

The persistence of gender inequality

Things have changed for the better, but not for all women and not in all domains of gender equality. Progress has been slow and limited for women in very poor countries, for those who are poor, even amid greater wealth, and for those who face other forms of exclusion because of their caste, disability, location, ethnicity, or sexual orientation. Whether for comparisons between men and women in the same country, or absolute comparisons of women across countries, the progress in some domains is tempered by the sobering realities that many women face in others.

Consider the likelihood of women dying during childbirth in Sub-Saharan Africa, which is still comparable to the rate in Northern Europe during the 19th century. Or the difference in school enrollments in Nigeria, where a wealthy urban child averages around 10 years of schooling, while poor rural Hausa girls average less than 6 months.¹ Or the fact that women remain severely disadvantaged in their control over resources and assets in the household. Or that the earnings differentials between men and women have not changed much. Or that women's rep-

“We are not educated. We don't know anything and do not know how we can be able to change our life and obtain power and freedom.”

Adult woman, rural Afghanistan

resentation in policy making remains far lower than men's. Or that domestic violence continues to exact a heavy toll on women around the world—regardless of individual or country income, women continue to be the primary victims of violence at home and to suffer more severe injuries.

Where is progress absent?

- *Severely disadvantaged populations.* Across and within countries, gender gaps widen at lower incomes, and, in the poorest economies, gender gaps are larger. The benefits of eco-

“There is no such thing as equality between men and women in this community, maybe in towns and urban areas, but not here! A man is always above the woman.

Adult man, rural South Africa

Women just started entering society, so the man is still trying to maintain his control.”

Adult man, West Bank and Gaza

conomic growth have not accrued equally to all men and all women for some parts of society. Household poverty can mute the impact of national development, and the differences are often compounded by other means of social exclusion, such as geography and ethnicity.

- “Sticky” domains. Improvements in some domains of gender equality—such as those related to occupational differences or participation in policy making—are bound by constraints that do not shift with economic growth and development. Gender disparities endure even in high-income economies despite the large gains in women’s civil and economic rights in the past century. These outcomes are the result of slow-moving institutional dynamics and deep structural factors that growth alone cannot address.
- Reversals. External shocks—sometimes economic, sometimes political, sometimes institutional—can erase hard-earned gains. In some instances, improvements in gender equality have been reversed in the face of unexpected shocks that revealed or worsened institutional or market failures. The shocks affect both males and females, but multiple factors shape their impact on gender differentials—among them, the source and type of shock, economic and institutional structures, and social norms. Even when shocks do not have differential gender impacts, the absolute welfare losses for both men (and boys) and women (and girls) can be substantial. In particular, adverse circumstances early in life, as in the critical first three years, can have irreversible long-term effects.

SEVERELY DISADVANTAGED POPULATIONS

While much of the world has reduced gender gaps in health and education, conditions for women in some low-income countries have not improved much. In many South Asian and Sub-Saharan countries, girls’ enrollments in primary and secondary education have progressed little. In Eritrea, the female primary net enrollment rate rose from a very low base of 16 percent in 1990 to just 36 percent in 2008. In Afghanistan, Chad, and the Central African Republic, there are fewer than 70 girls per 100 boys in primary

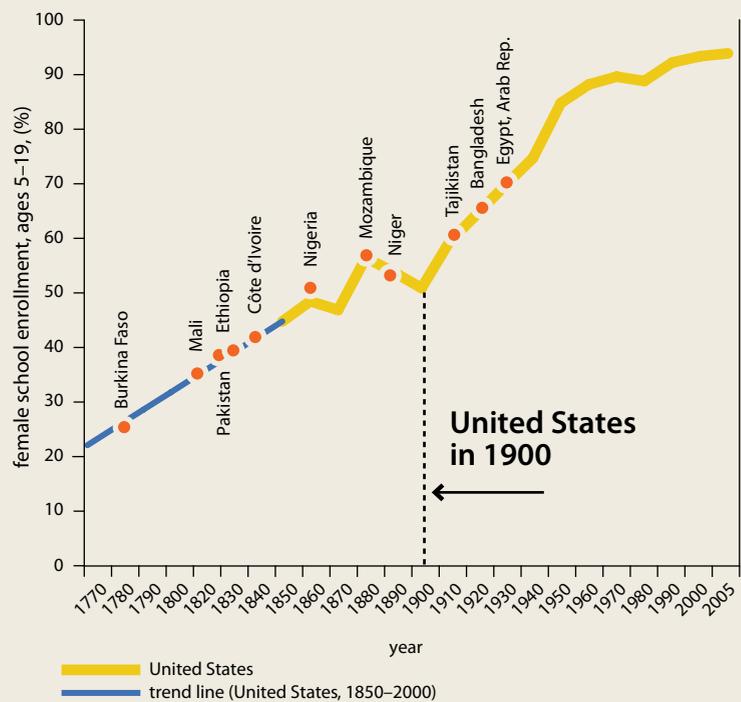
“Money. And someone who would convince my dad to let me continue my education. . . . If I had enough money, I would enroll somewhere as a part-time student. You have to pay for every exam.”

Young woman, Serbia

school. The Republic of Yemen has one of the world’s largest gender disparities in net enrollment rates, and progress has been difficult to sustain.² School enrollments for girls 5–19 years old in Mali are equivalent to those in the United States around 1810 (figure 2.1).

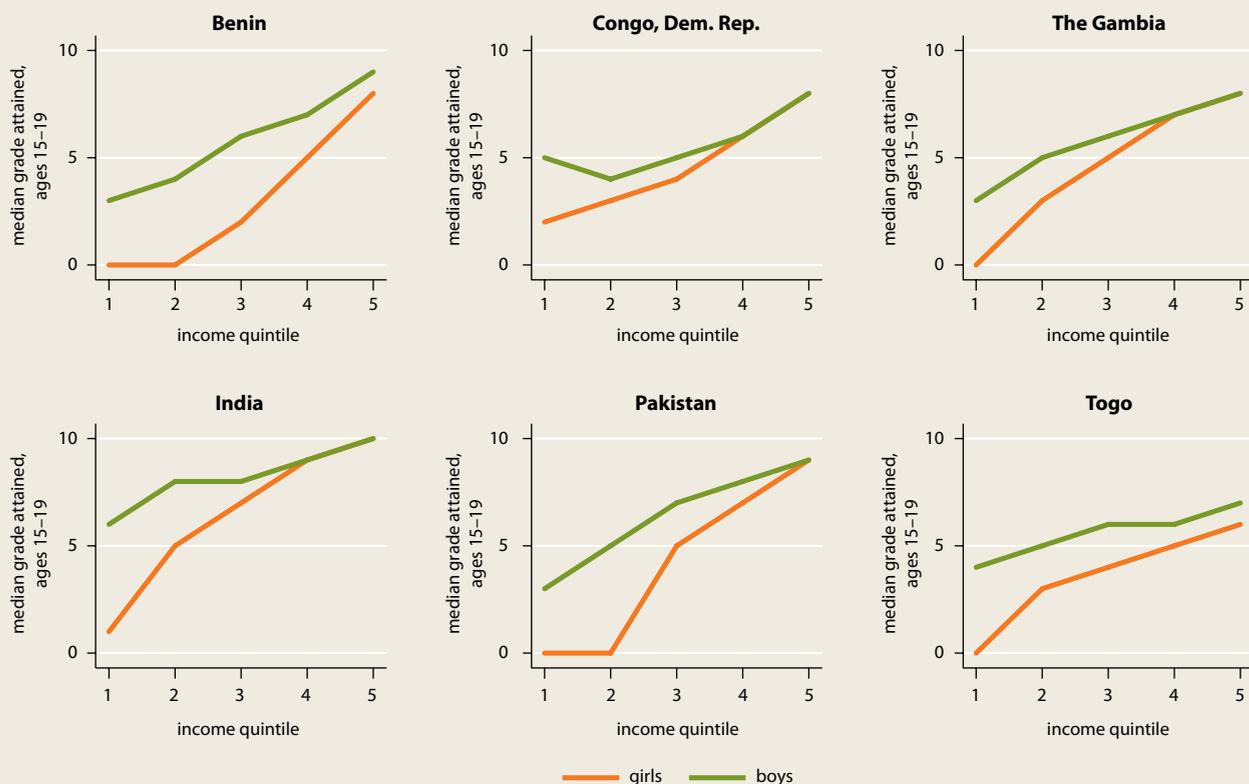
Gender disparities have also lingered among groups that have not benefited from growth within countries: income poverty widens gender gaps. While the educational attainment of

FIGURE 2.1 Female enrollments remain strikingly low in some countries



Source: WDR 2012 team estimates based on U.S. Census and the International Income Distribution Database (I2D2).

Note: Values between 1760 and 1840 are based on female school enrollment trending between 1850 and 2000.

FIGURE 2.2 *In some countries, female disadvantage augments at lower incomes ...*

Source: WDR 2012 team estimates based on EdAttain.

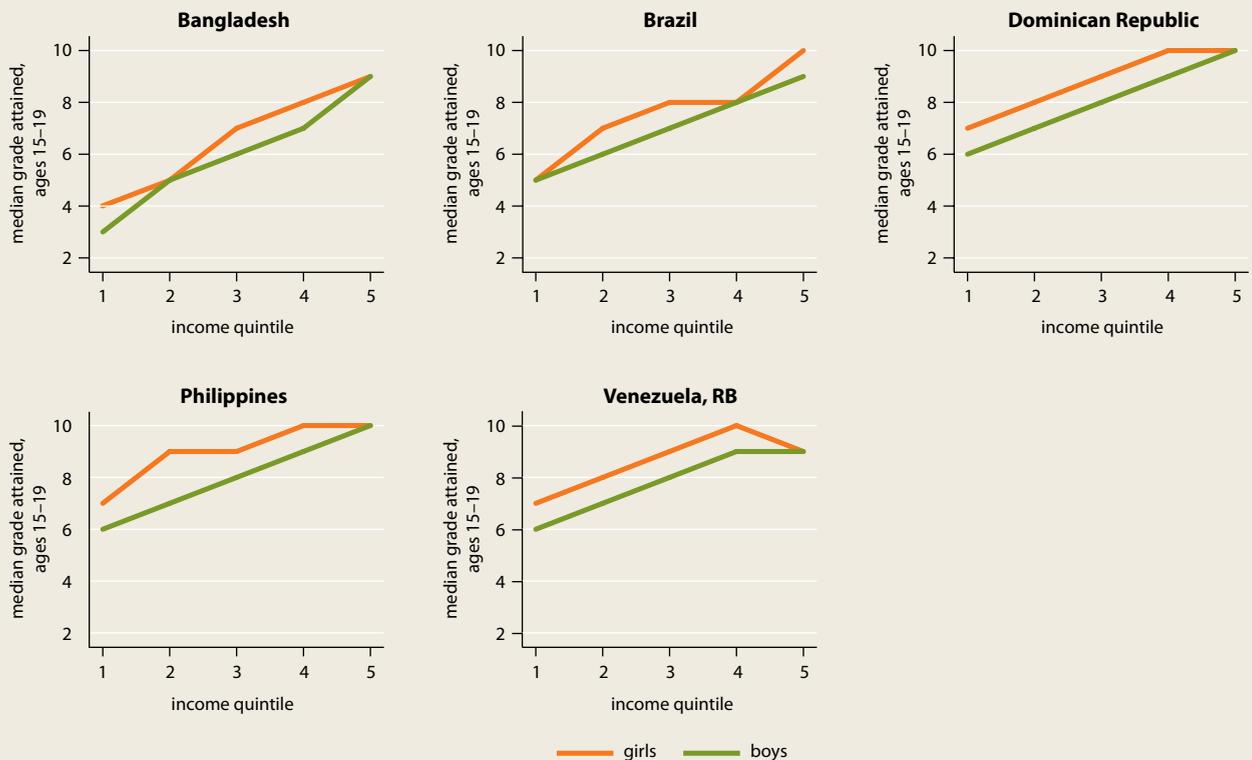
wealthy boys and girls is very similar, gender inequalities are intensified among the poor. In India, the median boy and girl ages 15–19 in the wealthiest fifth of the population reach grade 10, but the median boy in the bottom fifth reaches only grade 6, and the median girl only grade 1. Across countries there is little gender disadvantage for the wealthiest: households in the top income quintile tend to achieve full gender parity in education.

Poor girls face a significant schooling disadvantage in much of Africa and South Asia, a disadvantage that increases at lower incomes, as in Benin, the Democratic Republic of Congo, The Gambia, and Togo (figure 2.2). Yet the opposite can be observed elsewhere—in Bangladesh, Brazil, the Dominican Republic, the Philippines, and the República Bolivariana de Venezuela, girls at low levels of wealth tend to stay longer in school than boys (figure 2.3). Regardless of whether the gender gap favors boys or girls at low household incomes, in countries where the difference between rich and poor

tends to be small—as in Uzbekistan or Vietnam—gender differences also tend to be small.

The disadvantage for girls tends to be more pronounced and to emerge earlier than for boys. A girl in the poorest fifth of the population in the Democratic Republic of Congo studies three fewer years than a poor boy. And a cumulative gender bias against girls builds over the educational life cycle. In 2008, there were only 66 female tertiary students for every 100 male students in Sub-Saharan Africa and 76 in South Asia.³ Sub-Saharan Africa is the only region where growth in male tertiary enrollment has outpaced female enrollment growth, especially for doctoral degrees.

The gaps between rich and poor are the same in health. Lower fertility rates imply that fewer women are exposed to the risk of childbirth, and reductions in parity (the number of times a woman has given birth) and the age-structure of births have accounted for a sizable fraction of declines in the lifetime risk of death from maternal causes.⁴ Although fertility rates have

FIGURE 2.3 ... yet in others, at low levels of wealth girls stay longer in school than boys

Source: WDR 2012 team estimates based on EdAttain.

dropped dramatically in all regions since 1960, they have been rising in many Sub-Saharan countries. In Nigeria, the total fertility rate rose from 4.7 children in 1999 to 5.7 in 2008.⁵

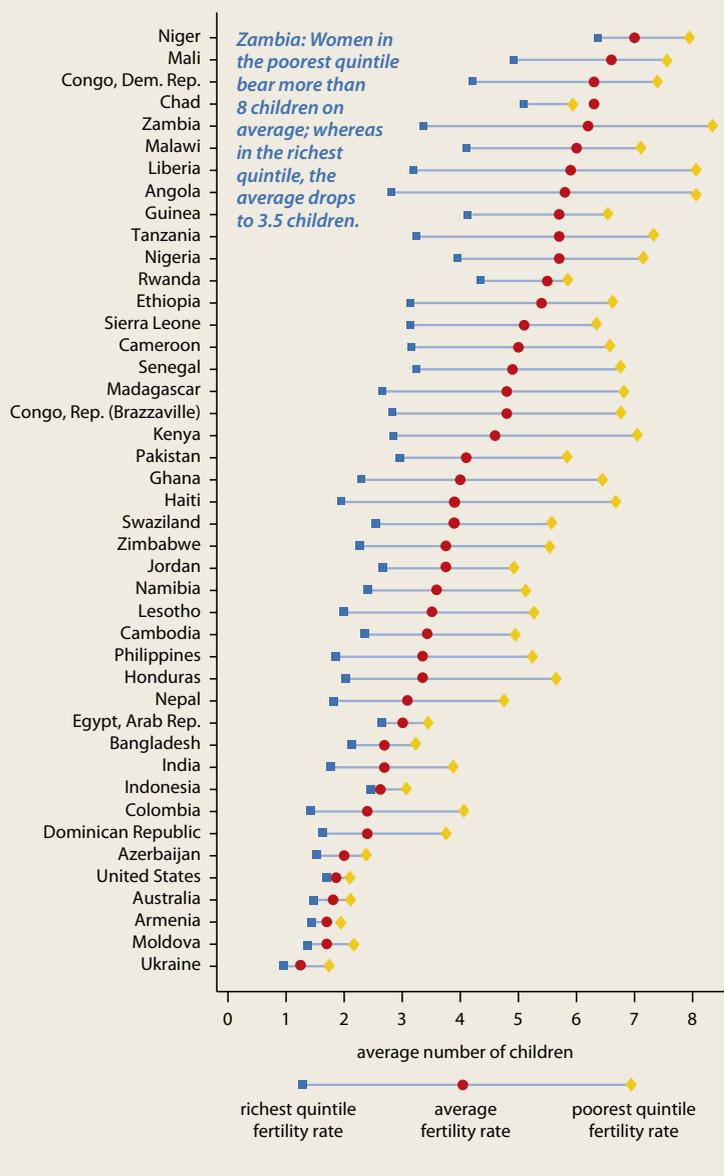
As in education, household wealth makes a difference. In all countries, fertility rates for the poor are higher than for the rich (figure 2.4). Yet at low fertility (typically in richer countries), the differences between the bottom and the top quintiles tend to be small—on the order of 0.5 to 1 live birth. At higher fertility (usually in poor countries), the differences widen. In Zambia, the average fertility of a woman in the poorest quintile is 8.5 children (the highest in the world), but for a woman in the richest fifth, it is just over 3.

In addition to household wealth, ethnicity and geography are important for understanding and addressing gender inequality. Even in countries that have grown rapidly, poor and ethnic minority women tend to benefit far less than their richer and ethnic majority counterparts. So, wide gender disparities endure. Many

ethnic minorities are poorer and less urban than the general population. An estimated two-thirds of girls out of school globally belong to ethnic minorities in their countries.⁶ In Guatemala, the illiteracy rate among indigenous women stands at 60 percent, 20 percentage points above indigenous males and twice that of nonindigenous females.⁷ For ethnic minorities in Vietnam, more than 60 percent of childbirths take place without prenatal care, twice the rate for the majority Kinh. More urban ethnic minority groups and groups not concentrated in poor regions tend to experience smaller differences with the majority populations. In China, rural ethnic minority groups have less access to education and health than the more urban Han, Hui, and Manchu, but the school enrollment and health insurance gaps narrow in urban areas.⁸

Other factors of exclusion, such as caste, disability, or sexual orientation, also tend to compound disadvantages in ways that affect development outcomes. More research is needed to better understand these links.

FIGURE 2.4 *At low incomes, fertility rates remain high—And the poorer the country, the larger the gap between rich and poor*



Source: WDR 2012 team estimates based on Demographic and Health Surveys.

“STICKY” DOMAINS, DESPITE ECONOMIC PROGRESS

In two areas, income growth has brought only modest and gradual progress toward gender equality in most developing countries: female mortality and access to economic opportunities. And gender gaps have not narrowed in women’s

control over resources, women’s political voice, or the incidence of domestic violence.

In some cases, individual preferences, market failures, institutional constraints, and social norms continue to reinforce gender gaps despite economic progress. Income growth may also have unexpected adverse effects on gender equality through new gendered preferences. In other cases, development outcomes have not always reflected extensive formal gains in securing equal rights. Despite notable improvement in expanding legal guarantees to women and men alike, slow implementation has impeded a move into gender parity. Social norms continue to bind to varying degrees in all nations, and a chasm remains between theory and practice.

Economic growth can even temporarily aggravate gender differentials in some countries. In China, new opportunities for rural industrial wage work led families initially to favor the junior secondary education of males, considerably widening the gender gap in the 1980s.⁹ But as the economy continued to grow, girls rapidly caught up with boys in the 1990s. Sub-Saharan Africa is in the midst of a significant expansion of secondary education. As in China, more African boys than girls attended secondary school between 1999 and 2008, deepening the gender gaps. In 2008, there were 79 girls for every 100 boys, down from 83 girls per 100 boys in 1999. Indeed, girls face significant barriers to secondary school entry, but enrollment rates tend to be low all around.

In some cases, these gaps work against boys. Everywhere in the world, repetition and, to a lesser extent, dropout rates are higher among boys than among girls. Some upper-middle-income and advanced economies are concerned about male underachievement in education—girls outperforming boys academically. In the United States and Israel, girls obtain better grades in all major school subjects, including math and science.¹⁰ In France, women are the majority in enrollments at the elite *Grandes Ecoles de Commerce* (business schools).¹¹ Male underperformance in higher education usually is not rooted in social exclusion, but men can also be subject to cultural norms that steer them away from academic achievement. Identifying education as primarily a “female” endeavor means that young men in several Caribbean nations, such as Dominica and Jamaica, withdraw from school.¹²

Missing girls at birth and excess female mortality

Sex ratios at birth and mortality across countries in 1990, 2000, and 2008 reveal continuing disadvantages for women in many low- and middle-income countries (and disadvantages for men in some regions for specific reasons). First, the problem of skewed sex-ratios at birth in China and India (and in some countries in the Caucasus and the Western Balkans) remains unresolved (table 2.1). Population estimates suggest that an additional 1.4 million girls would have been born (mostly in China and India) if sex ratios at birth in these countries resembled those found worldwide. Second, compared with developed economies, the rate at which women die relative to men in low- and middle-income countries is higher in many regions of the world.¹³ Overall, missing girls at birth and excess female mortality under age 60 totaled an estimated 3.9 million women in 2008—85 percent of them were

“My sister gave birth when she was 14 and died.”
Young woman, the Republic of Yemen

in China, India, and Sub-Saharan Africa. In other countries—notably some post-transition economies—excess male mortality has become serious.

Over the past three decades, some aspects of the problem remained the same, while others changed dramatically. Skewed sex ratios at birth were identified in the early 1990s,¹⁴ and as prenatal sex determination spreads and fertility declines, the problem has become worse. Excess female mortality is slowly shifting from early childhood in South Asia to adulthood in Sub-Saharan Africa, declining in all low-income countries except in Sub-Saharan Africa (see chapter 3).

TABLE 2.1 *Missing girls at birth increased between 1990 and 2008 in India and China, as did excess female mortality in adulthood in Sub-Saharan Africa*

Excess female deaths in the world, by age and region, 1990 and 2008
(thousands)

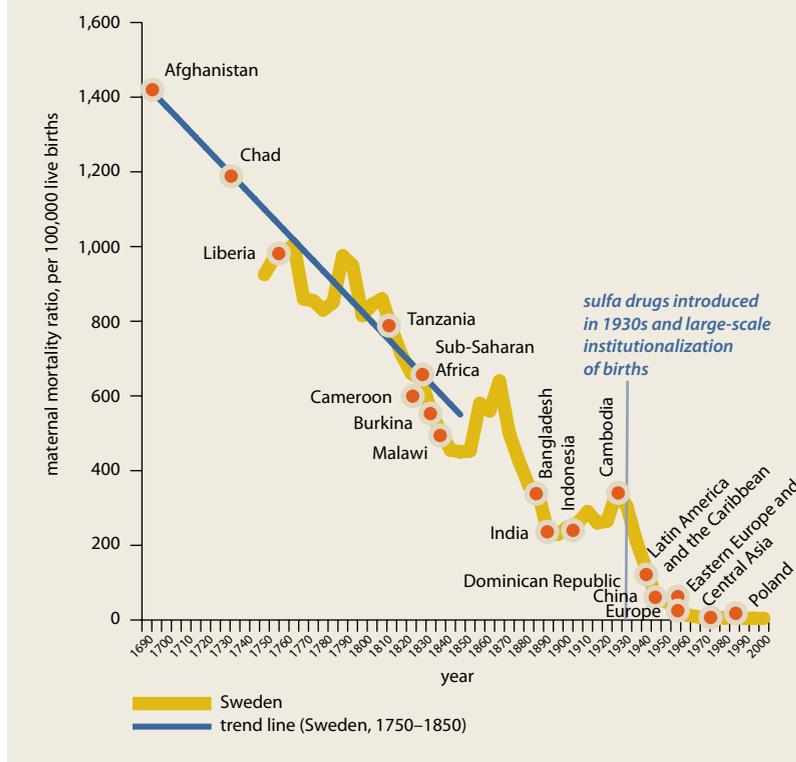


	girls at birth		girls under 5		girls 5–14		women 15–49		women 50–59		Total women under 60	
	1990	2008	1990	2008	1990	2008	1990	2008	1990	2008	1990	2008
China	890	1,092	259	71	21	5	208	56	92	30	1,470	1,254
India	265	257	428	251	94	45	388	228	81	75	1,255	856
Sub-Saharan Africa	42	53	183	203	61	77	302	751	50	99	639	1,182
High HIV-prevalence countries	0	0	6	39	5	18	38	328	4	31	53	416
Low HIV-prevalence countries	42	53	177	163	57	59	264	423	46	68	586	766
South Asia (excluding India)	0	1	99	72	32	20	176	161	37	51	346	305
East Asia and Pacific (excluding China)	3	4	14	7	14	9	137	113	48	46	216	179
Middle East and North Africa	5	6	13	7	4	1	43	24	15	15	80	52
Europe and Central Asia	7	14	3	1	0	0	12	4	4	3	27	23
Latin America and the Caribbean	0	0	11	5	3	1	20	10	17	17	51	33
Total	1,212	1,427	1,010	617	230	158	1,286	1,347	343	334	4,082	3,882

Source: WDR 2012 team estimates based on World Health Organization 2010 and United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs 2009.

Note: Totals do not necessarily add up because of rounding.

FIGURE 2.5 *Maternal mortality in many developing countries is similar to that in Sweden before 1900*



Source: WDR 2012 team estimates based on World Health Organization and others 2010.

What accounts for these patterns? Chapter 3 provides a deeper discussion, but two issues are highlighted here: maternal mortality and the preference for sons. The female disadvantage in mortality during the reproductive ages is in part driven by the risk of death in pregnancy and childbirth and associated long-term disabilities.¹⁵ Although maternal mortality ratios have fallen by 34 percent since 1990, they remain high in many parts of the world: Sub-Saharan Africa had the highest ratio in 2008 at 640 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births, followed by South Asia (280), Oceania (230), and Southeast Asia (160).¹⁶ Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, and Indonesia have maternal mortality ratios comparable to Sweden's around 1900, and Afghanistan's is similar to Sweden's in the 17th century (figure 2.5).

These high mortality ratios translate into large absolute numbers of maternal deaths, especially where fertility rates remain high. In 2008, there were 63,000 maternal deaths in India and 203,000 (more than half of the total) in Sub-Saharan Africa, in stark contrast to rich coun-

tries, with only 1,900 maternal deaths.¹⁷ One of every 10 women in Afghanistan and 1 of every 14 in Somalia and Chad die from maternal causes, and a much larger fraction suffer long-term health issues stemming from complications during and after childbirth.

Progress in maternal mortality has not kept up with GDP growth. During 2000–08, the economies of Chad and Tanzania grew at impressive annual rates of 9.4 percent and 7 percent, but maternal mortality declined by a mere 8 percent (to 1,200 per 100,000 live births) in Chad and by 14 percent (to 790) in Tanzania. South Africa grew at a modest 4 percent annually during the same period, and maternal mortality *increased* by 8 percent to 410 per 100,000 births—a manifestation of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Since 1990, both India and Equatorial Guinea had declines of 41 percent in their maternal mortality ratios, which fell to similar levels in 2008, but the two countries had radically different growth trajectories—a mere 3 percent a year in Equatorial Guinea compared with a solid 8 percent in India. Driving the high maternal mortality rates in many countries are poor obstetric health services and high fertility rates. Income growth and changes in household behavior alone appear insufficient to reduce maternal mortality; public investments are key to improving maternal health care services.

The disadvantage against unborn girls is widespread in many parts of Asia and in some countries in the Caucasus (such as Armenia and Azerbaijan), where the intersection of a preference for sons, declining fertility, and new technology increases the missing girls at birth. In China and India, sex ratios at birth point to a heavily skewed pattern in favor of boys. Where parents continue to favor sons over daughters, a gender bias in sex-selective abortions, female infanticide, and neglect is believed to account for millions of missing girls at birth. In 2008 alone, an estimated 1 million girls in China and 250,000 girls in India were missing at birth.¹⁸ The abuse of new technologies for sex-selective abortions—such as cheap mobile ultrasound clinics—accounted for much of this shortfall, despite laws against such practices in many nations, such as India and China.¹⁹ Economic prosperity will continue to increase amniocentesis and ultrasound services throughout the developing world, possibly enabling the diffusion of sex-selective abortions where son-preferences exist.²⁰

These preferences do not appear to change easily. Even among later children of South and Southeast Asian immigrants in Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States, the share of male births remains unusually high.²¹ This does not imply that change is impossible: The Republic of Korea's male-female sex ratio under age five was once the highest in Asia, but it peaked in the mid-1990s and then reversed—a link to societal shifts in normative values stemming from industrialization and urbanization.²²

In a smaller set of countries, there are also missing *men*. In Eritrea in the 1990s, a large number of young men went missing due to conflict. In some countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, violence may have contributed to excess deaths among young males. In Eastern Europe and Central Asia, a much larger number of men are missing in middle age, and this excess male mortality has been linked to the prevalence of types of conduct deemed more socially acceptable among men, such as alcohol use and other risky behavior.

“Men and women are not paid the same daily wages. If men get Nu 200, then women get only Nu 150 for doing the same work. It is not fair or just.”

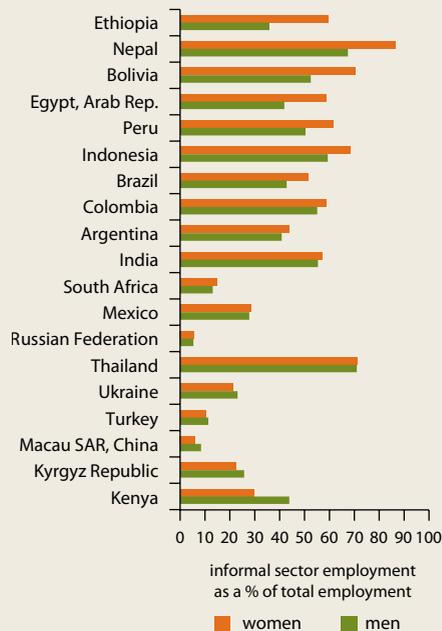
Adult woman, Bhutan

Different work, less pay

Men and women work in different industries and occupations in developed and developing nations. But as chapter 1 showed, although more women are working outside the home in almost all countries, they are clustered into selected parts of the “economic space,” with little change over time, even in high-income countries. Three markers of the segregated workspace are particularly striking. First, women are more likely to engage in low productivity activities than men and to work in the informal sector (figure 2.6). Women are more likely to be wage workers and unpaid family workers than men, to have less mobility between the formal and informal sectors, and to transition more between the informal sector and being out of the labor force.²³

Second, among the self-employed, women outside agriculture tend to operate small in-

FIGURE 2.6 *Women are more likely than men to work in the informal sector*



Source: WDR 2012 team estimates based on International Labour Organization 2010.

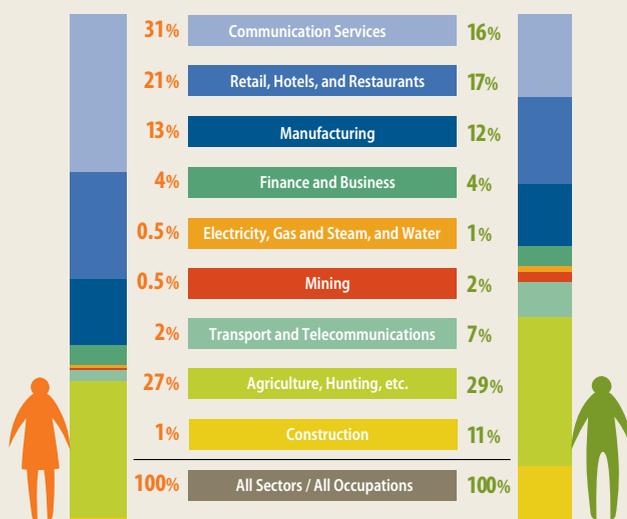
Note: Most recent year available between 1999 and 2006.

formal businesses, often out of their homes. Of industrial homeworkers in some developing countries, such as Chile and Thailand, 80 percent are women.²⁴ Because of the nature of these businesses, female owners are concentrated in the smallest firms—smaller in employees, sales, costs, and the value of physical capital. They also have lower profits than male-owned firms. In Latin America, average profits are between 15 and 20 percent of a standard deviation lower for female than for male-owned firms.²⁵

Third, even within the formal and informal sectors, women and men choose very different jobs (figure 2.7). Women are more likely to be in communal and public services, retail services, and trade. Men are overrepresented in dangerous professions—such as mining, construction, transport, and heavy manufacturing—with high occupational injury rates in poor and rich countries alike. The burdens of defense and maintaining public order also fall heavily on men. These patterns are similar across countries and regions, and, if anything, they are accentuated at higher incomes.

FIGURE 2.7 *Women and men work in different sectors (and different occupations)*

distribution of female / male employment across sectors



Source: WDR 2012 team estimates based on data from LABORSTA Labor Statistics Database, International Labour Organization.

Note: Totals do not necessarily add up due to rounding.

Such gender-differentiated patterns contribute to the persistence of sizable gender gaps in earnings. Differences in average wages by gender range from 20 percent in Mozambique and Pakistan to more than 80 percent in Côte d'Ivoire, Jordan, Latvia, and the Slovak Republic. The gaps are slowly diminishing, partly because of improvements in education among women relative to men, differences in the concentration of women in some sectors and occupations, and shifts in work experience patterns and career interruptions linked to greater control over fertility.²⁶

Housework and care are still a woman's domain

One domain where gender differences appear to be particularly persistent is the allocation of time to housework and care. Over time and across countries, irrespective of income, women bear disproportionate responsibility for housework and care, while men are mostly responsible for market work. These differences, deeply rooted in gender roles, reduce women's leisure, welfare, and well-being. An immediate outcome of these different domestic responsibilities is that men and women have very different patterns of time use and different amounts of leisure. These patterns have implications for women's ability to invest in education (chapter 3), their agency (chapter 4), and their ability to take up economic opportunities (chapter 5), and to participate more broadly in economic, political, and social life (chapters 4 and 6).

In six countries—with widely different incomes, economic structures, and social norms—the patterns are remarkably similar (figure 2.8). Everywhere, women devote 1 to 3 hours more a day to housework than men; 2 to 10 times the amount of time a day to care (of children, elderly, and the sick), and 1 to 4 hours less a day to market activities. These are averages for all men and women, and the differences are accentuated with family formation. As chapter 5 describes, marriage significantly increases the time devoted to housework for women but not for men. Children significantly increase the time spent on care by both men and women but more so for women.

Time use for women and men converge as income and education increase, mainly because women become more like men (increasing their hours devoted to market work and decreasing the

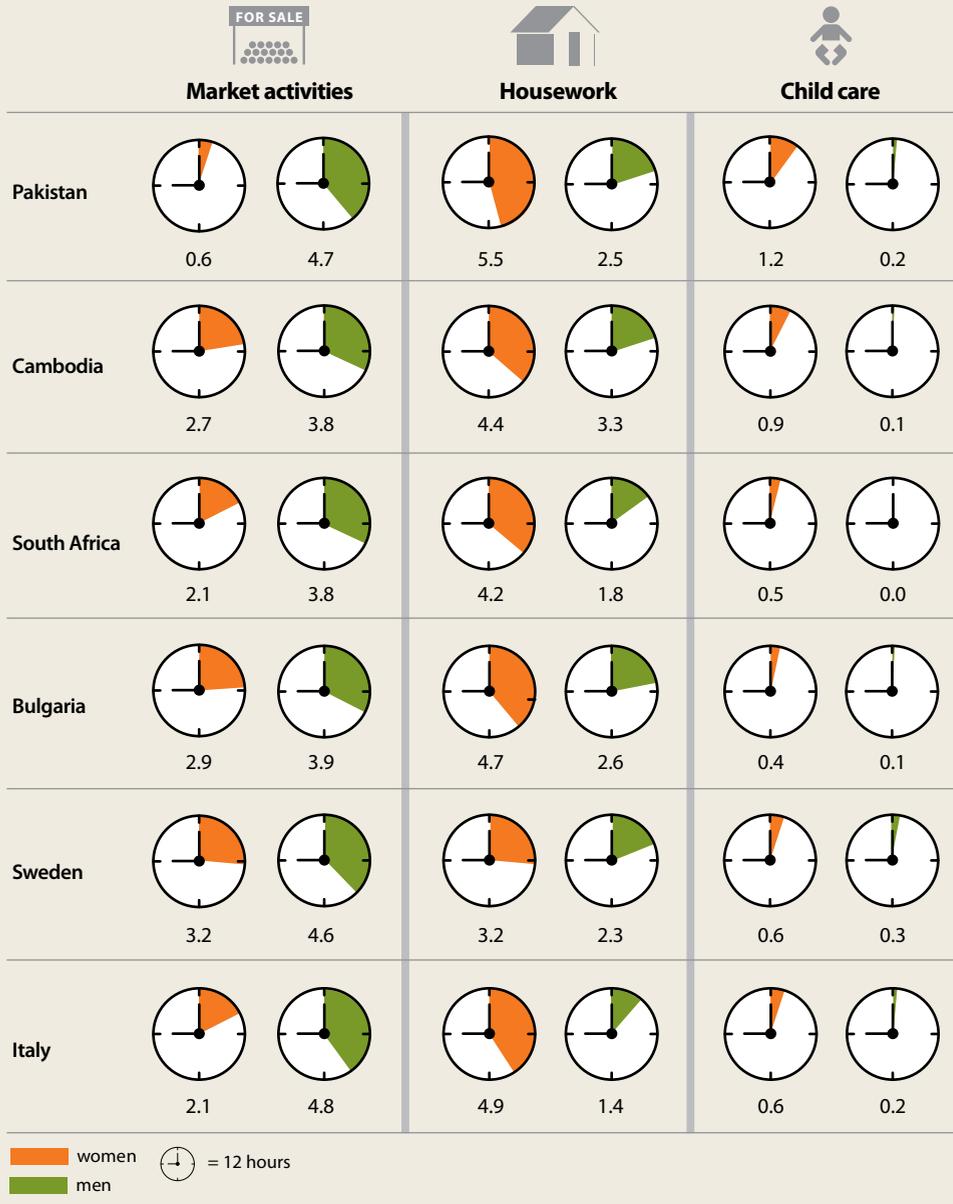
“ Women need more free time, women are more tired than men. . . . They take care of the house, of the children. While men, they are the entire day at work and don't have to take care of the house. And if the woman has a job also, then she gets even more tired.

Adult woman, Moldova

These days, for a woman to be rated as a 'good wife' one has to be a superwoman, working very hard both at home and in the office, fulfilling every demand of your family members as if we don't have any right to enjoy.”

Adult woman, Bhutan

FIGURE 2.8 Across the world, women spend more hours each day on housework and care than men ... and men spend more time in market activities



Source: Berniell and Sánchez-Páramo 2011.

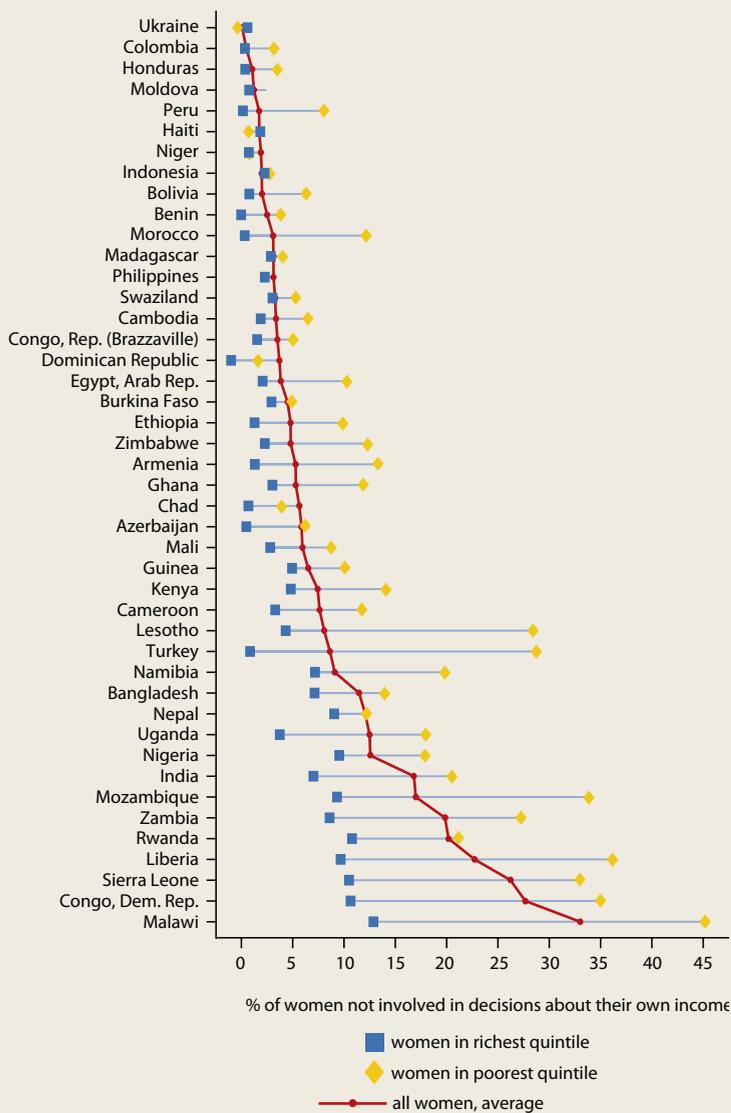
hours to housework and care), not because men take up more housework and care (chapter 5).

Less voice and less power

Some dimensions of gender equality where progress has been slowest fall in the domain of women’s agency. Consider three aspects. First, women’s ability to make decisions about earned

income or family spending reflects their control over their own lives and their immediate environment. Second, trends in domestic violence capture intrahousehold gender dynamics and asymmetric power relations between men and women. Third, patterns in political voice can measure inclusiveness in decision making, exercise of leadership, and access to power.

FIGURE 2.9 *Who controls women's own income?*



Source: WDR 2012 team estimates based on Demographic and Health Surveys.

Less control over resources

Many women have no say over household finances, even their own earnings. The Demographic and Health Surveys show that women

in some developing countries, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa and Asia, are not involved in household decisions about spending their personal earned income. As many as 34 percent of married women in Malawi and 28 percent of women in the Democratic Republic of Congo are not involved in decisions about spending their earnings. And 18 percent of married women in India and 14 percent in Nepal are largely silent on how their earned money is spent.²⁷

Husbands have more control over their wives' earning at lower incomes. In Turkey, only 2 percent of married women in the richest fifth of the population have no control over earned cash income, a proportion that swells to 28 percent in the poorest fifth. In Malawi, 13 percent of married women in the richest fifth have no control, compared with 46 percent in the poorest fifth (figure 2.9).

Less control over resources and spending is partly a reflection of large differences between men and women in the assets they own. Assets are typically inherited, acquired at marriage, or accumulated over the lifetime through earnings and saving. As shown above and explored further in chapter 5, women typically earn less than men, particularly when aggregated over the life cycle. This disparity directly affects their ability to save, irrespective of male-female differences in savings behavior. And as chapter 4 explores, inheritance and property rights often apply differently to men and women so that gender disparities in access to physical capital and assets remain large and significant. Land makes up the largest share of household assets, particularly for the poorest and rural households.²⁸ Women own as little as 11 percent of land in Brazil and 27 percent in Paraguay. And their holdings are smaller than those of men. In Kenya, as little as 5 percent of registered landholders are women.²⁹ In Ghana, the mean size of men's landholdings was three times that of women's.³⁰

In many countries, land ownership remains restricted to men only, both by tradition and by law. In most African countries and about half of Asian countries, customary and statutory

“Some working women don't even know how much they get paid for their job because their husbands cash their salary for them.”

Adult man, West Bank and Gaza

laws disadvantage women in land ownership. According to customary law in some parts of Africa, women cannot acquire land titles without a husband's authorization.³¹ Marriage is the most common avenue for women to gain access to land. But husbands usually own it, while wives only have claim to its use. While property rights for women have slowly begun to improve in some countries, legislation has often proved insufficient to change observed practices.

More vulnerable to violence at home

Physical, sexual, and psychological violence against women is endemic across the world. A flagrant violation of basic human rights and fundamental freedoms, violence can take many forms. International statistics are not always comparable, yet incontrovertible evidence shows that violence against women is a global concern.³²

Women are at far greater risk than men of violence by an intimate partner or somebody they know than from violence by other people. According to South African data, for example, teachers were the most common perpetrators of the rape of girls under age 15 (one-third of cases).³³ About 50 percent of female homicides in South Africa were perpetuated by an intimate partner. The mortality rate from intimate partner violence there is estimated at 8.8 per 100,000 women.³⁴ Overall, women are more likely than men to be killed, seriously injured, or victims of sexual violence from intimate partners.³⁵

The number of countries with laws regulating intimate partner violence has risen. In 2006, 60 countries had specific legislation to address domestic violence, up from 45 in 2003, and 89 had some form of legal provision. Many of these are higher-income countries; most developing countries with laws against intimate partner violence are in Southeast Asia and Latin America.

Yet in many nations, violence against women is perceived as acceptable or justifiable. On average, 29 percent of women in countries with data concurred that wife beating was justified for arguing with the husband, 25 percent for refusing to have sex, and 21 percent for burning food. In Guinea, 60 percent of women found it permissible to be beaten for refusing to have sex with their spouses. In Ethiopia, 81 percent of women say that it is justified for a husband to beat his wife for at least one of the reasons listed in the Demographic and Health Surveys; 61 percent reported violence to be appropriate for burning

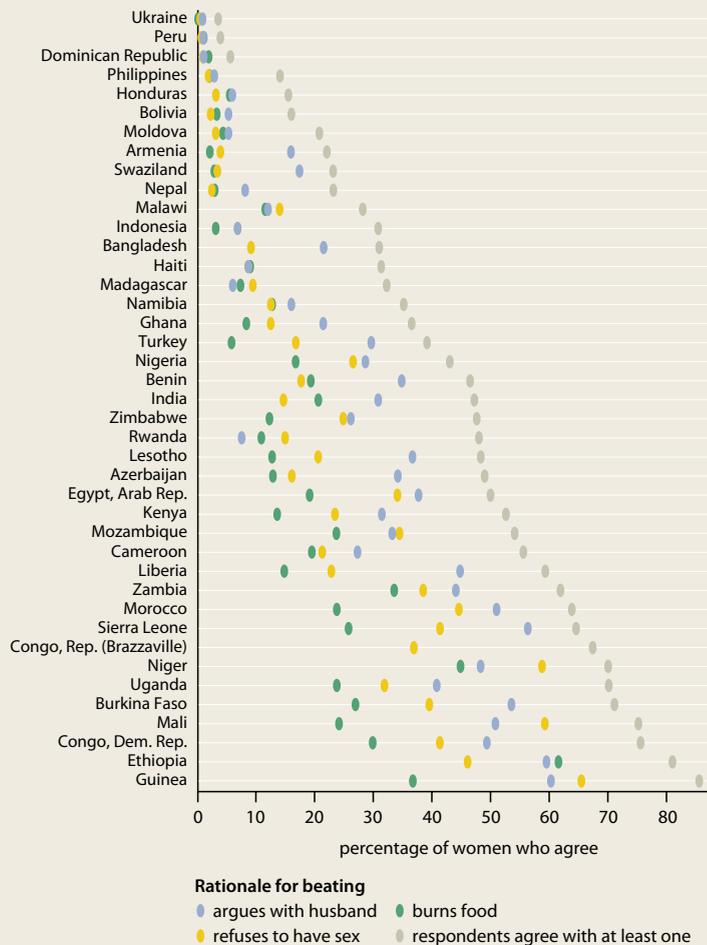
“ I think that women are now a problem: they get money and they no longer listen to us. So, if you want to continue being a man in the house, you need to bring the discipline. You must beat her up, and if any child intervenes, you also beat them. Then they all fear and respect you. ”

Adult man, Tanzania

food and 59 percent for arguing with their husbands (figure 2.10).

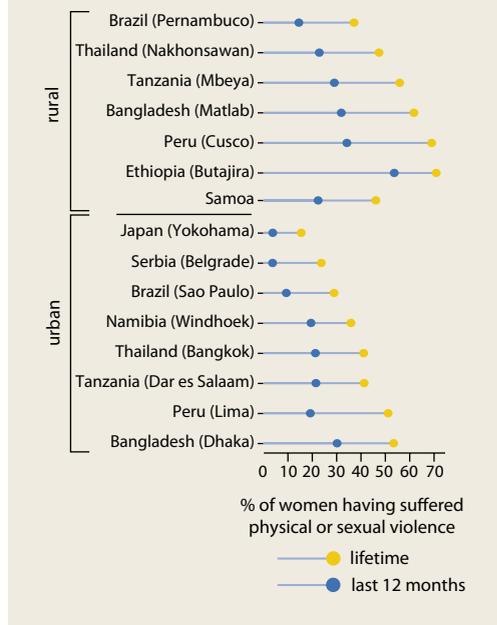
The prevalence of domestic violence varies greatly across rich and poor countries. Physical

FIGURE 2.10 Perceptions in many nations are that wife-beating is justifiable



Source: WDR 2012 team estimates based on Demographic and Health Surveys.

FIGURE 2.11 *There is great heterogeneity in rates of domestic violence reported across nations*



Source: World Health Organization 2005.

or sexual abuse by an intimate partner within the last 12 months was most prevalent in Ethiopia (Butajira) and Peru (Cusco), involving 54 and 34 percent of women respectively. At the other extreme, Japan (Yokohama) and Serbia (Belgrade) are below the 4 percent mark (figure 2.11). In many instances, the violence can be grave. In Peru (Cusco), almost 50 percent of women are victims of severe physical violence during their lifetime.³⁶ And even with low incidence, the numbers are unacceptably high. A 3 percent domestic abuse incidence rate for Poland is equivalent to 534,000 women in one year, or 1,463 new women a day.³⁷

Domestic violence knows no boundaries, but incidence rates tend to rise with socioeconomic deprivation. Reported across all economic groupings, it is usually most prevalent among economically disadvantaged women. Women's low social and economic status can be both a cause and a consequence of domestic violence. Low educational attainment, economic duress, and substance abuse are among the many compounding factors for abusive behavior.

Men can also be victims. Domestic violence against them is more circumscribed than against women, in incidence, nature, and severity. According to the National Crime Victimization Survey in the United States, intimate partner violence affected 4.1 females per 1,000—more than half a million women—and 0.9 males per 1,000—117,000 men—in 2009. So men were a fifth as likely to be victims of domestic abuse as women. In England and Wales, about two in five domestic violence victims between 2004 and 2009 were men. Based on data from the British Crime Survey, about 4.0 percent of men (4.8 percent of women) reported suffering partner abuse in the past 12 months, an estimated 600,000 male victims.³⁸

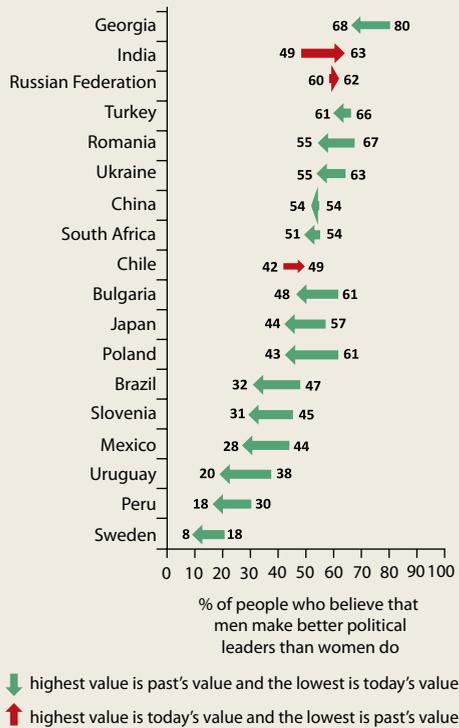
Less likely to hold political office

Few nations have legal restrictions for women to run for public office, yet the number of women holding parliamentary seats is very low, and progress in the last 15 years has been slow. In 1995, women accounted for about 10 percent of members of the lower or single houses of national parliaments, and in 2009, 17 percent.³⁹ In Africa and most of Asia, the number of female parliamentarians more than doubled. Also during the last 15 years, the number of countries with at least 30 percent women as parliamentarians rose from 5 to 23—including 7 from Sub-Saharan Africa as well as Argentina, Cuba, Finland, Iceland, the Netherlands, and Sweden. Rwanda's parliament has 56 percent women, up from 17 percent in 1995. East Asia registered the least progress, and the number of women parliamentarians in particular is low in the Pacific Islands.

Although men and women are equally likely to exercise their political voice by voting, men are often perceived to be superior in exercising political power. Responses to the World Values Surveys over several years point to a general positive evolution of views on gender equality in politics in the last decade (figure 2.12). But people continue to view men as “better” political and economic leaders than women.

And men have better chances than women of winning an election. The likelihood of a female candidate winning a parliamentary seat over a man is estimated to be 0.87 (with 1 signifying that men and women are equally likely to succeed in an electoral contest), with considerable variation across countries. Women have greater

FIGURE 2.12 *Men are perceived as better political leaders than women*



Source: WDR 2012 team estimates based on World Values Surveys, waves 1994–97 and 2005–07.

chances of prevailing over men in Africa. In contrast, in Asia and high-income countries, women's chances drop considerably. Women are least likely to win elections in the Pacific Islands and Latin America and the Caribbean.⁴⁰

Quotas and reservations have helped expand female parliamentary representation. Ninety countries have some quota mechanism for parliamentary representation, whether in seat reservation, candidate quota legislation, or voluntary political party quotas. Sixteen countries, all in Africa and Asia, explicitly reserve parliamentary seats for women. In others, such as Finland, there has been little change. For instance, 38.5 percent of newly elected members of parliament in Finland in 1991 were women, and by 2011, this share had increased marginally to 42.5 percent.

Women's participation in cabinets, regardless of the structure and size, has also lagged. The proportion of women among ministers was on average 17 percent in 2008, up from 8

percent in 1998. Higher female participation in cabinet positions can be observed in every region, especially in Western Europe, Southern Africa, and Latin America and the Caribbean. In 1998, women occupied more than 20 percent of ministerial posts in only 13 countries, but 63 countries 10 years later. In 2008, Chile, Finland, France, Grenada, Norway, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, and Switzerland had cabinets with more than 40 percent female ministers.⁴¹

REVERSALS

The gender disadvantages discussed in this chapter form the backbone for the analysis in the remainder of the report—and the policies advanced to mitigate them. In contrast to these facets of gender relations, where there is often a clear pathway for analysis, the gendered impact of external shocks, which can generate large losses in welfare and well-being, depends on many specific circumstances. In some cases, men or boys are worse affected; in others, women and girls. The impact of shocks can be temporary, with large losses in welfare after the shock followed by subsequent catch-up.⁴² But some shocks, especially when they hit early in life (as in the critical first three years) can also have irreversible consequences. Outlined here is the multifaceted nature of external shocks and their impacts. The message: protection against shocks should be a key part of any development policy, and whether a gendered lens is appropriate depends on context.

Whether the source is financial, political, or natural (box 2.1), shocks and hazards can affect men and women differently, a function of their distinct social roles and status. First, market failures, institutional constraints, and social norms can amplify or mute gender differences in the *impact* of shocks. The mechanisms that produce these outcomes are multiple. For example, the higher mortality rates for girls and women in the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami have been related to their more limited mobility caused by restrictive clothing and caring for small children.⁴³ Second, those failures, constraints, and norms can amplify or mute gender differences in the *vulnerability* to shocks. The fact that women tend to own and control fewer assets than men, for example, can make them more vulnerable to expected income shocks.

BOX 2.1 *The many faces of climate change*

Climate change results in more frequent droughts and floods and more variable rainfall. A rising fraction of the world population is affected by climatic shocks and natural disasters as a result of their greater frequencies and larger numbers of people in disaster-prone areas. Cold days, cold nights, and frosts have become less frequent, while the frequency and intensity of heat waves have increased. Both floods and droughts are occurring more often. The interiors of continents have tended to dry out despite an overall increase in total precipitation. Globally, precipitation has increased, with the water cycle sped up by warmer temperatures, even as the Sahel and Mediterranean regions have more frequent and more intense droughts. Heavy rainfall and floods have become more common, and there is evidence that the intensity of storms and tropical cyclones has increased.

Women appear more vulnerable in the face of natural disasters, with the impacts strongly linked to poverty. A recent study of 141 countries found that more women than men die from natural hazards. Where the socioeconomic status of women is high, men and women die in roughly equal numbers during and after natural hazards, whereas more women than men die (or die at a younger age) where the socioeconomic status of women is low. Women and children are more likely to die than men during disasters. The largest numbers of fatalities during the Asian Tsunami were women and children under age 15. By contrast, 54 percent of those who died in Nicaragua as a direct result from Hurricane Mitch in 1998 were male.

Erratic weather can also affect agricultural productivity, which can reduce the income and food of households. The reductions in food availability may not affect all household members equally. And temperature and precipitation fluctuations may affect the prevalence of vector-borne, water-borne, and water-washed diseases, as well as determine heat or cold stress.

Men and women may be affected differently by changing weather. Household evidence from rural India and Mexico suggests that this may be indeed the case, but the impact and direction depend on the climatic shock and environmental context. In some locations in Mexico, rural girls can have *lower* height-for-age than boys after a positive rainfall shock or a negative temperature shock. Yet girls in high-altitude areas have *higher* height-for-age than boys as a result of warmer weather.

Sources: Jacoby, Safir, and Skoufias 2011; Neumayer and Plümpert 2007; Skoufias, Vinha, and Conroy 2011; World Bank 2009.

Two areas where shocks can generate significant reversals are in education and health outcomes and in access to economic opportunities.

Reversals in education and health

The health of infant girls tends to fare worse as a result of negative income shocks. Undernutrition during gestation or infancy and declines in health-care-seeking behavior increase mortality and morbidity risks in later life. In India, the mortality of girls rises significantly as a result of macroeconomic crises, but boys appear to be better protected.⁴⁴ A study of 59 developing countries suggests similar results. The average increase in infant mortality during an

economic contraction is 7.4 deaths per 1,000 for girls, five times the 1.5 for boys.⁴⁵ With proper nourishment, older children and adults can usually compensate for nutritional deficits during a shock.

In contrast, the impact of economic crises on associated risky behavior, morbidity, and mortality tends to be greater for men. The sudden political and economic transformation in Eastern Europe fueled a sharp and unexpected drop in male life expectancy. In many countries in the region, particularly the Russian Federation, men bear a greater share of the burden of ill health. Premature male mortality has been overwhelmingly concentrated in the unmarried population. Women outlive men by nine years on average—a gap larger than in the rest of world. The rise in male mortality is partly related to increased risky behavior, including smoking and alcoholism.⁴⁶ In Russia, a recent survey shows that 19 percent of men, but only 1 percent of women, were classified as problem drinkers.⁴⁷ Stress owing to the absence of economic activities (challenging traditional gender roles of men as breadwinners) and weak family or social support networks are linked to the declines in male health.⁴⁸

When families experience an income shock, girls' education suffers more than boys' in some countries but not in others. Girls in Turkey were more likely than boys to drop out of school in response to lower household budgets.⁴⁹ And in Indonesia, girls were more likely to be pulled out in response to crop losses.⁵⁰ Vulnerability to external shocks is particularly important because interruptions in schooling can increase the risk of dropping out, and lags and delays in school progression can have a permanent impact on overall grade attainment. In Ethiopia, girls ages 7–14 are 69 percentage points more likely to be in school if they attended school in the previous period, and boys 21 percentage points more likely.⁵¹

But boys may also be pulled out of school during an economic shock, usually to bolster household finances. When low-skilled work opportunities are available, boys more than girls are very likely to be used to complement dwindling family income. While Ethiopian boys have generally enjoyed greater access to schooling, in times of economic crisis they have also been the first to be withdrawn from school to work.⁵² And in Côte d'Ivoire, while enrollments of both

boys and girls fell in response to drought, boys' enrollments fell more (chapter 3).

Income shocks may have mixed effects in relation to endowment accumulation. In some instances (mainly in middle- and high-income economies), income shocks can actually bring boys and girls back into school. Wage reductions or poor labor market conditions in a crisis lower the opportunity cost of schooling, inducing households to keep their children in school—especially boys who are more likely to be engaged in wage labor. In Nicaragua, the school participation of rural boys increased 15 percentage points after a sudden drop in coffee prices around 2000–02.⁵³ In Argentina, the deterioration in employment rates during the deep 1998–2002 financial crisis also increased the probability of boys attending school.⁵⁴

Reversals in access to economic opportunities

Shocks can bring about reversals in economic opportunities for both men and women. Women tend to hold more precarious jobs, operate smaller and less capitalized firms, and be engaged in more vulnerable economic activities than men, suggesting that they would be more likely to be affected by economic shocks. But the evidence does not support this oft-held view.

In the recent financial crisis, there were no common patterns by gender and no evidence that women were more affected than men.⁵⁵ Evidence from 41 middle-income countries suggests that the main impact was on the quality of employment (number of hours worked and wages), rather than on the number of jobs.⁵⁶ Gender impacts vary significantly by country and defy simple generalizations.⁵⁷

Both labor market entry (added workers) and exit (discouraged workers) during crises might operate simultaneously, affecting different groups of women differently. Women from low-income households typically enter the la-

bor force, while younger, more educated women from wealthier households often exit the labor market in response to economic crises. The impact of crises on women's labor force participation has often been the strongest in the informal or unregulated sectors of the economy, which more readily absorb additional women in petty commerce or domestic service.⁵⁸

The direction of labor market impacts and their gender differences depend on the nature of the macroeconomic shock. Export-oriented industries, such as light manufacturing, were the initial casualties in the most recent financial crisis. Higher female participation rates in these fields led to strong first-round negative employment effects for women. But lower female participation rates in sectors that shrank in the crisis, such as construction, or industries dependent on external demand, such as tourism, implied that the aggregate employment effects for women relative to men were muted once these second-round effects are taken into account. In Latvia, Moldova, Montenegro, and Ukraine, men tended to lose their jobs more than women. The sectors most affected by the crisis in those countries—such as construction and manufacturing—tend to be male-dominated.

Similarly, during the Asian crisis of 1997, female employment was not the hardest hit. Women in East Asian nations were disproportionately employed in firms more resilient to the crisis.⁵⁹ But the gender earnings gap increased, particularly in larger firms. In other words, women's smaller net employment impact came at the expense of a larger reduction in their earnings.

“STICKY” GETS “STICKIER”

Chapter 1 noted that changes are interconnected. Progress in one dimension of gender equality can multiply the effects on another dimension. The same applies to an absence of change. A lack of progress in one dimension can compound the negative effects in another dimension. Gender differences can thus endure, bound together by many layers of constraints that reinforce one other. Breaking this impasse requires action on various strands of this web of persistent inequality.

Maternal education is inversely correlated with infant and child mortality in developing

“The financial situation in Moldova is very bad. I think that women should stay home and take care of the family.”

Adult man, Moldova

countries. In Mozambique, low maternal education is a strong predictor of low health service use and child malnutrition.⁶⁰ And stunted children—before 24 months of age—have poorer psychomotor skills and lower cognitive achievement. Undernourished boys and girls are also less likely to be enrolled in school or enter school late, sustaining the cycle of deprivation.⁶¹

Poor health of girls and women spills over into the next generation. Both contemporary and childhood health of the mother matter for the health of the next generation. Maternal well-being—measured through short stature, low body mass index, and anemia—affects size at birth, survival, and child growth. So underinvesting in the health of girls and women contributes to child mortality and intergenerational cycles of poor health among survivors.⁶² Girls who are born small and do not catch up in growth fail to attain the height predicted by their genetic potential. Their reduced uterine and ovarian size implies lower birth weights for their offspring, engendering a new intergenerational cycle of deprivation.⁶³

Lack of property ownership and control matters for women's agency. Assets are an important element to boost voice and bargaining power in household decision making, access to capital, and overall economic independence. Nepali women who do not own land have less say in household decision making than women with land.⁶⁴ In Colombia, a lack of property or social assets constrains women in negotiating for the right to work, controlling their own income, moving freely, and contesting domestic abuse.⁶⁵ In Kerala, India, women's independent ownership of immovable property is a significant predictor of long-term physical and psychological domestic violence, over and above the effects of other factors. The odds of being beaten if a woman owns both a house and land are a twentieth of those when she owns neither.⁶⁶

Cash employment is also strongly associated with women's empowerment. Not earning a cash income is most consistently associated with married women not making decisions—on topics such as their health care, large household purchases, purchases for daily needs, and visits to family or friends. Higher household wealth by itself does not consistently enhance the likelihood that women will make decisions alone or jointly in most countries.⁶⁷

The clustering of men and women in different occupations and sectors begins earlier, in the educational system. While female participation is increasing across all fields of study as more women enter tertiary education, segregation by area of specialization remains. Male bias is most marked in engineering, manufacturing, and construction. In about two-thirds of the world's countries, men also outnumber women in science. But in nine-tenths of the world, women outnumber men in education; humanities and arts; social sciences, business, and law; and health and welfare.

Educational segregation by specialization does not go away—and even appears to increase—with economic development. Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Morocco, and Namibia are among the countries with the least gender segregation by study areas, though men are more likely to obtain a tertiary degree. Among Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries, Turkey has the least gender segregation in tertiary fields of study, while Croatia, Finland, Japan, and Lithuania have the most. In Norway and Denmark, women make up two-thirds of tertiary enrollments, but only a third of science students is female.⁶⁸

These are just several examples, among many, of how constraints in one aspect of gender equality can hold back progress on other dimensions, causing gender inequality to persist. This persistence comes with large economic, social, and political costs. Part 2 of the Report analyzes the foundations of these persistent gender disparities, rooting them in the interactions between households, markets, and formal and informal institutions.

NOTES

1. UNESCO 2010.
2. Yuki and others 2011.
3. UNESCO Institute for Statistics 2010.
4. Berry 1977; Högberg and Wall 1986.
5. USAID 2006.
6. Lewis and Lockheed 2006.
7. Chioda, Garcia-Verdú, and Muñoz Boudet 2011.
8. Hannum and Wang 2010.
9. Hannum 2005.
10. Perkins and others 2004.
11. Vincent-Lancrin 2008.
12. Jha and Kelleher 2006.

13. See chapter 3, technical annex.
14. Sen 1999.
15. AbouZahr 2003.
16. WHO and others 2010.
17. Ibid.
18. The estimate could be affected where births of girls go unreported.
19. Jha and others 2006.
20. Guilmoto 2009.
21. Abrevaya 2009; Almond, Edlund, and Milligan 2009; Dubuc and Coleman 2007.
22. Chung and Das Gupta 2007.
23. Bosch and Maloney 2010; Gong and van Soest 2002.
24. Beneria 2001.
25. Bruhn 2009; Mead and Liedholm 1998.
26. Chioda, Garcia-Verdú, and Muñoz Boudet 2011.
27. UN DESA 2010.
28. Banerjee and Duflo 2007.
29. Nyamu-Musembi 2002.
30. Deere and Doss 2006.
31. Katz and Chamorro 2003.
32. In addition, the absence of longitudinal data prevents analyzing how trends have evolved over time.
33. Jewkes and others 2002.
34. Abrahams and others 2009.
35. Reed and others 2010.
36. United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs 2010.
37. UN DESA 2010.
38. Home Office British Government 2009.
39. UN DESA 2010.
40. Ibid.
41. Ibid.
42. Dercon 2011.
43. Nishikiori and others 2006.
44. Bhalotra 2010.
45. Baird, Friedman, and Schady 2007.
46. World Bank 2007.
47. Bobrova and others 2010.
48. Doyal 2000.
49. Tansel 2002.
50. Cameron and Worswick 2001.
51. Mani, Hoddinott, and Strauss 2010.
52. Rose and Al-Samarrai 2001.
53. Maluccio 2005.
54. López Bóo 2010.
55. Habib and others 2010.
56. Khanna, Newhouse, and Paci 2010.
57. Cho and Newhouse 2011; Turk and Mason 2009.
58. Sabarwal, Sinha, and Buvinic 2010.
59. Hallward-Driemeier, Rijkers, and Waxman 2010.
60. Lindelow 2008.
61. Naudeau and others 2011; Victora and others 2008.
62. Bhalotra and Rawlings 2011.

63. Ibañez and others 2000.
64. Allendorf 2007.
65. Friedemann-Sánchez 2006.
66. Agarwal and Panda 2007.
67. Kishor and Subaiya 2008.
68. UNESCO 2009.

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