

Country gender ranking

Gender equity is a complex concept involving multiple dimensions of both a quantitative and qualitative nature, for many of which there are no data records available. This Social Watch report includes a ranking of those countries for which data is available in terms of the different dimensions selected as indicators in the thematic area relating to gender equity.

Taking as our first parameter for selection existing information that is comparable on an international level, the dimensions chosen are: education, economic activity and participation in political and economic decision-making (“empowerment”).

The final ranking was constructed by combining the internal ranking for each of the above-mentioned dimensions in a single final index of countries. The challenge we were faced with was how to unify the different dimensions along which gender equity has been measured, in order to obtain a more comprehensive ranking than that provided for each dimension separately or in traditional indexes. While we have not yet managed to build a unified index showing values that in turn can be used as a monitoring tool for each country, in the way that the Quality of Life Index (QLI) works for countries’ poverty and welfare evolution, we hope that the inclusion of the gender tables and their ranking on the basis of the combination of the indicators presented will make a contribution to existing measurements of gender equity.

The two indexes that so far are most used to classify countries on the basis of their levels of gender equity are the Gender-related Development Index (GDI) and the Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) developed by the UNDP. The GDI measures progress along the same dimensions and using the same variables as the Human Development Index (HDI), but takes into account inequalities in progress between women and men (it combines life expectancy, education levels and differences in earned income). The greater the gender inequality relating to basic human development, the lower a country’s GDI value is in comparison with its HDI.

The GEM shows the degree to which women can actively participate in a country’s economic and political life. It measures gender inequality in three key areas of economic and political participation and decision-making. This index is comprised of variables measuring women’s participation in decision-making in administrative and executive posts, professional and technical positions and in parliamentary seats. The GEM focuses on women’s opportunities in the economic and political sphere and thus differs from the GDI, which measures gender inequality in terms of basic capabilities. These two indexes cover central dimensions of gender equity, but they do so separately.

The final index measuring gender equity constructed by SW for this report, which takes into ac-

count the three dimensions of education, economic activity and empowerment, sorts countries into groups on the basis of the average values of their indicators.

The countries in the *first group* are Finland, Poland, Slovakia, Sweden and the United States. In the *last two groups*, that is the countries that are furthest from achieving gender equity, are Côte d’Ivoire, Pakistan, Chad and Yemen.

The first big contrast can be seen in the dimension relating to education, where the countries in the last places on the ranking have an average value for ratios of female to male literacy of 0.7, for ratios of primary school enrolment of 0.7, and of secondary school and tertiary education enrolment of 0.3. In contrast, the countries in the first group have values of 1 or more for all the indicators relating to education.

With respect to earned income ratio and economic activity in the countries in the first group, women receive on average 60% of the wages received by their male counterparts and have a 50% participation rate in the workforce. In the countries at the bottom of the ranking, women’s participation in the labour force stands at an average of 6% (except for Chad, which has a rate of 20.6%) and their earned income represents 30% of male wages.

Finally, if we take the percentage of women in parliament as the indicator relating to the dimension of empowerment, it is here that we see the greatest variations within each final country grouping. In the first group, for example, we find Sweden, which, as we already noted in the table **Gender equity: women’s empowerment**, is the country with the highest percentage of women MPs (45%) and the United States with 14%. Among the last places in the ranking we find Yemen with just 1% of women MPs and Pakistan with 22%.

The ranking proposed in this Social Watch report is a first step towards combining different dimensions in an index, which doubtlessly will need adjusting in future editions. On the other hand, although any attempt to unify in a single ranking the different dimensions in which gender equity is currently measured is certainly a worthy endeavour, a gender perspective should in fact be incorporated horizontally in all the dimensions used to analyse social development, thus defining the very concept of development. It is meaningless to say a society “is developed” and “has achieved gender equity”, when the latter is one of the necessary conditions for achieving development. ■

Gender ranking technical notes

To construct the table ranking countries according to their performance in the dimensions relating to gender equity, we used the same method that Social Watch uses in other areas. That is, the values shown relate to the average of each country’s performance in the different dimensions of analysis, which in this case are: education, economic activity and empowerment.

The unified index is calculated by combining each country’s values for the component dimensions in an unweighted average.

Each country is classified in one of four categories according to the distribution of each indicator. The average for the area is calculated on the basis of the average of the values resulting from that classification. This first scaling exercise eliminates the gaps between values and standardises their distribution. The general ranking therefore provides no more than a basic indexing criterion referring to countries’ relative positions and not to the indicators’ conceptual levels.

When countries share the same relative position, they are listed in alphabetical order. ■