



The World's Women 2010: Trends and Statistics

KEY FINDINGS for Asia and the Pacific

The World's Women 2010: Trends and Statistics is a publication prepared by the United Nations Statistics Division and produced every five years, as called for in the Beijing Platform for Action.

The World's Women 2010 presents statistics and analysis on the status of women and men in the world, highlighting the current situation and changes over time.

Based on statistics from international and national statistical agencies, the report covers several broad policy areas – population and families, health, education, work, power and decision-making, violence against women, environment and poverty. The present document highlights key findings related to Asia and the Pacific.¹

¹ The classification of subregions throughout this document does not exactly match that of ESCAP as data for the publication were drawn from various sources of regional and international organizations which use different geographical classifications.

Population and families

Population: The world population in 2010 totalled nearly 7 billion people, 61 per cent of which live in the Asian and Pacific region. Two subregions account for about a quarter of the total population of the world: South-Central Asia (26 per cent) and East Asia (23 per cent).

Sex ratio of population: There are 57 million more men than women in the world, corresponding to a sex ratio of 102 men per 100 women. In Asia, the value is relatively high at 106 in South-Central, West and East Asia, respectively, while it is around 99 in South-East Asia.

Older population: As people nowadays live longer – especially women, the share of population aged 60 and over is steadily increasing. Today, older persons account for around 11 per cent of the world population. The proportion varies however from a low of 7 per cent in South-Central Asia and Western Asia to a high of 14 per cent in East Asia.

Time-use: Women spend much more time doing housework, community and/or volunteer work than men do. For example, in Cambodia, women spend on average three hours per day on such chores, compared to less than one hour for men. Corresponding figures for women are six hours in Iraq and four hours in Japan, as opposed to one hour for men in both countries.

Health

Cause of death: In Western Pacific, cardiovascular diseases are the leading cause of death, while cancer ranks second for both sexes. The likelihood of dying from respiratory diseases is also higher in Western Pacific than it is in any other region of the world.

HIV/AIDS: Two thirds of the total number of persons living with HIV/AIDS in the world are found in sub-Saharan Africa, followed by South and South-East Asia where over 4 million

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Photographer: Joy Zhu

people were estimated to be infected with the virus in 2007. In Asia, there was no one primary mode of transmission, as injecting drug use and unprotected sex, including sex work and heterosexual sex, were all important vectors of transmission.

Prenatal care: Since the mid-1990s, the proportion of women receiving prenatal care has been increasing in many regions of the world. The improvement was particularly notable in South Asia, where the proportion rose by 19 percentage points from 49 in 1996 to 68 percent in 2000-2008. By contrast, the percentage of women who had received prenatal care at least once during their pregnancy remained at 77 per cent over the same period in South-East Asia.

Induced abortion: An overwhelming majority of induced abortions were performed in developing countries, where access to safe abortion tends to be limited. Some 26 million abortions were recorded in 2003 in Asia alone. In countries such as India, although abortion is available on broad grounds, access to services provided by qualified personnel remains uneven.

Child mortality: Although declining, child mortality is still relatively high in Asia at about 65 deaths per 1,000 live births for girl child and 56 for male child in 2005-2010. Female child mortality was found to be especially high in some parts of Asia, including Afghanistan, China, India and Pakistan.

Education

Illiteracy: East Asia experienced one of the sharpest decreases in the number of women and men illiterate. The number declined from 186 million in 1990 to 72 million in 2007, registering a drop of over 60 per cent. During the same period, in South-Central Asia and West Asia, the number of illiterate men decreased also noticeably, however that of women actually increased.

Population with no schooling: The proportion of population without any schooling is high in South Asia, at 49 per cent for women and 36 per cent for men. By contrast,

the proportion is less than 2 per cent for both sexes in Central Asia and Oceania.

Enrolment in primary education: Net enrolment in primary education – the proportion of boys and girls, relative to their respective age groups, that enter the education system – has increased across the world. The proportions of children enrolled in primary school exceed 90 per cent for girls in East and South-East Asia, and for boys in East, South-East Asia and Western Asia.

Tertiary education: Globally, men's dominance in the share of tertiary education has ceased. However, available statistics show that this is not necessarily the case in Asia and the Pacific. In 2007, the share of women in tertiary education accounted for 48 per cent in East Asia and the Pacific, and 41 per cent in South and West Asia.

Work

Labour force participation: In spite of a slight increase in women's participation observed in South Asia over the last two decades, only 36 per cent of women aged 15 and over are in the labour force in 2010 across the region. By contrast, East Asia, experienced a decline in women's labour force participation over the last two decades, even though this subregion exhibits one of the highest female labour force participation rates (69 per cent) among all regions of the world.

Employment by sector: The services sector is the predominant source of employment for women in East Asia, where it accounts for 76 per cent of all female employment. It is also an important sector for women in South-East Asia, accounting for 54 per cent of female employment. However, this is not the case in South Asia where women are predominantly engaged in the agricultural sector (55 per cent), while services comprise only about 28 per cent of female employment. Industry does not represent an important sector for women's employment in any of these regions. For men, the services sector accounted for 62 per cent of employment in East Asia but for only 43 per cent in both South and South-East Asia.



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Informal sector employment: Many women and men in developing countries are employed in the informal sector. Although employed, many of them are not covered by national labour legislation, benefiting neither from social protection nor from other employment benefits. In India, among both women and men employed in the non-agricultural sector, more than 80 per cent hold informal jobs.

Earnings gap: The earnings gap between women and men tends to be wider in Asian countries compared with Latin American and developed countries. In four out of the six countries in Asia-Pacific that have data available, women's average wage in the manufacturing sector is less than 70 per cent that of men's. The Republic of Korea has one of the largest gender wage gaps in the world: women's wage in that sector averages only 57 per cent that of men's.

Maternity leave: Maternity leave provisions exist in most Asian countries but most of them legislate less than the standard minimum of 14 weeks stipulated in the Maternity Protection Convention adopted by the International Labour Conference in 2000. Paternity leave is now also available in a few Asian countries, such as Indonesia (two days) and the Philippines (seven days).

Power and decision-making

Women in parliaments: The average proportion of women in the lower or single houses of parliament more than doubled in 14 years in Central Asia, South-East Asia and South Asia. The average proportions of women in parliament in the four subregions of Asia now range from 14 per cent in East Asia to 20 per cent in South-East Asia. Small countries in the Pacific subregion (excluding Australia and New Zealand) have by far the lowest representation of women in parliament – just 3 per cent on average.

Gender quota: The implementation of gender quotas has resulted in a higher proportion of women in the national parliaments of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Nepal and

Pakistan. In those countries, women represented on average 22 per cent of parliamentarians in the lower or single house in 2009, compared with an average of only 7 per cent in the other four countries of South Asia that did not use gender quotas.

Women ministers: Asia and the small countries of the Pacific trail the rest of the world in the share of women ministers. On average, less than 10 per cent of ministers in the Governments in all subregions of Asia and the Pacific (excluding Australia and New Zealand) are women. Together with Northern Africa, these subregions have the lowest proportions of women among ministers worldwide. In Asia-Pacific, the only countries that count 20 per cent or more women among its ministers are Mongolia, Nepal and Timor-Leste.

Violence against women

Violence against women: Violence against women is a universal phenomenon. Yet, the proportion of women having experienced physical violence by any perpetrator during their lifetime varies from one country to another. Among countries in Asia, the proportion was 12 per cent in Hong Kong, SAR of China; 13 per cent in Azerbaijan; 15 per cent in the Philippines; 21 per cent in India and 23 per cent in Cambodia.

Physical violence: The proportion of women that have experienced physical violence by their intimate partners, at least once in their lifetime, was 6 per cent in Hong Kong, SAR of China and 10 per cent in the Philippines. Figures exceed 40 per cent in Bangladesh, Samoa, the Solomon Islands and Turkey.

Wife-beating: Wife-beating is a clear expression of male dominance. Yet, women are often expected to endure being beaten based on ingrained social conditioning about the status of women. For example, 9 per cent of women in the Philippines consider it justifiable being hit or beaten by her husband for going out of the house without telling him. In

Armenia, the corresponding percentage is 10 per cent, while it is 18 per cent in Indonesia and 40 per cent in Turkmenistan.

Environment

Collection of water: When water is not available on the household premises, the burden of collecting water falls mostly on women. In rural parts of Asia, women are held responsible for collecting water in 30 per cent of households, against 13 per cent for men. In rural India, for example, women were the usual collectors of water in 48 per cent of households and men in only 6 per cent.

Cooking fuels: A large proportion of households in South and South-East Asia still rely heavily on solid fuels for cooking, exposing household members to increased health risks. This is the case in more than 80 per cent of households in Bangladesh, Cambodia and the Lao People's Democratic Republic. In such situations, women are more exposed than men to the resulting high-intensity pollution emissions and consequently to respiratory problems and diseases, because they spend more time cooking.

Natural disasters: Women and girls appear to be more vulnerable to natural disasters as a result of having less access to information and life skills development and being generally more constrained than men in terms of mobility outside their homes. For example, many more women succumbed to the December 2004 tsunami in several locations. In Indonesia, in four villages in the north Aceh district, female deaths accounted for 77 per cent of all deaths. In the areas affected by the tsunami in Sri Lanka, out of the more than 13,000 dead and missing persons, 65 per cent were women.

Poverty

Inheritance and property rights: In about half the countries in Asia, women are disadvantaged by statutory and customary laws with respect to inheritance and property rights. Elements of gender inequality with regard to inheritance rights were identified in 25 of the 42 Asian countries. With regard to entitlements to ownership of land, gender inequality was identified in 21 countries. For example, in urban Viet Nam, 21 per cent of the house and residential titles are in the name of women, 61 per cent in the name of men and 18 per cent are joint titles. In rural areas, 8 per cent of farm and forest land titles are in the name of women, compared with 87 per cent in the name of men and 5 per cent being joint titles.

Cash spending: A significant proportion of women in South Asian countries have no say with regard to ways in which their own cash earnings are being spent. The proportion of married women aged 15–49 not involved in such decisions related to their own earnings is higher in India (18 per cent), Nepal (14 per cent) and Bangladesh (13 per cent) compared with countries in Central and South-East Asia, where the corresponding proportions range from 3 to 7 per cent.

Decision-making: The percentage of married women participating in intrahousehold decision-making is low in Asia, although not as low as it is in Africa. Within Asia, women from countries in South-East Asia – Cambodia, Indonesia and the Philippines – have more decision-making power with regard to household purchases than do women from countries in South Asia – including Bangladesh, India and Nepal. For example, the proportion of women usually making decisions by themselves or with their husbands on major household purchases is over 75 per cent in the three South-East Asian countries mentioned but only slightly over 50 per cent in the three South Asian countries.

Economic and Social
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