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United Nations Development Programme



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FAQ Gender Development Index

What does the GDI measure?

The GDI measures gender gap in human development achievements in three basic dimensions of human development: health, measured by female and male life expectancy at birth; education, measured by female and male expected years of schooling for children and female and male mean years of schooling for adults ages 25 and older; and command over economic resources, measured by female and male estimated earned income.

How is the GDI calculated?

To calculate the GDI, the HDI is calculated separately for females and for males using the same methodology as in the HDI. The same goalposts as in the HDI are used for transforming the indicators into a scale lying between zero and one. The only exception is life expectancy at birth where the goalposts are adjusted for an average of 5 years female biological advantage over male.

What is the difference between the GDI in the 2014 Report and the one introduced in 1995 and discontinued in 2010?

The Gender-related Development Index introduced in 1995 and published up to 2009 was not a direct measure of gender gap, rather it was the HDI adjusted for gender disparities in its components. Secondly, the old GDI could not be interpreted independently of the HDI. The newly constructed GDI however, is a direct measure of gender gaps in HDI achievements in that it is based on the sex-disaggregated HDI. Countries are ranked based on the absolute deviation from gender parity in HDI. Lastly, unlike the old GDI, one is able to determine which of the two groups—females or males, is doing better. We refer to the Gender-related Development Index as the 'old GDI'.

What are the components of the GDI?

With regards to income, this component is a proxy for command over resources, and it is measured by estimated GNI per capita in PPP\$ based on female and male shares of economically active population, ratio of female to male wages in all sectors, female and male shares of the population and GNI per capita PPP\$ (2011 constant prices).

The income component of the old GDI was highly criticized for the crude way in which it was measured and for not measuring what it is supposed to measure so why are you re-introducing using a similar approach to estimate female and male incomes?

The income component of the newly introduced GDI is a proxy to command over resources rather than gender gaps in human development that are correlated with incomes such as nutrition, clothing and shelter. The previous estimated earned income considered female-to-male ratio of non-agricultural wages only. Given the small size of the non-agricultural formal sector in many developing countries, the assumption tends to over-estimate the income gaps in these countries. In the estimated sex disaggregated GNI per capita PPP\$, we have taken into consideration wages in the agricultural sector as well.

Another improvement is the treatment of income in the new GDI. The old GDI considered income levels as well as gender gaps in income. As such, income levels dominated the index with the result that countries with low income levels could not achieve a high score even with perfect gender equality in the distribution of income. The new GDI focuses more on gender gaps in HDI components.

A number of countries do not have sex disaggregated wage data. How do you estimate sex disaggregated GNI per PPP\$ for these countries?

The global average female to male wage ratio across all sectors is 0.8 and this is what we have used to make estimate for countries with missing wage data. This average coincides with averages for some regions but not others where the number of countries with data is limited. We recognize the limitation in assuming that the global average applies to all countries. ILO is currently working hard to improve availability of sex-disaggregated wage statistics.

What are the main findings of the GDI in terms of national and regional patterns of gender inequality in HDI values?

The world average GDI value, which is the ratio of female to male HDI value, is 0.920 indicating that on average, female HDI is 8% lower than male HDI. Stated other way, female HDI value is on average 92% of the male HDI. The GDI was calculated for 148 countries. There is a wide range of variation among countries.

Regional average GDI values range from 0.830 in South Asia to 0.963 in Latin America and the Caribbean Region. Both Arab States and sub-Saharan African region have

relatively high gender gaps in HDI values as reflected in GDI values of 0.866 and 0.867 respectively. The OECD countries average around 0.964.

Gender inequality in HDI values is highest in Afghanistan where the GDI value is only 0.602. In other words, female human development achievement is only 60.2% of males.

The GDI reveals that in 16 countries (Argentina, Barbados, Belarus, Estonia, Finland, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Mongolia, Poland, Russian Federation, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden, Ukraine and Uruguay), female HDI values are equal or higher than those of males. For some of these countries, this may be attributed to higher female educational achievement; in others, to a significantly longer female life expectancy – longer than five years of biological advantage.