Methodological note to calculate gender data gaps and countries' performance on the status of women and girls

As of December 2020

The goal of this experimental exercise is to reveal gender data gaps and to measure the status of women and girls in each country, using the SDGs indicators. Instead of measuring gender (in)equality or parity between women and men, as many existing measures do, we instead focus on measuring women's and girls' outcomes, without comparing them to men and boys. Although this measure would not provide a comprehensive picture of gender equality, it makes visible the striking differences that exist between women living in high-income countries compared to women in low- or middle-income countries. Further, one of the merits of this approach is that it allows us to better understand some of the specific challenges that women and girls face, including in areas where there are no equivalent indicators for men such as violence against women or maternal mortality.

Overall, we use a total of 72 gender-specific indicators, based on the 53 gender-specific SDG indicators (excluding SDG 4.5.1) and an additional 20 SDG indicators where data by sex are available from the United Nations Statistical Division (UNSD)'s SDG indicators page. This also included one supplementary series to SDG 1.1.1 on poverty, which was based on special tabulations commissioned by UN Women and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), in collaboration with the Pardee Center at the University of Denver. For each indicator, we calculate the 33rd and 66th percentiles of the distribution and, based on these two values, countries are classified as belonging to 'High performance', 'Medium performance' and 'Low performance' categories, using the following rule:

- For "negative" directional indicators (i.e., lower values are better)
  - *High*: If the country's value is between 0 and the 33rd percentile;
  - *Medium*: If the country's value is between the 34th and 66th percentiles;
  - *Low*: If the country's value is between the 67th and the 100th percentiles; and
  - *Data unavailable*: If data are not available.

- For "positive" directional indicators (i.e., higher values are better):
  - *High*: If the country's value is between the 67th and the 100th percentiles;
  - *Medium*: If the country's value is between the 34th and the 66th percentiles;
  - *Low*: If the country's value is between 0 and the 33rd percentile; and
  - *Data unavailable*: If data are not available.

Using these results, the values are calculated as follows:

$$Percentage\ of\ indicators\ in\ High\ category = 100 \times \frac{\sum High\ indicators}{Total\ indicators}$$

and similarly, for the *Medium*, *Low* and *Data unavailable* categories. Overall, the four categories add up to 100 per cent.

There are three important points to note about this methodology that should be considered when interpreting the results:

1. Because the cut-off points are the 33rd and 66th percentiles of the data, the categories *Low, Medium* and *High* performance are measures of where countries are, relative to each other. Therefore, theoretically, even if overall outcomes for women and girls are lagging or advancing for all countries, some countries would still fall in each of the three categories (although we did not find any such case in our analysis).
2. Because indicator data availability differs by country, the different performance categories are not strictly comparable across countries. Therefore, country performance should be looked at in conjunction with data availability.
3. As indicated above, this is **not** a measure of gender equality. Therefore, a country could do well on these indicators but may not do as well if disparities between women and men are high. To look at gender equality, in the future, we may build on this analysis to compare indicators that only have women and men components (i.e., those disaggregated by sex).

Updates as of December 2020

The first analysis conducted in 2019 included 62 gender-specific SDG indicators and corresponding data as of September 2019. This analysis indicated 31 per cent data availability, which was computed based on the simple average of availability of indicators by region. The methodology has since been updated to reflect the weighted average based on the countries in each region. Based on this updated methodology, the global gender data availability for 2019 has been revised to 33 per cent. Note that only the global figure for 2019 has changed; country and regional percentages remain the same.

The second analysis was conducted in April 2021, based on 72 gender-specific indicators and data availability as of December 2020. The analysis used the updated methodology.

Note

This methodology is experimental, so we would appreciate any comments or suggestions to improve it. Please send any comments to gender.data@unwomen.org.