

WORLDWIDE - NO COUNTRY TREATS ITS WOMEN... THE SAME AS ITS MEN.



BEST PERFORMERS

AUSTRALIA

FINLAND

ICELAND

NORWAY

SWEDEN

WORST PERFORMERS

YEMEN

PAKISTAN

COTE D'IVOIRE

TOGO

EGYPT

NO COUNTRY TREATS ITS WOMEN THE SAME AS ITS MEN

The stimulus sheet information comes from Social Watch's Gender Equity Index (GEI). The GEI measures *gender equity* – that is, the relative parity between men and women. This makes it different to other gender-related indices, such as the UNDP's Gender-Related Development Index (GDI), which takes other development factors, such as a country's GDP per capita, into account.

This may seem like a trivial difference, but it can have a significant bearing on results. The UNDP's GDI ranks Ireland 10th and Moldova 113th, for example, but in the GEI Moldova ranks higher than Ireland. This is because the GEI focuses on gender parity, and in Moldova, women earn, learn and live as much as men. In Ireland, on the other hand, men earn approximately US\$52,000 a year, while women get less than half – US\$21,000. What matters isn't how much women earn or live compared to other countries, but rather how much they earn, learn and live compared to their country's men.

The GEI is composed of three main dimensions: the education dimension, the economic participation dimension and the empowerment dimension.

The **Education Dimension** measures the gender literacy gap, as well as school enrolment rates. A number of countries from across the globe score high on this dimension, with Vanuatu, Bahrain and Japan all having a significant gender gap in education.

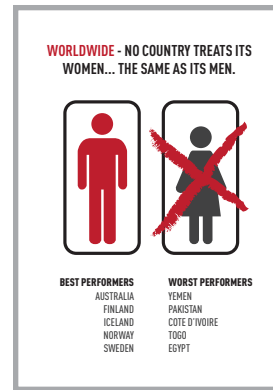
The **Economic Participation Dimension** measures the percentage of women in paid jobs (excluding agriculture) and the difference in income between men and women. The greatest economic inequalities are to be found in the Middle East and certain parts of Latin America.

The **Empowerment Dimension** is calculated using the percentage of women who are qualified for professional and technical jobs, those in high administrative positions, as well as the percentage of women present in national parliaments and ministerial cabinets. Although there are more women than men worldwide, only 15% of parliamentary seats are occupied by women, and a mere 6% of all ministerial posts. Again, a nation's wealth is not always a good indicator of women's equity on this front: women in South Africa, Cuba and China hold over 20% of all political positions, while in countries like Greece, Singapore or South Korea they hold less than 5% of all positions.

There seems to be a 'tiered' road forward to gender equity: the gender gap is smallest in the education field, with the largest gaps being in the empowerment sphere. Although exceptions exist, it is probably true to state that gender equity is achieved in this order, as girls are educated alongside boys, go on to hold long-term jobs, and are then suitably empowered to seek high office.

What the GEI exposes is the myth that gender equity depends on high levels of income. A number of low-income countries have achieved a significant degree of gender equity. Counter-wise, a number of developed countries tend to use their high levels of GDP per capita as a smokescreen to mask significant gender inequities.

A number of high-GDP countries, such as Luxembourg and Switzerland, are outperformed on the GEI by far poorer countries such as Mozambique and Russia. This essentially means that while women in the



former countries may be amongst the best off in the world (in terms of income), there is less direct gender discrimination (as measured by the GEI) within the latter two countries. Similarly, although Rwanda's GDP per capita is amongst the lowest in the world, on the GEI it ranks above the USA, UK and France, and just below Finland and Norway.

FURTHER INFORMATION

The Gender Equity Index was developed by the Uruguay-based civil society organisation Social Watch. Their website has a [section devoted to the index](#), with a thorough explanation of it, analysis of gender inequality worldwide and an excellent section on what needs to be done moving forward.

http://www.socialwatch.org/en/avancesyRetrosesos/IEG_2008/index.htm

The UN Population Fund also has an interesting [section on gender inequality](#) which brings together weblinks, videos, news reports and detailed reports. It has sections on various forms of gender discrimination too.

<http://www.unfpa.org/gender/>

In responding to such questions, there are at least two clearly identifiable schools of thought often described as the **Realists** and the **Cosmopolitans**.

The Realists argue that there are no overall agreed global ethical standards and that to believe that there are is both dangerous and illusory. They argue that given that states are the main actors on the international scene (an argument often challenged in the age of the transnational corporation) they should only rationally act based on their own interests and not those of others, whoever they are and in whatever circumstances they exist. So, they argue, there is no 'moral universalism'; there is no obligation to help the poor (unless, of course, this is in their interest - an important caveat) and the state system is the fundamental and unchanging core global governance institution.

In contrast, **the Cosmopolitans** argue that some form of moral universalism exists and therefore all humans (regardless of geography) and not just fellow citizens exist within this universal set of values or principles (and therefore actions). They argue that the moral standing of individuals is based on some morally significant characteristics; that such characteristics are shared by all humans (and not only by the members of some nation, culture, society, or state) and that all humans have moral standing (and the boundaries between nations, cultures, societies and states are morally irrelevant).

There are important differences within the Cosmopolitan camp. One set of philosophers argue that the proper standard for morally judging the actions or institutions of society is the consequences that follow and that the key consequence is the welfare of humans. As human beings, our capacity to experience both well being and ill being forms the shared basis for a moral code or contract. The consequences of this view are clear – if some people are suffering terribly due, for example, to poverty, then this creates a moral imperative that anyone who is in a position to help them must do so. The fact that such people might be thousands of miles away or from another country or culture is entirely irrelevant.

Those who derive their cosmopolitanism from human rights take a different view. Echoing the Universal Declaration of Human Rights they argue that all humans are born with rights and that such rights come with responsibilities which, in turn, create a duty to provide for the rights of others. Human rights are not simply individual but are also social.

The argument is also made that by creating, benefitting from and justifying, a world order which systematically and structurally disadvantages billions of people, the rich (of the world) are clearly violating their duty not to impose a global order which systematically violates the rights of others.

Cosmopolitans also put forward a series of different views on issues such as how they understand the redistributive dimensions of the justice perspective and the on the legitimacy of global institutions. All cosmopolitans tend to agree that individuals, and not states, nations, or other groups, are the ultimate focus of universal moral standards.

FURTHER INFORMATION

For those wanting to take the arguments much further, *Living High and Letting Die: Our Illusion of Innocence* by Peter Unger (1996, Oxford University Press) is a very rewarding if challenging read.

Similarly, those interested in exploring the justice debate further should read John Rawl's classic text *A Theory of Justice* (1971, Harvard University Press) and the most renowned rejection of Rawls' ideas, Robert Nozick's *Anarchy, State and Utopia* (1975, WileyBlackwell).

Macquaire University has some excellent introductory essays on this debate available online. The introduction to Rawls begins [here](http://www.humanities.mq.edu.au/Ockham/y64l13.html), while Nozick's libertarian rebuttal is explained [here](http://www.humanities.mq.edu.au/Ockham/y64l16.html).

<http://www.humanities.mq.edu.au/Ockham/y64l13.html>

<http://www.humanities.mq.edu.au/Ockham/y64l16.html>