer be delayed.

Introduction

The World Economic Forum report in 2005 entitled [Women's Empowerment: Measuring the Global Gender Gap](#) was an early attempt to use internationally comparable data for a large number of countries to assess the extent to which governments had eliminated the gap between women and men in such areas as political empowerment, economic opportunity, and educational attainment. The report examined the relationship between the success of countries in those efforts and their rankings in international competitiveness. Since that first report, we have learned much more about the numerous and insidious ways women are being held back and the consequences this has for the economy and human welfare.²

Perhaps the most impressive effort at data collection has been undertaken by the World Bank over the past decade with the creation of its Women, Business and the Law database. This information, now collected for 190 countries, has shown consistently that gender inequalities -- whether in the home, education, employment, law, or politics -- greatly undermine an economy's growth potential.³ The emergence of the global COVID-19 pandemic has only reinforced this pattern. Ironically, a quarter century after the Beijing Platform for Action, female empowerment and gender-sensitive policies have proven to be key to addressing the COVID-19 pandemic. Many of the countries that have adopted the most effective and humane responses to the pandemic -- including Finland, Germany, Iceland, Norway, Taiwan, and New Zealand -- are countries characterized by strong female leadership based on feminist principles.⁴

It is time to prioritize the role of women in securing a country's economic and social well-being and to further examine the close links between gender discrimination and inefficient economic policies and their negative impacts not only for women, but for everyone. This work should begin with a close review of the current state of conditions.

2 For a fairly comprehensive overview, analyzing key aspects of gender discrimination, with particular emphasis on economic and political empowerment, work, education, human rights and violence against women, see Lopez-Claros and Nakhjavani, (2018) *Equality for Women = Prosperity for All*.

3 In its first 10 years of existence the Women, Business and the Law report and dataset have catalyzed 274 reforms in 131 countries. By casting a light on the multiple discriminations against women embedded in the laws of countries across the world, the report and associated data have provided powerful incentives to improve the legal framework, to phase out overt restrictions on women's economic agency that have had a damaging effect on their economies.

4 The data is most illuminating. As of 19 October 2020, Taiwan has had 2.2 cases per 100,000 people, New Zealand 37.2, Finland 230.1, compared to 2,404 in the United States and 2,448 in Brazil. Coronavirus deaths per 100,000 people have been 11.8 in Germany, 6.4 in Finland, 5.2 in Norway, 3.1 in Iceland, 0.5 in New Zealand and 0.03 in Taiwan, compared to 73.4 in Brazil and 67.1 in the United States. In absolute terms, Germany has had about 9,800 deaths while the United Kingdom has had over 43,700. New Zealand with 25 deaths compares well with Ireland, with 1,850. Some 40 percent of the cases of reasonably successful management of the pandemic have been led by women leaders. See Donald Steinberg and Ruth Halperin-Kaddari, "What a "Feminist" Approach to Fighting COVID-19 Might Have Achieved," [Just Security](#), May 28, 2020

International benchmarking has a well-established record in promoting behavioural change. The practice of synthesizing large volumes of information into a scoring system or index accompanied by rankings can help us to understand factors and policies that influence behaviour and policies, have a bearing on the issue at hand -- whether it be human welfare in the UNDP's Human Development Index, business environment conditions in the case of the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business Index, the incidence of corruption in Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index, or gender discrimination in the Gender Equality and Governance Index.

Composite indicators also permit a common discourse when framing a problem to reflect available data and the underlying problems and challenges revealed by that data -- such as systemic discrimination against half the world's population. Further, indexes and the associated rankings can focus public attention on a particular set of policy issues. When supported by detailed data, they bring into focus underlying strengths and weaknesses, which can then become a catalyst for policy debate and corrective action. Data and associated scores and rankings can also empower civil society, the business community and other stakeholders as they pursue reforms -- in our case, the barriers women face as they seek to contribute to national prosperity and well-being.

As architects of the Gender Equality and Governance Index (GEGI), we believe that despite their limitations, indexes can be useful working tools to generate debate on key policy issues, precipitate remedial actions, and track progress over time. A well-designed composite indicator provides a useful frame of reference for evaluation, especially if attention is placed not just on the relative rankings themselves but on ways to improve country performance.

The GEGI presents data from a variety of international organizations -- including the World Bank, Interparliamentary Union, and various UN agencies-- to achieve a broad-based and comparative understanding of gender discrimination on a global scale. This data highlights five areas or "pillars" related to such discrimination: governance, education, work, entrepreneurship, and violence. Among the questions that provide differentiation among countries are:

- Has the country ratified the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) without reservations?
- Are there quotas in place for women representatives in parliament?
- How prevalent is the presence of women in political and economic leadership positions?
- Can a woman register a business or apply for a passport and travel abroad as a man can?

- How pronounced is the gender digital divide?
- Does the law mandate equal remuneration for work of equal value?
- Is domestic violence legislation in place to protect women from various forms of abuse?
- Is there preference for sons in the country that leads to pervasive sex-selective abortion and a high sex ratio?

The GEGI looks at some 60 such factors (see index structure in Figure 1). Scores and associated rankings reveal which countries have made the greatest progress in reducing gender inequalities in the areas identified by the index. Why have Iceland, Norway, Germany, and Taiwan done so well across the full range of factors identified in the index, while Qatar, Syria, Afghanistan, and Iran have done so poorly? Are there correlations between these rankings and policies that foster or hinder women's integration into the labor market, access to education and technologies, equal protection under the law, discriminatory social and cultural practices, and so on?

The index can also help countries track their progress over time. As countries adopt different tools to reduce gender disparity, they can measure the collective impact of these actions – such as the use of quotas or temporary special measures – on gender equality on a continuous and consistent basis. The data will be updated in a new report each year.

A cursory glance at the ranking scores based on the data for 2020 provides some initial insights on the links between economic wellbeing, inclusive and diverse leadership, and gender equality on a global scale. Iceland ranks first among the 158 countries included in the GEGI index, followed by Spain, Belgium, and Italy. European democracies make up 21 of the top-ranking 25 countries. Only one authoritarian regime achieves a score in the top 50, while two-thirds of the 50 lowest ranking countries are classified as authoritarian.⁵ The link between economic prosperity per capita and gender equality is also clear, as all but three countries in the top 50 are high- or upper-middle income countries. Rwanda (55) is the highest-scoring low-income country. The highest-ranking economy in East Asia was Taiwan, while China (82) and India (100) lag behind. Given that one out of three women live in these two countries, conditions of gender inequality are particularly important there. Sub-Saharan Africa makes up nearly one-half of the lowest ranking 50 countries, and the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) comprise another one-third.

⁵ In this paper we will use the definition of political regimes developed by the Economist Intelligence Unit in 2006, which classifies countries as full democracies, flawed democracies, hybrid regimes and authoritarian regimes. The EU's Democracy Index is based on the answers to 60 questions delivered in the form of experts' assessments and grouped into five categories: electoral process and pluralism, civil liberties, the functioning of government, political participation, and political culture. For a discussion of the characteristics of each regime type see: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democracy_Index

The following report will provide a close analysis of the five “pillars” that have proven to be critical to understanding gender discrimination in the world (Figure 1). These include

- I: Governance and Equality
- II: Education for Equality
- III: Women and Work
- IV: Entrepreneurship and Doing Business
- V: Violence against Women

Figure 1. Structure of the Gender Equality and Governance Index (GEGI)

Pillar I: Governance and Equality

1. Legal and Constitutional Framework

- a. Does the constitution contain a clause on equality? (1)
- b. If there is a nondiscrimination clause in the constitution, does it explicitly mention sex or gender? (1)
- c. Has CEDAW been ratified? (2)
- d. Has CEDAW been ratified without reservations and is there agreement with its optional protocol?
- e. i. Has CEDAW been ratified without reservations? (2)
- f. ii. Is there agreement with the CEDAW optional protocol? (2)

2. Participation in Governance

- a. What is the proportion of women in ministerial positions? (%) (3)
- b. What is the share of seats held by women representatives in national parliament? (%) (4)
- c. Are there legislative quotas for women in national parliament and in subnational bodies, such as state legislatures?
- d. i. Are there legislative quotas (reserved seats) in place for women representatives in national parliament? (5)

- e. ii. Are there quotas for women in subnational bodies, such as state legislatures? (5)
- f. Are there quotas for women on corporate boards? (1)

3. Equal Rights and Values

- a. Are married women required to obey their husbands? (1)
- b. Is women’s testimony in court afforded equal weight to men’s? (1)
- c. Does the law provide for the valuation of nonmonetary contributions? (1)
- d. Do you agree that “Women having the same rights as men” is an essential characteristic of democracy? (% of population) (6)
- e. Do spouses have equal rights to convey citizenship? (1)

4. ‘Her’-storical Context

- a. How many years since women are allowed to vote? (7)(16)(17)
- b. The number of years that the country has had a woman head of state and/or prime minister (8)
- c. The number of years that the country has had a woman central bank governor and/or finance minister (9)
- d. How early on in the country’s history was a woman appointed to a high court? (7)

Pillar II: Education for Equality

1. Difference in primary and secondary education between men and women (school life expectancy) (10)
2. Difference in tertiary education between men and women (school life expectancy) (10)
3. Mean years of schooling (female, 25+ years) (10)
4. Do you agree with the statement that "A university education is more important for a boy than for a girl" (% of population) (6)
5. Adolescent fertility rate (births per 1,000 women ages 15-19) (3)
6. Contraceptive prevalence, modern methods (% of women ages 15-49) (3)
7. Female/ Male ratio of Internet Usage (12)

Pillar III: Women and Work

1. Incentives to Work

- a. Is there paid leave available to women of at least 14 weeks? (1)
- b. Is there paid parental leave? (1)
- c. Are mothers guaranteed an equivalent position after maternity leave? (1)
- d. Are childcare payments tax deductible? (1)
- e. Men (15+ years old) who disagreed with the statement: "It is perfectly acceptable for any woman in your family to have a paid job outside the home if she wants one. (%)" (11)

2. Working without Restrictions

- a. Can a woman get a job in the same way as a man? (1)
- b. Are women able to work in the same industries as men? (1)
- c. Does the law mandate equal remuneration for work of equal value? (1)
- d. Does the law mandate nondiscrimination based on gender in employment? (1)
- e. Are the ages at which men and women can retire with full pension benefits equal? (1)
- f. Do you agree with the statement: "When jobs are scarce, men should

have more right to a job than a woman" (% of population)? (6)

- g. Ratio of female to male labor force participation rate (%) (modeled ILO estimate) (3)
- h. Difference between male and female share of vulnerable employment (% , modeled ILO estimate) (3)
- i. Factor Weighted Gender Pay Gap (14)

Pillar IV: Entrepreneurship and Doing Business

1. Doing Business

- a. Can a woman open a bank account in the same way as a man? (1)
- b. Can a woman register a business in the same way as a man? (1)
- c. Does the law prohibit discrimination by creditors based on gender? (1)
- d. Account ownership by women at a financial institution or with a mobile-money-service provider (% of population ages 15+) (3)
- e. Women who have saved to start, operate, or expand a farm or business (% of population age 15+) (3)
- f. Do you agree with the statement "On the whole, men make better business executives than women do" (% of population) (6)
- g. Do you agree with the statement that "If a woman earns more money than her husband, it's almost certain to cause problems" (% of population) (6)

2. Mobility Restrictions

- a. Can a woman choose where to live in the same way as a man? (1)
- b. Can a woman travel outside the home in the same way as a man? (1)
- c. Can a woman apply for passport and travel abroad alone in the same way as a man?
- d. i. Can a woman apply for a passport in the same way as a man? (1)
- e. ii. Can a woman travel abroad alone in the same way as a man? (1)

3. Property Rights

- a. Do men and married women have equal ownership rights to property? (1)

- b. Do sons and daughters have equal rights to inherit assets from their parents? (1)
- c. Do female and male surviving spouses have equal rights to inherit assets? (1)

Pillar V: Violence Against Women

- 1. Lifetime risk of maternal death (1in:) (3)
- 2. Percentage of women age 15 years and older who report that they “feel safe walking alone at night in the city or area where you live” (11)
- 3. Is there domestic violence legislation? (1)
- 4. Percentage of women who experience over their lifetime physical or sexual violence committed by their intimate partner (11)

- 5. Status of Sexual Harassment Legislation
- 6. a) Is there legislation that specifically addresses sexual harassment? (1)
- 7. b) Is there legislation on sexual harassment in employment? (1)
- 8. c) Are there criminal penalties or civil remedies for sexual harassment in employment? (1)
- 9. Conviction rate of persons convicted of intentional homicide of females (per 100,000 of population) (13)
- 10. Is there a preference for sons as manifested in a high sex ratio at birth? (15)

Note: Numbers in parenthesis refer to data sources, presented in Appendix I

PILLAR I

Governance and Equality



Gender equality will not be achieved by individual actions and changing cultural attitudes alone, nor by simply removing barriers to opportunity. Comprehensive, proactive steps to expand women’s engagement in the field of governance must be taken to ensure that women can contribute directly to improving economic and social welfare. They must be involved both in decision making and the election process; they must have a say in who their elected leaders are; and they need to vote and be voted into office.

Although there are a few examples of aristocratic women in Europe during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries who wielded political influence through literary salons, women did not begin to get the right to vote in national elections anywhere until little more than a century ago. While the Seneca Falls convention in 1848 in the United States spurred the ideals of emancipation and inspired suffrage movements throughout the East and the West, it was not until 1893 that New Zealand became the first country to intentionally grant suffrage to women. Without the power to choose who governed them, women were denied the opportunity to have their voices heard, were

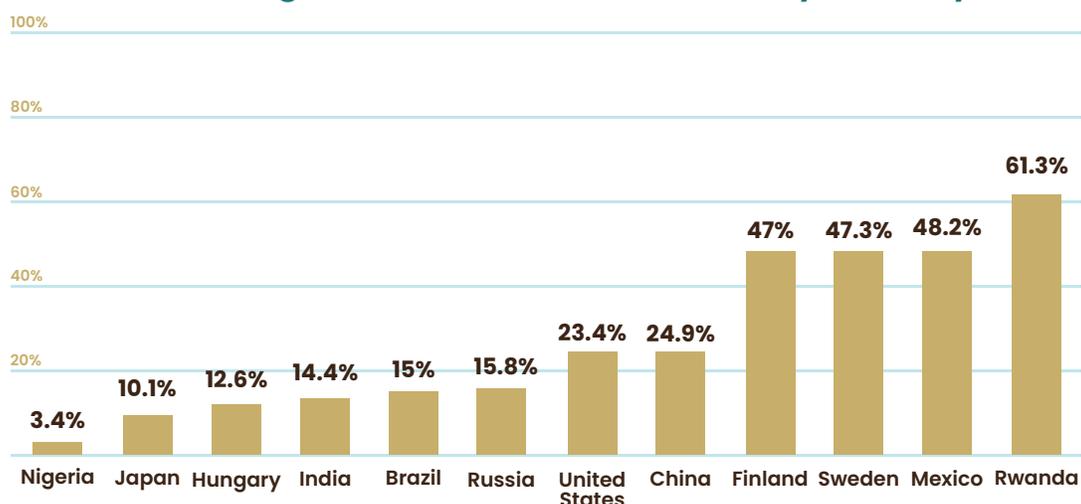
Gender equality will not be achieved by individual actions and changing cultural attitudes alone, nor by simply removing barriers to opportunity.

restricted from choosing what laws should govern countries, and were oppressed and dominated at home and on the streets.

In general, women's suffrage has come relatively recently⁶: the average time since women were granted the right to vote is a mere 67 years. In some countries where women have legally been granted the right to vote, they have encountered further difficulties linked to religious and cultural barriers, such as pressure against voting coming from male members of their families or restrictions on women's mobility.⁷

Furthermore, women are still grossly underrepresented in political decision-making bodies long after being granted the right to vote (Figure 2). We must evolve from an emphasis on equality of opportunity toward ensuring equality of outcome, since economic growth and social progress depends on the active engagement and influence of women in governance.

Percentage of Women in Parliament by Country



The Law

A fundamental result of equality can be measured in the domain of the law, wherein the legal framework of a country must support equal rights for women if real progress is to be made. Unfortunately, in most countries today, women do not enjoy complete legal protection. Indeed, governments virtually everywhere use the law to perpetuate rather than to prevent prejudice, to deny women their rights rather than protect them, and to discriminate against women rather than to ensure their empowerment. The re-

6 Switzerland did not grant women the right to vote at the federal level until 1971. A 1959 referendum to grant women the vote was soundly defeated (67 percent of the voters opposed), in no small measure through strenuous efforts of many prominent women who founded the Federation of Swiss Women Against Women's Right to Vote that same year, arguing that women's role in society should largely revolve around "Kinder, Kirche und Küche" (children, church, and kitchen). Its president said "to make political decisions, you must read newspapers, and a woman who does her housework and looks after her children has no time to read newspapers." (See the discussion in Chapter 5 of Lopez-Claros and Nakhjavani, 2018, p. 168–69)

7 Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Egypt, Uganda, Kenya and Nigeria are some countries where women have faced such barriers, including violence.

sults are detrimental to all because the legal exclusion of women from power results in inefficient and poorly implemented policies that not only ignore their needs and those of their children, but everyone else in society as well.

The national management of the COVID-19 crisis is proof of this principle in action. Although women prime ministers and heads of state account for only about 10 percent of such positions among the 193 members of the United Nations, about 40 percent of the successful examples of coping with the pandemic have been in those countries where women are in positions of leadership. This is the case in Finland, Germany, Iceland, New Zealand, Norway and Taiwan, all of which have provided effective management through an approach that has prioritized collective human security and socio-economic wellbeing, an approach, moreover, that is strongly anchored in science and empirical evidence, and reflective of greater inclusiveness, transparency and flexibility.

Governments virtually everywhere use the law to perpetuate rather than to prevent prejudice, to deny women their rights rather than protect them, and to discriminate against women rather than to ensure their empowerment.

The latest update of the Women, Business and the Law database shows 1,669 examples of such discrimination in the laws of the 190 countries where data is gathered. Fewer than 5 percent of the countries surveyed have normative frameworks that have removed all discriminatory legislation. All but Canada are in Europe. In some countries, the data identifies more than 20 cases of overt legal discrimination against women. These restrictions lead to lower labor participation rates for women, lower school enrollment rates of girls relative to boys, a larger wage gap for women relative to men, and, since the discriminations can also discourage female entrepreneurship, a smaller number of women-owned businesses.⁸

One way to determine if a country's legal framework supports gender equality can be found in examining language in its constitution. In the first instance, the GEGI considers whether a country's constitution contains an explicit clause on equality. Even if it does not directly mention gender or sex, such a clause provides the framework for pursuing equality for a specific subsection of the population. For example, Honduras and Iran both have clauses in their constitutions that mention equality, but do not explicitly apply it to gender or sex. Still, the clause has provided a platform for legal efforts to pursue tangible gender empowerment measures. Where there is no precise clause ensuring equality in the constitution, as in Saudi Arabia or Israel, pursuit of gender equality under constitutional grounds becomes harder. While some countries, like Australia and Denmark, lack explicit references to equality or discrimination on the grounds of gender, they have implemented enough measures to be among the top

⁸ While the countries with the largest numbers of discriminatory indicators are located in Sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East and North Africa, these are present nearly everywhere, including in high-income countries. The regional breakdown is as follows: 518 in Sub-Saharan Africa, 361 in the Middle East and North Africa, 255 in East Asia and the Pacific, 235 in Latin America and the Caribbean, 132 in Europe and Central Asia, 108 in South Asia, and 60 in the OECD.

25 countries in this Index in protecting and supporting women's equality. Addressing sexual equality and non-discrimination in a constitution may be a starting point, but it does not have to be the last word in codifying a country's commitment to the pursuit of equality.

Another legal indicator of a country's commitment to gender equality is its adherence to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). CEDAW is an international treaty resting on the foundations of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights and is rooted in the "recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family." CEDAW was adopted in 1979 by the UN General Assembly and went into effect in 1981. When a country becomes a signatory to this convention, it is a public commitment to equality and prohibits gender-based discrimination.

Currently, 188 UN member states have ratified CEDAW and made that public commitment. Exceptions include the United States, Palau, the Holy See, Iran, Sudan, and Tonga. The United States and Palau have signed the treaty but have not officially ratified the Convention and are therefore not obliged to put it into effect. While a dedication to removing barriers to gender equality is a step in the right direction, the Convention does not ensure that countries will fully implement it. The effectiveness of CEDAW is also hindered by a state's ability to include individual "reservations," which limit its obligations under the terms of the treaty. These reservations cannot be incompatible with the objective and purpose of the treaty but do provide countries with an excuse to avoid its full implementation on the basis of, for example, political ideology, national security, legal standards or cultural autonomy.

Among countries in the GEGI that have ratified CEDAW to date, 59 retain reservations that block the implementation of its statutes. For example, Jordan refuses to be bound by Article 9 Paragraph 2 of CEDAW, which grants women equal rights with men in respect to the nationality of their children. Similarly, Spain has excluded succession to the Spanish Crown in the Convention, thereby protecting male-preference through the principle of primogeniture. More troublesome are reservations that are more comprehensive and general in nature in countries like Bahrain, Bangladesh and Egypt, among others. In many countries, family law and family relations adhere to local practices rather than the gender equality inherent in full implementation of CEDAW, thus undermining gender equality globally.

In 1999, to address weak national implementation of CEDAW, the UN adopted an optional protocol to the Convention. This allows for the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women to receive and consider complaints against parties within its jurisdiction. The body can monitor state parties' compliance with CEDAW and is designed to encourage faithful implementation of the Convention through an enforcement mechanism. But each state party must choose to agree to the optional protocol, and as of 2017, the Committee had only ruled on five cases. This is partly due

to the fact that the protocol is a laborious bureaucratic process requiring that all domestic remedies be exhausted before the committee may rule. Nevertheless, despite such impediments, the adherence to and enforcement of the Convention increases the possibilities for ensuring gender equality from an international legal standpoint.

Another area of potential improvement lies in valuing a woman's word against a man's in legal proceedings. Fourteen countries in the index assign less worth to the testimony of women than to that of men in court, namely Bahrain, Brunei, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Libya, Mauritania, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, and Syria. This practice perpetuates gender inequality and closes the doors to women's advancement, in the family and in the workplace.

Leadership

The role of women in elevated leadership roles in a country's justice system can encourage more equitable implementation of the law. By adjudicating on anti-discrimination laws, constitutional and supreme courts in particular play an integral role in advancing women's rights and economic empowerment. The first country to appoint a female judge to its highest high court was France in 1946, and examples of other relatively early appointers include Ghana in 1961 and Indonesia in 1968. By 1970, it was common for high courts to have no women on them. Although considerable progress was made over the next 4 decades, by 2014 there were still 30 courts around the world that had never had a women justice. By the time the United States appointed the first women to the U.S. Supreme Court in 1981, there had been a woman on the highest court in the Philippines for eight years. Yet exclusion and discrimination remain pervasive, and women are still underrepresented at the apex of the judiciary in most countries.⁹

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While a legal framework provides a strong base for promoting gender equality, another effective approach is at the decision-making level. According to the World Bank, as of 2019, women make up 49.6 percent of the world population, but are severely underrepresented in positions of ministerial and executive leadership in most countries.

The GEGI examines the proportion of women in key positions in each country. Only 72 countries in the GEGI have had a female president or prime minister for any length of time since 1945. At present, female heads of state or government preside in only 21 countries of the world, including Taiwan.¹⁰ Finland and New Zealand are the only two to have had three female leaders, including the current Prime Ministers. Leadership positions in the world of finance, including the management of national economies,

9 Escobar-Lemmon, Maria, Valerie Hoekstra, Alice Kang and Miki Caul Kittilson "Breaking the Judicial Glass Ceiling: The Appointment of Women to High Courts Worldwide." *Journal of Politics*. Forthcoming.

10 See <https://www.cfr.org/article/womens-power-index#chapter-title-0-2>

are also male dominated. Since 1970, only 47 countries in the index have had a woman serve as a finance minister or a central bank governor. At present, 14 countries have female central bank governors,¹¹ notwithstanding the wealth of first-class female economists.

The index examines the proportion of women in ministerial positions in each country. The results range widely with 65 percent in Spain, to zero in Thailand, Lithuania, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Brunei, and more. According to the Inter-Parliamentary Union, only 25 percent of representatives in the combined houses of national parliaments globally were women as of June 2020. Again, the data shows a wide range of representation: Rwanda has the highest percentage with 62 percent, while 19 countries have less than 10 percent female representatives. Among the large countries with particularly low female participation are Brazil, India, Nigeria, and Russia.¹² In India, the introduction of a quota for women in parliament has been argued back and forth since 1996, but the debate has run afoul of the often virulent issue of caste. At the local level, however, quotas of a third in village councils have led to interesting analyses of the increased focus on equitable policies for collective well-being.

More and more countries are using quotas for elected legislative bodies. In 1991, Argentina was the first country in Latin America to implement a quota requiring at least 30 percent women among candidates for all national elections. After seeing the advantages of increased representation of women in national legal bodies, other countries in Latin America such as Mexico, Bolivia, Costa Rica, Peru, and Colombia followed suit. At the national level, many countries in Africa reserve seats for women in their national parliaments, including Burundi, Djibouti, Eritrea, Eswatini, Morocco, Niger, Rwanda, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda and Zimbabwe. Saudi Arabia reserves 20 percent of its national parliament seats for women. Quotas have also been introduced for subnational legislative bodies in 71 countries. The impact of quotas in public leadership positions has shown promising results, and where these laws exist, there is clearly more government spending on social services and welfare and lower rates of corruption. Countries with quotas for women in parliament also show a higher degree of women participating in the labor force. More generally, women's visible presence in top-level positions in governance has important role modeling and symbolic effects at the mass-level. For example, in Uruguay, Hinojosa and Kittilson (2020) find that the implementation of gender quotas and a substantial rise in women's election to the national legislature led to increases in women's political

The impact of quotas in public leadership positions has shown promising results, and where these laws exist, there is clearly more government spending on social services and welfare and lower rates of corruption.

11 Dreher et al. (2010), When is a Central Bank Governor Replaced? Evidence Based on a New Data Set, *Journal of Macroeconomics*, 32, 766–781 is original data source. Dataset updated in 2020.

12 In Europe Hungary is a bit of an outlier, at 12.5 percent.

interest and engagement, and higher levels of support for government and political institutions.¹³

Although women have been entering the workforce and taking on more senior roles at a significant rate, female representation on corporate boards is still scant in most countries¹⁴. As of 2020, only 11 countries measured in the index have quotas for corporate boards.¹⁵ The quota level ranges from a minimum of at least one woman on

Many studies have found a positive correlation between companies with women on their boards and various metrics of financial success.

a board to a requirement of at least 40 per cent participation. Many studies have found a positive correlation between companies with women on their boards and various metrics of financial success.¹⁶

Limitations on Individual and Family Rights

Beyond leadership positions, the fight for gender equality is emerging at the personal and grassroots levels as well. How the law views women's rights has a visible impact on their domestic role as well. The distribution of marital power and traditional practices regarding female roles have left women's behavior and exercise of rights subject to their husbands' sphere of control throughout history and in nearly every political, legal, cultural, and religious environment.¹⁷ For centuries, women have been legally bound by their husbands' wishes when it comes to such aspects as their ability to work, to exercise their freedom of movement, and to own property in their own names.

While the level of autonomy over their own lives has evolved over time with more and more women gaining control of their assets, professional lives, and career choices, 13 countries in the Middle East and Africa still require married women to legally obey their husbands. Furthermore, the Women, Business and the Law dataset shows that as of 2020, a total of 36 national legal frameworks impede a woman from choosing where to live.¹⁸ Even when it has not been incorporated into the legal system, limitation on a woman's choices shows up in data on their access to education (see next section).

In some countries, during a couple's negotiations for divorce, the law provides for an evaluation of non-monetary contributions when distributing assets between the

13 Hinojosa, Magda and Miki Caul Kittilson. 2020. *Seeing Women, Strengthening Democracy: How Women in Politics Foster Connected Citizens*, Oxford University Press.

14 Lopez-Claros and Nakhjavani (2018), p.109.

15 Full and flawed democracies: Belgium, France, Germany, Iceland, India, Israel, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, and one authoritarian exception, the UAE.

16 Commenting on a range of studies the World Bank argues that low gender diversity on corporate boards "is seen by many as undermining a company's potential value and growth. Higher diversity is often thought to improve the board's functioning by increasing its monitoring capacity, broadening its access to information on its potential customer base, and enhancing its creativity by multiplying viewpoints. Greater diversity implies that board directors can be selected from a broader talent pool." (Quoted in Lopez-Claros and Nakhjavani, 2018, p. 109).

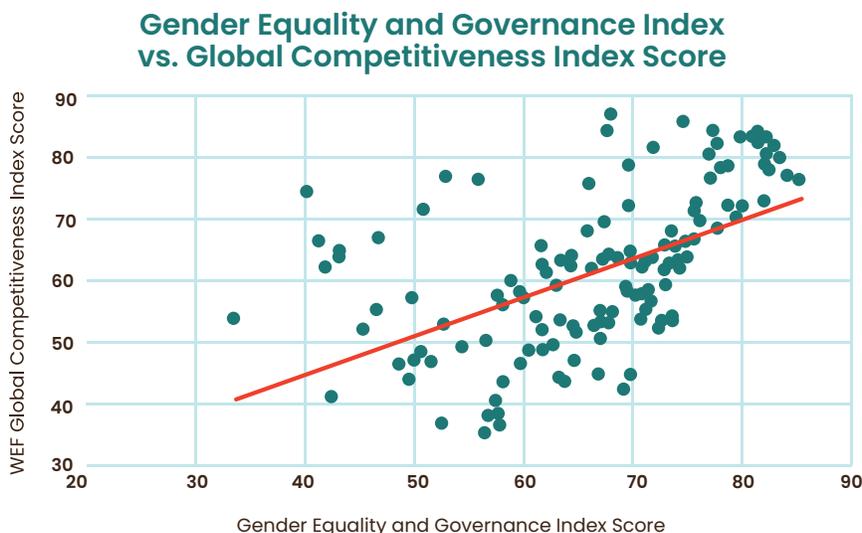
17 Lopez-Claros and Nakhjavani (2018), pp. 170–71.

18 World Bank (2020).

spouses. As of 2019, the index found that 116 countries assign value to non-monetary contributions such as caring for minor children or maintenance of the household, but this practices occurs rarely in the Middle East and North Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa and Asia. This refusal to compensate the domestic labor of women undervalues their contribution both to the family and society.

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Figure 3 below is of considerable interest, highlighting the high correlation between country scores in the Gender Equality and Governance Index and the Global Competitiveness Index (GCI) published annually by the World Economic Forum¹⁹. The GCI provides an expansive definition of competitiveness and has included since its inception a broad range of indicators capturing the governance dimension, such as the efficiency of the legal framework, judicial independence, the incidence of corruption, freedom of the press, the burden of government regulation, the quality of macroeconomic management and other key elements of good governance. It is encouraging to see that those countries that perform well in the GEGI, that have moved further along the path of facilitating women’s economic and political empowerment, are also countries that are more competitive, with better quality institutions and providing a broader set of opportunities to their populations for inclusive economic growth and prosperity.

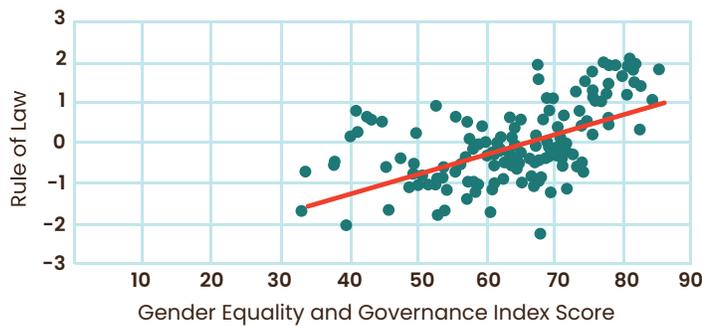


Arguably of even greater significance is the high correlation between the Gender Equality and Governance Index scores and the World Bank’s Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI), unquestionably the leading database on metrics of good governance. The WGI have been updated biannually since 1996 and capture six dimensions of good governance in close to 200 countries and territories: voice and accountability;

¹⁹ The correlation coefficient is 0.55, with a p-value well below 0.05.

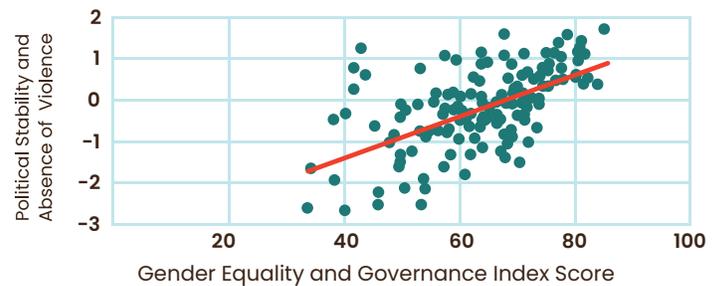
political stability and absence of violence/terrorism; government effectiveness; regulatory quality; rule of law; and control of corruption. There is significant correlation between the GEGI scores and each one of these aspects of good governance. Figure 4 below shows correlation charts with respect to rule of law, government effectiveness, and political stability and absence of violence. In all of these instances higher GEGI scores are associated with a better governance performance in each of these areas. Those countries that have been more successful in promoting gender equality, in empowering women economically and politically as per the indicators included in the GEGI, also tend to exhibit stronger commitment to the rule of law, have lower levels of political instability and violence, have lower levels of corruption, and have governments that are more competent and effective.²⁰

Gender Equality & Governance Index Score vs Rule of Law



Source: World Bank, Worldwide Governance Indicators (2019)

Gender Equality & Governance Index Score vs Political Stability and Absence of Violence



Source: World Bank, Worldwide Governance Indicators (2020)

Gender Equality & Governance Index Score vs Government Effectiveness



Source: World Bank, Worldwide Governance Indicators (2019)

²⁰ The correlation coefficients are all highly significant, with p-values well below 0.05. For control of corruption the results are virtually identical if use is made of Transparency International's Corruptions Perceptions Index instead of the WGI.

PILLAR II

Education for Equality



Efforts to address gender inequality through legislation, leadership and political reform are insufficient. When women and girls are denied access to education, patriarchy prevails, and human capital is wasted. Inequalities in education artificially reduce the pool of talent from which companies and governments can draw, and thus a direct way to boost economic growth is to expand educational opportunities for girls, with a positive multiplier impact for families, communities and countries. With the right tools at their disposal, women and girls have proven themselves to be the source of the innovative ideas and groundbreaking solutions to the challenges facing the world at this critical juncture of history.

The world on average has made significant strides in female education in the past decades. The World Bank reported in 1980 that girls' primary school enrollment was 75 percent, while boys' primary school enrollment was 80 percent. The Bank's World Development Indicators report in 2018 showed that such enrollment of girls and boys was 88 percent and 91 percent respectively. While more males used to be enrolled in tertiary education, this ratio has reversed as of 2018, with 41 percent women enrolled in colleges globally as compared with 37 percent of men. While these strides are laudable, such figures mask dire situations in individual countries. In Central and West Africa, India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Turkey and Cambodia, girls and young women are still at a serious disadvantage when it comes to education.

As of 2014, the World Bank reported that in Angola, Bhutan, Burkina Faso, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Guinea, Mali, Niger, Pakistan, Rwanda, Senegal, and Uganda, more than half of women over the age of 25 have not completed any level of education. In Brazil, 42 percent of women over the age of 25 did not have more than a primary school education. The duration and quality of girls' education must also be examined if our global economies are to reach full potential. The failure to provide an extensive quality education has resulted in illiteracy among 500 million women in 2016, comprising two-thirds of all illiterate adults. By contrast, each additional year of education for girls is reflected in positive indicators such as delays in the age of marriage and first pregnancies, reduction in sexually-transmitted diseases, increases in lifetime income, and improved health care within families.

Culture

Cultural habits, norms, and preferences impact female education across the world. If the prevailing attitude towards girls' education in a country is predominantly negative, statistics show that the levels of education for women and girls are correspondingly low. Leadership and decision making are not only wielded on the public stage but also in the private sector and above all in the family home. And wherever there is "son preference", wherever patriarchy is the underlying basis for power in the nation or the family, the education of girls invariably suffers.

This correlation between cultural attitudes and education levels applies in countries with differing political ideologies. Equal opportunity and power to the people are touted as central facets of democratic ideology, yet they are often not reflected in access to education for women and girls, especially where patriarchal attitudes still dominate the culture. The GEGI examines these attitudes towards women in democratic states by asking, "Do you agree that women having the same rights as men is an essential characteristic of democracy?" The answers have been eye-opening. In 16 so-called democracies, less than 50 percent of the population agreed. Only one country has a positive response rate of more than 90 percent; none have 100 percent agreement.

The fight for gender equality has been taking place at the domestic level since the dawn of time, and the education of girls has been central to this struggle. Cultural traditions regarding marital power distribution that keep women's rights exclusively under their husbands' control exist throughout history in all regions, including Europe's Napoleonic Code and Asia's Hindu jurisprudence. For centuries, girls' ability to attend school has been controlled by their fathers and brothers, as has been their ability to work, move freely and control property. Lack of investment in education for women and girls, moreover, perpetuates the notion that a woman's role in society is solely to serve her husband and raise children. As long as traditional caretaking roles fall exclusively on women and girls, their potential is severely circumscribed and men are deprived of developing deeper relationships with their children. The economic cost to society when girls are groomed solely for underappreciated domestic service at the

cost of female entrepreneurship, female leadership and women’s creative contributions to society is immeasurable.

Even when girls have the opportunity of further education, cultural attitudes often limit their choices. Barriers to equality for women in education and work can be found in the social expectations that push more women into lower paid positions in such fields such as education and health care and away from senior roles in government, business and STEM arenas. The World Bank’s *World Development Report* on gender notes the prevalence of school textbooks that depict women in a limited range of social and professional roles. This harmful tendency persists despite the lack of credible evidence of systematic gender differences in ability at any level of education.

Another barrier to higher levels of education for some women is childbirth, whether or not the pregnancy was intended or consensual. Once a girl becomes pregnant it can be significantly harder and sometimes impossible for her to continue schooling or work; she may be forced to drop out of both in order to deliver and take care of the child. Further, the absence of facilities at primary and secondary schools leads many young women to cease their education once menstruation begins.

The GEGI examines the adolescent fertility rate in countries and compares the availability of contraceptives in relation to educational opportunities. Access to contraceptives can empower a woman to choose when she wants to become a mother and hold off until she finishes her education. Widespread availability of contraceptives creates opportunities for women and can increase levels of labor force participation for women who can control their fertility. Increasing the number of girls who receive an education also lowers fertility levels, reduces child and maternal mortality, and expands the range of educational and employment options available to the next generation.²¹ As a result, the economy will benefit from the corresponding demographic dividend, as the working-age population outpaces the overall population. Not only is per capita economic growth boosted by giving girls a better education, but human capital is freed up when women can choose whether to pursue their education and stay in the workforce.

Boys vs. girls

The GEGI considers the negative influence on the perception in many cultures that a boy deserves “a better education than a girl.” The latest World Values Survey shows that at least one-fourth of the world’s population asserts that university education is more important for a boy than a girl. In Bangladesh, Haiti, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia, a majority of people surveyed believe that education for boys is more important than for girls. These negative views make it more difficult and less common for women to enter the workforce. Even when they have the same qualification, women are often not taken seriously when they attempt to compete for jobs against men. There is a direct

21 Klasen and Lamanna (2009), “The Impact of Gender Inequality in Education and Employment on Economic Growth: New Evidence for a Panel of Countries,” pp. 91–132.

correlation between a particular culture's perceptions of girls' education and the female labor force participation rate.

Unequal levels of education reduce the quality of human capital on average across a population and can substantially retard economic growth.

At lower levels of education, women have a harder time securing good-paying jobs than men, with implications for the overall health and economic prosperity. Unequal levels of education reduce the quality of human capital on average across a population and can substantially retard economic growth. A study by Stephen Klasen in 1999 shows that large gender gaps in education in Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and the Middle East and North Africa has reduced annual growth rates by 0.9 percent. Devoting more resources to equal education for women and girls can empower women both in the domestic sphere and in the workforce and promote more prosperous societies. The world's most competitive countries and economies, including those that produce and embrace new technologies, are marked by the highest opportunities for women's equality. Women who participate in the labor force and increase productivity as a whole and also serve as role models for her daughters and sons and give them a more equitable outlook on future opportunities for themselves and their peers whatever their identity.

PILLAR III

Women and Work



As in education, inequalities in employment are also toxic to economic growth because they constrain the labor market, making it difficult for firms and businesses to scale up efficiently. The Women, Business and the Law dataset highlights the harm caused by this discrimination.

For the countries included in the index, higher levels of discrimination against women coincide with lower rates of labor force participation for women, lower rates of school enrolment for girls at the secondary level, lower numbers of women-owned businesses, and larger wage gaps between women and men. These findings should come as no surprise. Nobel laureate Amartya Sen has argued that decreasing work-related gender inequalities can make “a positive contribution in adding force to women’s voice and agency,” thereby empowering women within both the public and private spheres.²² Countries that have integrated women into the workforce more rapidly have improved their international competitiveness. A prerequisite for narrowing gender inequalities in the workforce is to broaden the range of incentives that will facilitate her entry into the labor force at a wage rate that ensures equal pay for equal work.

Faced with multiple obstacles to economic participation, including traditional and cultural habits, women are frequently discouraged from using their skills to work and

²² Sen (1999), *Development as Freedom*, p. 191.

many girls doubt the benefits of finishing school. Unable to contribute to family income, they will have less say on the pattern of family spending. This will have adverse consequences for economic growth because there is clear empirical evidence that where women do indeed contribute to family income, more money gets allocated to the education of children and to safeguard their health. These investments boost the quality of human capital and contribute to the future growth and development of a society. Without such investments, a country is quickly reduced to poverty and social unrest. While celebrating the progress made in recent decades to narrow the educational attainment gaps between girls and boys, we are challenged to address the waste of human resources that result when women in countries such as Saudi Arabia, Iran, Algeria and Jordan, to name but a few, are hindered from integrating into the work force. The variables captured in Pillar III fall into two categories: incentives that encourage women to work, and the possibilities they have to work without restrictions.

Incentives to work

Many factors bear on a woman's initial decision to enter the workforce, and it is typically easier to measure the consequences of such decisions than their causes. The GEGI index includes several variables under 'Incentives to Work' that influence a woman's choice to engage in salaried employment. Although female-friendly workplace practices have

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been on the rise, women in most countries must make a choice between childbearing and the need to enter the labor market for some measure of financial autonomy or to advance their careers.²³ In the absence of maternity and paternity leave, tax-deductible childcare services, and guaranteed non-discrimination during the child-rearing years, this choice becomes even more problematic. Thus, a key deterrent to women looking for work in the first place is the widespread assumption that women are the primary caretakers of children and should stay at home. Although this belief may be changing in certain parts of the world, in most countries it is generally assumed that the woman will give up her salaried job in order to become the primary care-taker of children and a growing population of aging parents.

In the index we use a woman's access to adequate paid maternity leave as a way of measuring her incentive to work. In 50 countries, paid leave of at least 14 weeks--the minimum standard of ILO Convention 183--is not available to women. More generally, there is no consensus on the right duration of maternity leave. If it is too short, women are discouraged from entering the labor force; if too long, employers may be discouraged from hiring women altogether.²⁴ But there is a clear correlation between the availability of this minimum of paid leave and the female labor force participation

23 López-Claros and Nakhjavání (2018), p. 121–123.

24 Ibid, p. 122.

rate. More women will work outside the home in countries that provide adequate levels of maternity leave.

A second variable captures the availability of paid *parental* leave, which offers an incentive for both fathers and mothers to

participate in childcare. Only 43 countries provide for paid parental leave, while 115 do not. Paternity leave policies also provide an alternative or complement to maternity benefits and bear significantly on a woman's decision to work or return to work, as well as the social benefit for fathers as more engaged parents.

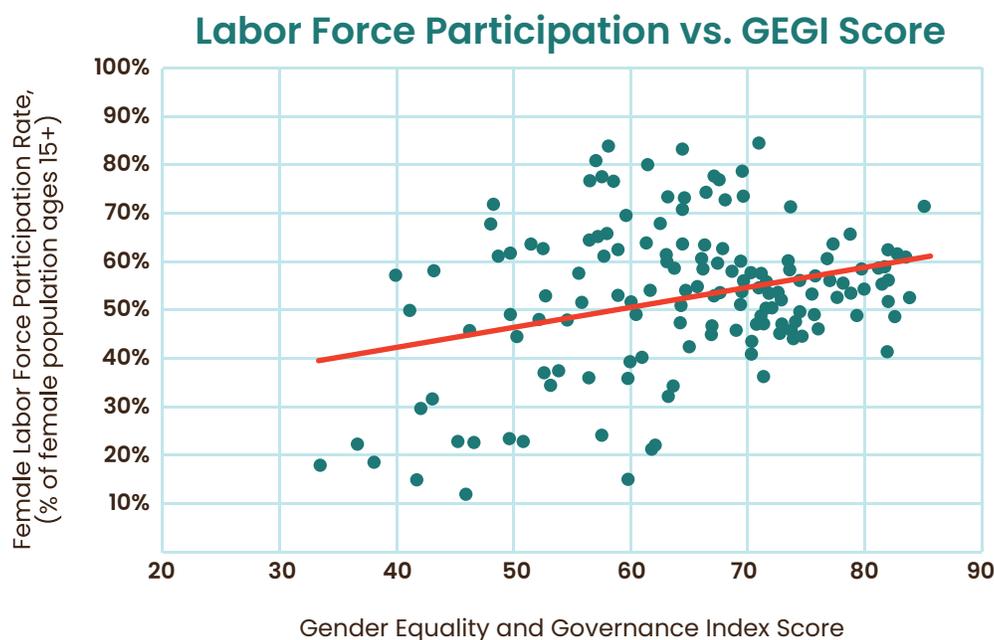
Countries that provide for paid leave of at least 14 weeks and guarantee women the right to return to their previous position include Armenia, Australia, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Italy, Lithuania, Mongolia, Morocco, New Zealand, Russia, South Africa and Spain.²⁵ Of these, only Canada, Chile, Italy, New Zealand, Norway, Russia and Spain make childcare payments a tax-deductible expense, which can create further incentives for women to work. Only 31 out of 158 countries in the index, most of which are in the high-income category, offer this tax incentive for childcare payments – this despite the fact that tax revenues will grow when more women work and this will more than offset losses to the budget from tax deductible childcare expenses.

By contrast, a combination of legal barriers and social norms restrict women from engaging in paid work in countries like Iran. To begin with, women in Iran cannot seek a job in the same way as a man can; Article 1117 of the Civil Code states that “the husband can prevent his wife from occupations or technical work which is incompatible with the family interests or the dignity of himself or his wife.”²⁶ Second, the law does not prohibit discrimination in employment based on gender, nor are there any criminal penalties or civil remedies for sexual harassment in the workplace. No laws mandate equal pay for equal work, and if her job entails travel, a woman may not obtain a passport or go abroad without the permission of male members of her household. Article 1108 states that “If the wife refuses to fulfil duties of a wife without legitimate excuse, she will not be entitled to the cost of maintenance.” There is no paid parental leave, nor a prohibition on discrimination in access to credit based on gender. Women are forced to retire earlier than men, earning lower pensions on average, as a result, due to a shorter contributory period. These restrictions result in an exceptionally low female labor force participation rate – 18 percent, among the lowest in the world – and helps explain why Iran has the second-lowest ranking at 157 in the Gender Equality and Governance Index. (See Figure 4, showing the high correlation between GEGI scores and labor force participation rates for women.)

There is a clear correlation between the availability of this minimum of paid leave and the female labor force participation rate. More women will work outside the home in countries that provide adequate levels of maternity leave.

25 Indeed, there are 100 countries among those covered in the index where employers guarantee returning working mothers an equivalent position and salary, while 58 countries do not. See “Mothers Are Guaranteed an Equivalent Position After Maternity Leave.” The World Bank Data Catalog. June 19, 2020.

26 The Iranian Civil Code is not symmetric; it does not confer the same right to the wife.



Working without restrictions

How can we ensure that incentives for women to work are not being trumped by restrictions against them entering the workforce? When we cross-reference a given country's political regime (using the EIU Democracy Index) with the likelihood that it will provide paid maternity leave and offer women the right to work in the same industries as men, we observe a political or ideological aspect of discrimination against women contributing to the economy. In authoritarian and hybrid regimes, women face greater restrictions on working than in full or even flawed democracies. Of the 50 countries that do not provide paid leave for women, all are either authoritarian or less than full democracies. Clearly, the more democratic the country, the more developed its civil society, and the more open governments will be to the needs of women and the demands made on them by pro-women movements.²⁷

There are nearly 100 countries where the law imposes restrictions or prohibitions on the kinds of jobs women can hold. A compelling example can be found in Russia, where 456 occupations are forbidden to women, many of them high-paying positions in the energy sector. This ban is often justified by the authorities as "a legacy of the Soviet Union" or as "restrictions introduced to protect women," but in most of these cases, such as driving the metro, technological changes have rendered such so-called "protection" meaningless. Not surprisingly, these restrictions contribute to a large gender wage gap and worsen income inequality.

27 Htun and Weldon (2010). "When Do Governments Promote Women's Rights? A Framework for the Comparative Analysis of Sex Equality Policy," pp. 207–16.

While women are well represented in certain professional occupations – usually related to social work and the service sector – men are still globally over-represented in the higher-level positions within these professions. Even in sectors of the labor force where women predominate, men tend to hold the managerial and supervisory roles.²⁸ While there is nothing wrong with some sectors being male-dominated and others being female-dominated, there should be a level playing field providing opportunities for all.²⁹ If segregation results from gender restrictions, it leads to a loss of autonomy and lower economic growth.

We observe a political or ideological aspect of discrimination against women contributing to the economy. In authoritarian and hybrid regimes, women face greater restrictions on working than in full or even flawed democracies.

Restrictions on women’s ability to work in certain industries is based on historically strict norms of division of labor which reinforce the biological differences between the sexes, mentioned above. These restrictions discourage women from broadening the range of their professional interests and contribute to a large wage gap that ultimately prevents the private sector—which creates some 90 percent of all the jobs in the world—from tapping into a broader pool of talent. Identifying and removing such restrictions on women are vital steps for economic prosperity and accompanying social well-being.

Equal remuneration

Horizontal occupational segregation, which restricts female participation in the workforce, exists across cultural boundaries and a wide variety of countries surveyed by the GEGI. To redress this problem, women must have easier access to the higher-paying sectors in the labor market. Female labor force participation matters, but so does the kinds of jobs they can fill and how well-paid these jobs can be.

In about half of countries covered in this index, the law does not mandate equal remuneration. As a result, women earn less than men for comparable work. This is a form of discrimination which greatly contributes to the feminization of poverty. There are far more poor women in the world than men, whichever poverty line is used

Equal pay for equal work is essential. When women work and earn equal income as a result of their efforts, they are empowered in the workplace and in the home. Among the benefits that accrue to an economy are higher savings, more productive investments and better use and repayment of credit, all of which contribute to economic growth.

The GEGI data reveals many barriers that must be removed if workplace gender equality is to be achieved. Most significantly, cultural norms, traditional attitudes, and legal restrictions determine whether women choose to work in the first place, which jobs

28 Wolf and Fligstein, “Sex and Authority in the Workplace: The Causes of Sexual Inequality,” pp. 235–52.

29 López-Claros and Nakhjavání (2018), p. 107.

they can seek, and how much they will be paid for services.³⁰ The gap between the top 20 countries in the GEGI's pillar of Women and Work and those countries at the other of the spectrum is very wide. The opportunities for women in the top-ranking 20 countries, which include Belgium, Canada, France, Italy, Portugal and the United Kingdom, are in sharp contrast to Afghanistan, Bahrain, Jordan, Kuwait, Myanmar, Pakistan, Qatar and Syria, where women still bear heavy burdens of legal restrictions, societal perceptions, glass ceilings, and other hidden barriers, often disguised as "culture."

30 Ibid.

Entrepreneurship and Doing Business



Inclusion in the labor force is only one piece of the employment gap. Given that just 7 percent of women in low income countries are employed as wage workers, entrepreneurship or self-employment in general is an equally important avenue for female empowerment. Women entrepreneurs could contribute significantly to economic innovation and growth if given access to the same training, capital, credit, and rights as men.

The Entrepreneurship and Doing Business pillar of the Gender Equality and Governance Index (GEGI) assesses how easily a woman can launch and operate a business in each country. Questions that expose this discrimination include: Can women access the capital and credit that successful business ventures require? Do social and cultural norms sanction female initiative in private business and allow women to generate wealth? Do legal barriers bar women from important business functions, like owning property and traveling? The Entrepreneurship and Doing Business pillar builds a holistic understanding of the business climate for women by considering three key categories: ease of doing business, mobility, and property rights.

Challenges

According to the World Bank, women own just one-third of all small, medium, and large businesses worldwide. This overarching statistic conceals significant regional variations. Women own just 18 percent of businesses in South Asia, but own 50 per-

cent of businesses in Latin America and the Caribbean. Although it remains difficult for women to break into leadership roles in longstanding businesses, female business participation is on the rise among newly registered firms.³¹ Ways must be found therefore to encourage and promote female participation in this field, enabling them to overcome the challenges and risks.

Women in business face different incentives and hurdles than their male counterparts. For example, their reasons for starting a business often differ from those of men. The Global Entrepreneurship Monitor found that more women report starting their businesses “out of necessity” than men, while more men than women report starting their businesses “to pursue an opportunity.”³² Because women are likely to start a business in order to support themselves and their families, they also tend to be more risk-averse in their business practices.

Women’s lack of access to financial accounts and services is most acute in low income countries, where only 32 percent of women, on average, have a financial account.

Another challenge is that women entrepreneurs have greater difficulty in securing credit than men. The International Finance Corporation has found that women entrepreneurs face a global financing deficit of \$1.5 trillion.³³ Women’s lack of access to financial accounts and services is most acute in low income countries, where only 32 percent of women, on average, have a financial account. Even if women do have access to financial services, they are frequently denied credit on the basis of gender discrimination. Only 44 percent of countries worldwide have laws against gender discrimination by creditors.

Furthermore, because women tend to earn less and have fewer property rights than men, they have a harder time providing collateral to secure a loan. The amount of collateral that creditors request varies based on the credit rating of the borrower, the reason for the loan, and the nature of the collateral. Collateral can take many forms, including property – a vehicle, house, equipment, farm animals, etc. For this reason, questions of property ownership and inheritance of assets are central to the discussion of women entrepreneurship.

In 94 percent of countries in the GEGI index, women and men have equal ownership rights to property—an encouraging figure, though not yet full equality. Women in Sub-Saharan Africa have the fewest rights of ownership, as only 82 percent of countries accord these rights equally. Regarding inheritance, the global disparities are much wider. In the MENA region, only 10 percent of countries accord inheritance rights equally to daughters and to surviving female spouses as to their male equivalents. South Asia also scores poorly in this regard, as only 38 percent of these countries confer equal inheritance rights.

31 Halim, Daniel. (March 2020). “Women entrepreneurs needed—stat!” World Bank Blogs.

32 Global Entrepreneurship Monitor. (2019). *2018/2019 Women’s Entrepreneurship Report*.

33 International Finance Corporation. (2017). *MSME Finance Gap: Assessment of the Shortfalls and Opportunities in Financing Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises in Emerging Markets*. Washington, D.C.

Another challenge to female entrepreneurship comes in the form of mobility restrictions. Traveling is key to building business partnerships, making deals, and growing a successful company or firm. A study published in Oxford Economics USA found that for every dollar spent on travel, businesses reap \$12.50 in incremental revenue.³⁴ If women are precluded from moving freely outside the home, from applying for a passport, and from traveling abroad, their business ventures will suffer correspondingly. Globally, women have 88 percent of the mobility that men have. Women's mobility is most restricted in the MENA region, where women only have 56 percent of the mobility accorded to men. For instance, women can only travel freely outside the home in 45 percent of MENA countries whereas in Europe and Latin America, women approach full equality on this front, reaching upwards of 95 percent of the same degree of mobility as men.

Cultural and social norms often discourage women from starting and running an independent business. These attitudes are difficult to measure quantitatively, making them all the more harmful. Data from the World Values Survey indicates that 40 percent of the global population believes that men make better business executives than women do, and 30 percent considers a woman earning more money than her husband to be awkward. Cultural attitudes are most firmly set against female entrepreneurship in the MENA region, where 62 percent of the population believes that men make better business executives than women, and in Sub-Saharan Africa, where 43 percent of the population believes high-earning women to be problematic. Among full democracies, only 15 percent of people agree with either statement, suggesting that democratic values align with female entrepreneurship.

There are also legal obstacles that explicitly block women from performing the most fundamental business operations, effectively stifling female entrepreneurship. Some of these barriers, such as opening a bank account in the same way as a man, are becoming increasingly rare but challenges remain: in South Asia only 75 percent of countries allow women to register a business in the same way as a man.

Advantages of Female Entrepreneurship

Society has much to gain from closing the gender gap in entrepreneurship. There will be direct benefits for women and their families, as studies show that women who earn income have increased bargaining power within the home.³⁵ There will be higher investments in the health and education of children because female empowerment in the household are directly linked to such improvements. Furthermore, economists have identified economic benefits associated with increased earnings for women, including higher savings, more productive investments, and more reliable repayment of credit.³⁶ Finally, a growing body of evidence shows women to be less prone to corruption and nepotism than men. In a survey of 6,500 companies in the UK, those with

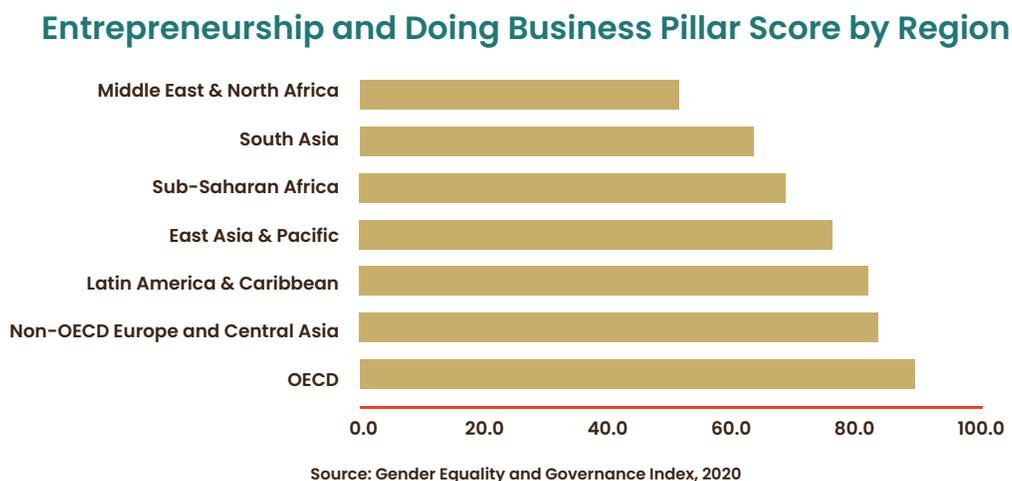
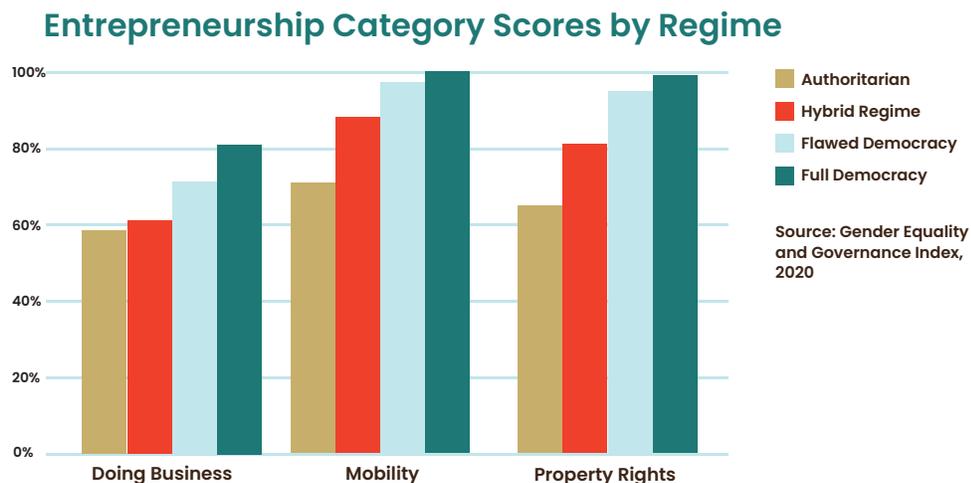
34 Oxford Economics USA. (2009). *The return on investment of US business travel*.

35 See, for instance, Duflo and Udry, (2004). "Intrahousehold Resource Allocation in Côte d'Ivoire: Social Norms, Separate Accounts and Consumption Choices."

36 World Bank. (2012). *World Development Report: Gender Equality and Development*. Washington, DC.

higher female participation in company boards had fewer governance scandals.³⁷ If women become better represented in business governance, this could impact how well the economy runs and increase investor confidence.

Entrepreneurship is a vital aspect of gender equality. By aggregating across fourteen relevant indicators, the Entrepreneurship and Doing Business pillar of the GEGI assigns a score to each country indicating the climate in them for women entrepreneurs. The MENA region has the lowest average pillar score, 53 out of 100, followed by South Asia (64). At 88, Europe has the highest average, followed by Latin America and the Caribbean at 82. A country's overall income level aligns closely with female entrepreneurship: high-income countries score 84, compared to low-income countries that average 66. A similar disparity exists between regime types. Full democracies lead in female entrepreneurship with an average pillar score of 90, while authoritarian regimes average just 63. Flawed democracies and hybrid regimes fall in between. (See Figure 5).



37 MSCI. (November 2015). *Global Trends in Gender Diversity on Corporate Boards*.

The challenge now is to devise targeted strategies, based on these facts, that can break down barriers and provide women the support they need to be successful in business. Investment in female entrepreneurship typically falls in three broad categories: improving women's access to capital and credit, training women on critical financial and business tactics, and creating access to networks and to markets. Furthermore, women owned businesses are significantly under-represented in supply chains despite owning around a third of SMEs. Potential solutions include creating incentives for individuals and corporations to invest in women-owned companies, as WEConnect International does, and developing mentorship programs to train young women entrepreneurs.

Closing the entrepreneur gap requires addressing other areas of inequality simultaneously. For example, if girls are not given the same opportunities as boys, they will not build the skills or knowledge necessary to run a successful business. Social and cultural norms must be adjusted to support rather than ostracize women in business, both through law and practice. Factors like infrastructure must be addressed, as this determines a woman's desire and ability to work outside the home. Ultimately, efforts to promote and protect female entrepreneurship must be viewed within the broader social and economic landscape, including age-old attitudes to women.

PILLAR V

Violence Against Women

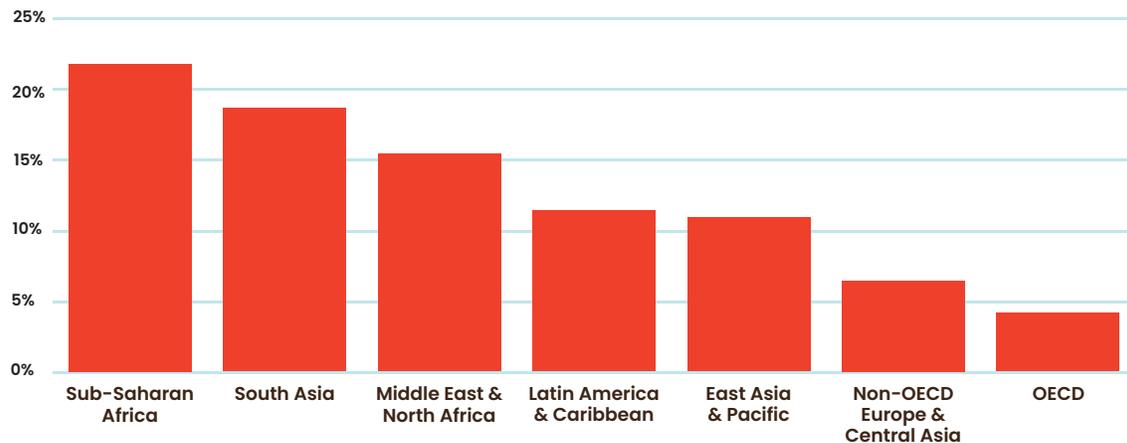


One of the most troubling statistics in the story of gender discrimination is the correlation between women’s political, educational, and entrepreneurial advancement and the growing evidence of rampant violence against them. Women are most vulnerable to violence in cultures where long-held customs and fundamental prejudices place the blame for violence on the women themselves. For centuries, guilt and shame have been tools to convince women that they are complicit in the crimes committed against them.

As a result, women hide their scars, and the violence continues. The WHO reports that one-third of all women will experience violence at some point, and one-fourth will experience domestic abuse. One in twelve women will be stalked in their lifetimes, and 87 percent of stalkers are male. Nearly 60 percent of all women killed intentionally in 2017 were murdered by intimate partners or family members. Women and girls make up 72 percent of all sex trafficking victims. According to the UN, the percentage of women in individual countries who will experience violence in their lifetimes ranges from 12 and 58 percent.³⁸ The wide range of this statistic illuminates three important characteristics of violence against women: it is pervasive, it is non-uniform, and it is extremely difficult to measure. (See Figure 6)

³⁸ United Nations. 2010. *The World’s Women 2010: Trends and Statistics*. p. 131.

Percentage of Women Who Have Experienced Intimate Partner Violence



Every so often, however, a particularly violent crime will break through the silence and will rally women and men to call for change. The 2012 gang rape and murder of 23-year-old Jyoti Singh on a public bus in Delhi and the 2015 murder of Ozgecan Aslan in Mersin, Turkey, brought thousands of people into the streets to call for an end to this kind of egregious viciousness. These demonstrations, like many before and since, succeeded in obtaining symbolic victories—the creation of a new committee, the establishment of a task force to investigate the crime, for example. However, such gestures were not able to bring about the massive cultural and psychological shift necessary to end violence against women.

As a prime example, the murder of yet another Turkish woman in July 2020 sparked a global social media movement and highlighted how little has been done to protect women in Turkey since Aslan’s death. The number of women intentionally killed in Turkey has risen fourfold since 2011, and almost 40 percent of them have been victims of abuse by their partners.³⁹ But instead of using the July 2020 murder as an opportunity to make fundamental changes to end the endemic violence against half its population, the Turkish government announced they are considering withdrawing from an important convention – the Istanbul Convention – protecting women from violence. Although violence against women is certainly not unique to Turkey, this response exposes a jarring picture of how quickly violence can escalate if left unaddressed.

A Veil of Secrecy

The first step towards ending violence against women is understanding it, to bring it out into the open, to acknowledge it, to analyze it and to assess it transparently and with objective tools and methods. Unfortunately, violence against women is often shrouded by a veil of secrecy. Most of it is unacknowledged, undisclosed, unreported, and unaddressed. This makes it particularly difficult to measure with any accuracy or to mend.

³⁹ Yackley (2020), “Turkey rethinks treaty protecting women.” *Financial Times*, 12 August.

It is estimated that only one-fourth of physical assaults, one-fifth of all rapes, and one-half of the stalkings that take place in the United States are reported to the police.⁴⁰ The World Bank states that fewer than one-third of women experiencing domestic violence globally will ever say anything about it publicly.⁴¹ Even in so-called democratic countries, stigma, shame, pressures of family honor, and the fear of social ostracism prevent women from speaking out, particularly when violence is committed by intimate partners. When women do report violence, they are often met with suspicion and lack of sympathy by untrained or biased authorities whose dismissive and uninformed reactions dissuade them from lodging official complaints. Willful ignorance at best and an attitude of crass entitlement and assumed impunity at worst have led societies in all regions to turn a blind eye towards femicide and other violent crimes against women. For example, the blanket term ‘injuries’ is one of the leading causes of death of women in India, and 100,000 women in South Asia die each year in ‘fires’.⁴² An epidemic of femicide is masked by euphemistic labels like these.

Pillar V of the GEGI is dedicated to the problem of violence against women. This pillar ranks countries by how well they perform on eight relevant indicators. These include lifetime risk of maternal death, women’s self-assessments of safety, prevalence of intimate partner violence, legislation on domestic violence and sexual harassment, and the prevalence of “son preference.” Through this combination of factors, Pillar V attempts to capture the full picture of violence against women, both *de jure* and *de facto*, in 158 countries.

The Rule of Law

The legislative push to end violence against women has been slow to evolve. For the first time, in 1979, the General Recommendation No. 19 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) Committee established violence against women to be a form of discrimination and framed this violence in the context of international human rights law.⁴³ But it was not until 1993 that the UN adopted the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women which explicitly condemned gender-based violence as an infringement on the fundamental freedoms of women.⁴⁴

Over the years, many countries have passed their own legislation to protect women from violence. At present, 82 percent of countries in the GEGI have some form of domestic violence legislation and 85 percent have legislation that addresses sexual harassment. Democracies are largely driving this legislative trend. Every full democracy has legislation protecting women from domestic violence and sexual harassment and

40 Anke Hoeffler (research officer at Oxford) and James Fearon (Professor of Political Science at Stanford University) (2014), “Conflict Assessment.” Copenhagen Consensus Center.

41 López-Claros and Nakhjavání (2018), p. 63.

42 Ibid., pp. 67 and 70.

43 López-Claros and Nakhjavání (2018), p. 61.

44 Ibid., p. 60.

around 90 percent of flawed democracies can say the same. By contrast, only 54 percent of authoritarian regimes have domestic violence legislation, and only 65 percent have legislation addressing sexual harassment in employment.⁴⁵

Legislation is an important step towards providing women with some degree of protection from violence and is an essential prerequisite for the changing of cultural norms that may treat violence against women as a non-criminal activity. But the true measure of legislation is whether its words are implemented. Unfortunately, enforcement of laws against femicide and violence has been hobbled by the persistence of deep-rooted gender inequity and powerful stigmas around intimate partner violence, marital rape, and sexual abuse. At least in the short term, new laws are not enough to reshape the cultural norms or to address or resolve the psychological factors that fuel, hide, and endorse violence against women.

Every full democracy has legislation protecting women from domestic violence and sexual harassment and around 90 percent of flawed democracies can say the same. By contrast, only 54 percent of authoritarian regimes have domestic violence legislation, and only 65 percent have legislation addressing sexual harassment in employment.

While violence against women exists in every country, it is not uniform across the globe. Of the 20 countries that have the best aggregate score on the Violence Against Women pillar of the GEGI, the majority are in Europe. Unsurprisingly, average scores reflect this geographic disparity. The Middle East and North Africa scores lowest on violence against women, with an average score of 54 out of 100; in the GEGI, a low score on the violence against women pillar indicates a difficult environment for women, with low levels of protection and high levels of vulnerability to violence. Sub-Saharan Africa follows, averaging 57, and South Asia scores 59. By comparison, North America has an average score of 70, followed by Europe and Central Asia with a score of 66.⁴⁶

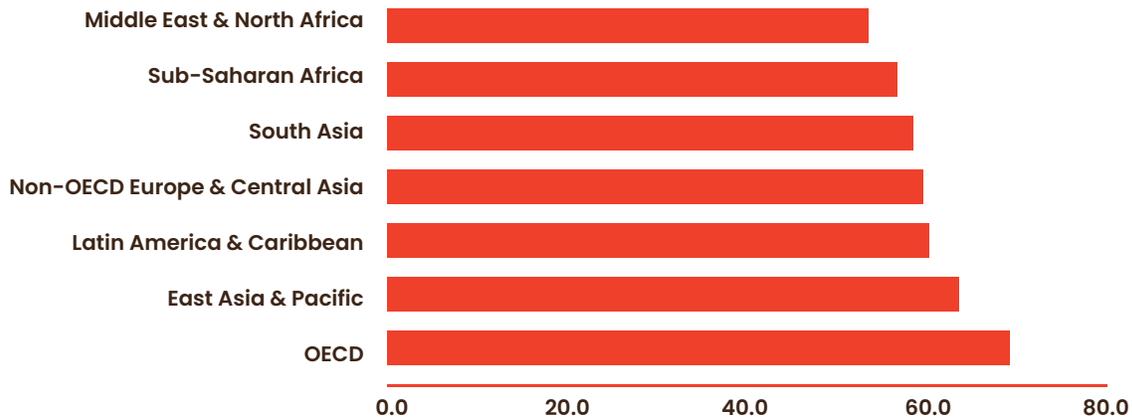
Scores also align closely with income levels and regime types. High income countries have an average score of 67, whereas low income countries average 55. The violence disparity between regime types is even more prominent than between income levels. Authoritarian regimes score lowest, with an average of 53. At 70, full democracies score highest. Hybrid regimes (60) and flawed democracies (65) fall in between. Part of this gap in scores can be explained by the gap in legislation protecting women. There are also real differences in outcomes. For example, only 4.4 percent of women in full democracies experience intimate partner violence, compared to 17.8 percent in authoritarian states.⁴⁷ (See Figure 7)

45 GEGI Index.

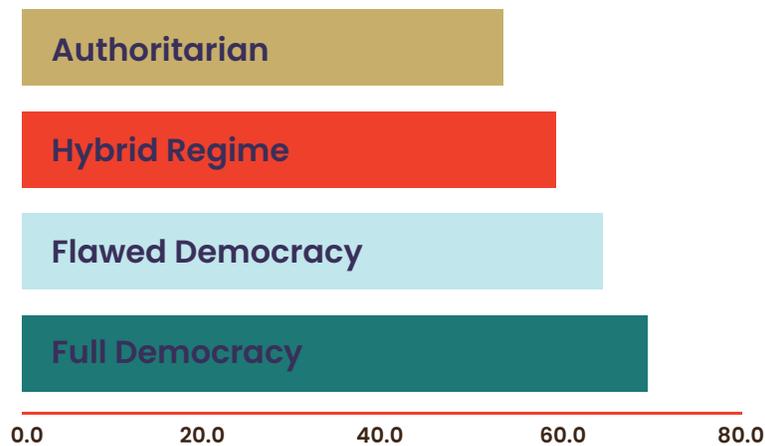
46 Ibid.

47 Ibid.

Violence Against Women Pillar Score by Region



Violence Against Women Pillar Score by Regime



Source: Gender Equality and Governance Index, 2020

Skewed sex ratios and their consequences

A pernicious consequence of unrestrained gender-based violence is that women are silently disappearing across the globe. In a path-breaking paper published in 1992 Amartya Sen noted that because women had a mortality advantage over men at every age group, one would have expected the world's female population to be larger than that of men. However, the reverse was true; as many as 100 million women might be missing worldwide, he observed. The latest estimates from the United Nations Population Division show a sex ratio (male births per female births) of 1.10 in India, 1.13 in China and 1.07 for the world as a whole. Despite the fact that women have lower mortality rates and longer lifespans on average than men, the demographic balance in women's favor, so vital for human survival, has tipped.

The most troubling sex ratios exist in countries where there is easy access to sex-selective technology, low fertility rates, and strong preferences for sons in social attitudes. Understanding son preference is crucial to addressing the challenge of the missing women. Preference is intrinsically linked to patrilineal kinship systems and patriarchal values that pass inheritance through the male line. If women cannot inherit, sons become the source of long-term financial security for parents, while daughters are seen as an economic burden on the family. Further, in societies where daughters leave home permanently to join their husband's household, sons are necessary insurance for the financial if not actual care of the elderly. Societal restrictions on women's mobility, education, and employment also invariably render daughters less productive as members of the family. It is not surprising to find reports of Afghan families dressing their daughters as sons to allow them to serve the family in a male role. Male ancestor worship also contributes to son preference, as it dictates that only a son can maintain the patrilineal family line. Without a son, the position of the father both in this world and in the afterlife is jeopardized.

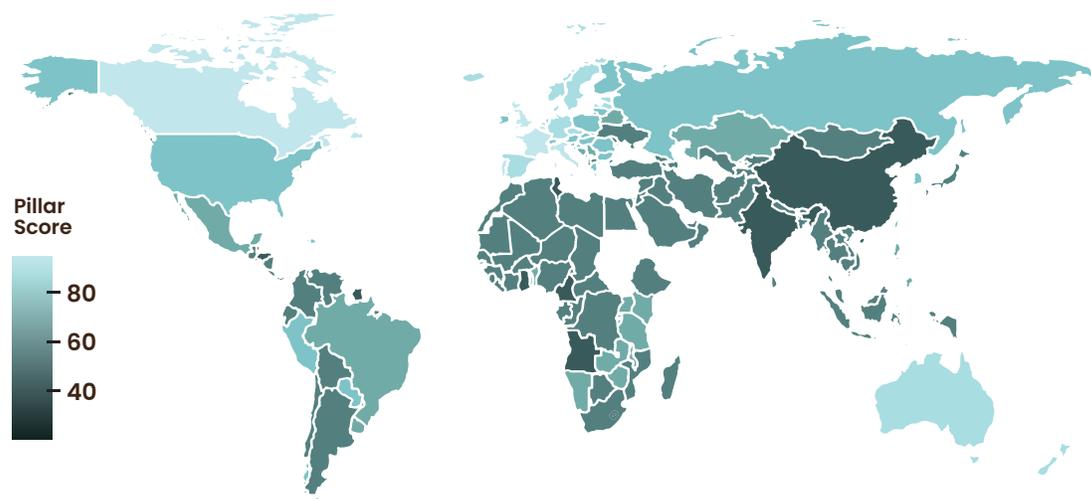
Societal preference for sons puts immense pressure on women to produce them. Where resources are tight, or fertility is restricted by the state, giving birth to sons may come at the expense of having daughters. This "gendercide" is silent, insidious, and pervasive. It occurs before birth through sex-specific abortions, or at birth through female infanticide or abandonment by desperate parents. If girls survive the cradle, they may find themselves penalized throughout childhood. Boys are prioritized to receive healthcare, education, and nutrition, while girls more frequently suffer from neglect and are subjected to genital mutilation or cutting. Dangers persist into adulthood. Women not only face more violence and abuse, but suffer from higher infection rates, reproductive problems and maternal mortality. Women account for 71 percent of the overall disease burden caused by unsafe sex, with 300,000 dying every year from problems related to pregnancy or childbirth. Eight women die each hour from unsafe abortion practices. Maternal death is particularly high in Sub-Saharan Africa, where the risk of death is one in 38. In comparison, the lifetime risk of maternal death in Europe and Central Asia is one in 4,300.

The resulting gender imbalance is extremely destabilizing. In China, where a large percent of the female population is missing, men outnumber women by 34 million. In India, the excess is 37 million.⁴⁸ In the two countries alone, 71 million young men will never find a wife. Unattached young men are more likely to be a hazard to society, as they are linked to increased crime rates, drug use, prostitution, and trafficking of women. The problem is not limited to India and China: women are missing in Korea, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Serbia, Bosnia, Egypt, Bangladesh, Pakistan, and beyond. A re-balancing of sex ratios will require combatting son preference head on at several levels. For instance, increased social protection for the elderly will take pressure off parents to use their children for care; government budgets can be targeted to promote the value of

48 Denyer and Gowen, "Too Many Men," *The Washington Post*, April 18.

women to society; and civil society should work to shift cultural attitudes away from patriarchy. Unless these and similar objectives are undertaken, the cost to civilization will be astronomical. (Figure 8)

Violence Against Women Pillar Score



Source: Gender Equality and Governance Index, 2020

The Cost

Violence against women comes at a steep price. Beyond the physical, emotional, and psychological toll on women and their families, violence has severe economic repercussions. UN Women estimates the annual cost at some \$1.5 trillion dollars. Rampant gender-based violence prevents many women from functioning productively or at all, costing the global economy trillions of dollars every year. By increasing absenteeism and reducing women's capacity to function productively, domestic violence is estimated to cost the United States \$460 billion annually -- more than any other crime.⁴⁹ A study examining data from nine diverse countries estimates that intimate partner violence costs about 5.2 percent of global GDP.⁵⁰ These studies highlight an important link between female labor force participation and violence against women: the more economically valuable women are to society, the stronger the economic argument against violence becomes. As women show themselves vital to economic growth, they can push through legislation and changed practices that protect them. For instance, the United States' 1994 Violence Against Women Act dedicated \$1.6 billion to violence prevention and is estimated to have led to an overall savings of \$14.8 billion.⁵¹

49 Lomborg and Williams (2018) "The Cost of Violence Against Women is Astonishing," *The Washington Post*, 22 February.

50 Ibid.

51 Clark et al. (2002), "A Cost-Benefit Analysis of the Violence Against Women Act of 1994," pp. 417–428.

Improved data collection and a harmonization of evaluation methods across countries is helping experts focus on nuances to better apply culture specific remedies, but the means are so far lacking. Unfortunately, the resources now dedicated to combatting violence against women are only a fraction of what that violence is costing the global economy. For example, the UN Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women, self-described as “the only global grant-making mechanism dedicated to eradicating all forms of violence against women and girls,” has only awarded \$175 million in total to efforts to address this problem since its establishment in 1996.⁵² This is a far cry from the trillions that are lost to violence each year.

Violence against women plagues society and strangles growth. Deep-rooted stigmas and prejudices slow the momentum of change. Tackling these problems will require confronting questions of culture and tradition which not only blind men to the problem but may make women complicit in their own subordination. For this reason, as the GEGI shows, violence against women can only be properly addressed in the context of broader gender equality.

Time of Crisis

However long-term the solutions to the problem of violence, special consideration must be given to the immediate crisis facing women at this time. The interplay of the COVID-19 pandemic and this phenomenon has raised violence against women to crisis levels. The hallmark of the pandemic response has been mandatory lockdowns and quarantine. Ironically, its first victims are not the patients lying on gurneys in hospital corridors, in dire need of respirators and intensive care. They are not necessarily the harassed and exhausted primary health careers either, many of whom tend to be women. They are the invisible wives and mothers and sisters and daughters trapped within the four walls of their homes the world over who find themselves at the mercy of husbands and sons and brothers and fathers lashing out at them in quarantine rage.

The pandemic has escalated the tensions created by security, health, and financial worries that assail families and provoke violence within them by further exacerbating these through confinement conditions. Lockdown has had devastating consequences on the most vulnerable members of society – not only on those with preexisting conditions of poverty and disease but on women and children. In the United Kingdom, for example, more women were killed in the first three weeks of the lockdown than any other three-week period in the past decade. According to UN Women, domestic violence helplines across the globe have seen a sharp increase in calls for help.⁵³ In an attempt to stem the violence and encourage reporting, courts in Italy, Austria, and Germany have begun ruling that in domestic violence cases, the abuser must leave the family home rather than the victim.⁵⁴

52 UN Women. “About the UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women.”

53 Mlambo-Ngcuka, Phumzile (2020), “Violence against women and girls: the shadow pandemic,” UN Women, 6 April.

54 Gordon, Sarah. “Coronavirus has brought a surge in domestic violence,” *Financial Times*, 12 August 2020.

Conclusion

Imagine a world where all countries score high on each of the five pillars of the Global Equality and Governance Index. This would be a world where women enjoy equal opportunity under the law, the right to use their full talents as leaders and participants in political systems, and freedom and respect in their families and communities. A world where girls and young women receive a quality education that empowers them to be good citizens and productive contributors to the national prosperity. A world where women are fully welcomed into the labor market, can pursue any profession, and receive equitable rewards for their service. A world where women are encouraged to start their own enterprises and have full access to the capital, markets, and institutional support needed to grow these businesses. And a world where women are free from the terror and tragedy of gender-based violence, and where female infants are valued, cherished, nurtured, and given the chance to thrive as much as their male counterparts.

This would not be a uniform or stagnant world. Each country would still address the challenges to gender equality and female empowerment through the prism of their unique cultural, historical and religious environments. But by all accounts, it would be more peaceful, prosperous, just, resilient, freer from corruption, and dedicated to personal freedom and opportunity than the world we now know or envision. It would be a world where political, economic and social systems better meet the needs and encourage the aspirations of all its citizens, and where individual achievement is bounded only by the limits by each person's skills, initiative, ambitions and imagination.

The Gender Equality and Governance Index provides a scientifically based, objectively verifiable initiative that can help guide these efforts. We can no longer delay.

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Appendix 1

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Appendix II:

Gender Equality and Governance Index

Rankings

Country	Scores	Ranking
Iceland	85.5	1
Spain	84.4	2
Belgium	82.8	3
Italy	82.7	4
Sweden	82.2	5
France	81.8	6
Luxembourg	81.4	7
Norway	81.2	8
Finland	81.1	9
Denmark	81.1	9
Canada	81.1	9
Netherlands	80.9	12
Portugal	80.8	13
Germany	80.4	14
United Kingdom	80.0	15
New Zealand	79.0	16
Poland	78.2	17
Slovak Republic (Slovakia)	78.0	18
Austria	78.0	18
Ireland	78.0	18
Taiwan, China	77.9	21
Switzerland	77.5	22
Latvia	77.2	23
Malta	76.7	24
Lithuania	76.0	25
Slovenia	75.9	26
Czech Republic	75.8	27
Australia	75.8	27
Estonia	75.6	29
Greece	75.6	29
Hungary	74.7	31
United States of America	74.6	32
Croatia	74.4	33
Romania	74.2	34
Peru	74.1	35
El Salvador	74.1	35
Cyprus	73.8	37
Paraguay	73.8	37
Mexico	73.7	39
Korea, Republic of (South Korea)	73.4	40
Dominican Republic	72.9	41
Nicaragua	72.0	42
South Africa	71.9	43
Mongolia	71.9	43
Brazil	71.6	45
Bosnia & Herzegovina	71.5	46
Bulgaria	71.5	46
Uruguay	71.5	46
Albania	71.3	49
Ecuador	71.2	50
Serbia	71.0	51
Ukraine	70.9	52
Montenegro	70.8	53
Namibia	70.7	54
Rwanda	70.6	55
Moldova	70.5	56
Belarus	70.2	57
Panama	70.1	58
Chile	69.8	59
North Macedonia	69.7	60
Argentina	69.6	61
Zimbabwe	69.5	62
Mauritius	69.4	63
Vietnam	69.4	63
Israel	69.3	65
Colombia	69.1	66
Costa Rica	68.6	67
Kenya	68.5	68
Cambodia	68.3	69
Venezuela	68.2	70
Philippines	67.9	71
Singapore	67.9	71
Japan	67.8	73
Honduras	67.7	74

Trinidad & Tobago	67.6	75
Thailand	67.4	76
Ethiopia	67.3	77
Bolivia	67.1	78
Kyrgyz Republic (Kyrgyzstan)	66.8	79
Kazakhstan	66.6	80
Liberia	65.5	81
China	65.3	82
Cabo Verde	65.2	83
Nepal	65.0	84
Russian Federation	64.8	85
Georgia	64.5	86
Armenia	64.3	87
Zambia	64.3	87
Burkina Faso	64.1	89
Bahamas	64.0	90
Maldives	63.9	91
Azerbaijan	63.8	92
Bhutan	63.7	93
Jamaica	63.6	94
Cote d'Ivoire	63.0	95
Lao PDR	62.5	96
Morocco	62.4	97
Ghana	62.3	98
Turkey	62.1	99
India	62.0	100
Indonesia	61.4	101
Guatemala	61.4	101
Tanzania	61.3	103

Tajikistan	61.0	104
Uganda	61.0	104
Democratic Republic of the Congo	60.9	106
Malawi	60.6	107
Belize	60.2	108
Benin	60.1	109
Algeria	59.9	110
Sri Lanka	59.8	111
Djibouti	59.7	112
Barbados	59.5	113
Suriname	59.0	114
Uzbekistan	58.9	115
Chad	58.6	116
Senegal	58.4	117
Mozambique	58.1	118
Tunisia	57.7	119
Madagascar	57.6	120
Botswana	57.4	121
Burundi	57.4	121
Lesotho	57.2	123
Togo	56.1	124
Malaysia	56.0	125
Sierra Leone	55.7	126
Guinea	54.4	127
Bangladesh	54.2	128
Central African Republic	54.2	128
Nigeria	53.7	130
Libya	53.3	131
Haiti	53.1	132

United Arab Emirates	53.0	133
Comoros	52.9	134
Myanmar	51.6	135
Angola	50.9	136
Mali	50.6	137
Cameroon	49.7	138
Gabon	49.7	138
Saudi Arabia	49.7	138
Niger	49.6	141
Lebanon	49.4	142
Congo, Republic of	48.8	143
Egypt	47.8	144
Eswatini	47.5	145
Iraq	45.8	146
Pakistan	45.7	147
Bahrain	45.1	148
Oman	43.3	149
Brunei Darussalam	42.7	150
Kuwait	41.4	151
Qatar	41.3	152
Jordan	40.3	153
Syria	39.9	154
West Bank and Gaza	38.2	155
Mauritania	37.9	156
Iran, Islamic Republic of	33.8	157
Afghanistan	33.1	158

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Amanda Ellis leads Global Partnerships for the exciting new ASU Julie Ann Wrigley Global Futures Laboratory. Previously New Zealand Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the United Nations in Geneva (2013–16), Ms. Ellis also served as Prime Minister’s Special Envoy, playing a key role in New Zealand’s successful UN Security Council bid. She subsequently served as co-chair for the UN Security Council High Level Group on Humanitarian Access into Syria. Prior to that, as Deputy Secretary (International Development) in the New Zealand Foreign Ministry Ms. Ellis was the first woman to lead the Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) Programme, managing an annual budget of over \$0.6 billion.

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