

Can gender statistics fill large gaps in the monitoring and accountability of the Sustainable Development Goals?

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Equality between women and men as beneficiaries of development, women's empowerment and the elimination of discrimination against them are fundamental values enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

Achieving gender equality requires the availability of robust evidence to shed light on differences and inequalities between the situations of women and men in all areas of life.

Gender statistics are those that: (a) explicitly call for disaggregation by sex and other relevant characteristics; and (b) although not disaggregated by sex, reflect the specific needs and opportunities of women and girls and the contributions they make to society.

Gender data provide the building blocks from which various gender statistics are created. Producing and disseminating gender statistics creates evidence-based 'gender knowledge' that helps policymakers develop evidence-based policy and measure policy effectiveness, to achieve progress towards gender equality.

A significant part of gender statistics is provided by national statistical agencies, government ministries and other sources. These institutions are mindful of their data collection, verification and harmonisation methods and have developed best practices to minimise the likelihood of gender biases in economic and social activities.

One of the requirements of the global indicator framework (GIF) for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is disaggregating SDG indicators by sex—where applicable—in accordance with the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics (United Nations Statistics Division 2014).

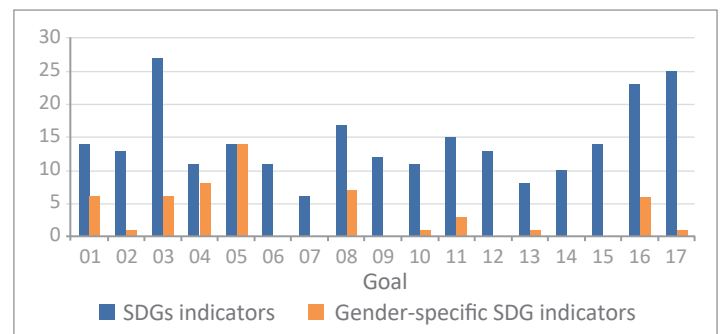
Disaggregating SDG indicators by sex covers many cross-cutting areas such as health, education, work, decision-making and access to resources and opportunities. Fifty-four of the 232 SDG indicators are gender-specific.

Unlike SDG 5 ("Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls"), whose 14 indicators are all gender-specific, the number of gender-related indicators in the remaining 16 SDGs ranges from 0 to 8. In fact, six SDGs—6, 7, 9, 12, 14 and 15—have no gender-specific indicators.

The Inter-Agency Expert Group on Gender Statistics (IAEG-GS) has gone to great lengths in providing technical support to strengthen national statistical systems that measure, monitor and report on the gender-specific SDG indicators. Nevertheless, according to the 2019 refinement of the GIF for the SDGs, only 10 gender-specific indicators (less than 20 per cent of all gender-specific indicators regarding the SDGs) are classified as Tier I, 24 are Tier II, 17 are Tier III, and 3 indicators (namely, 4.1.1, 4.5.1 and 5.5.1) are multi-tier. Therefore, more than 80 per cent of the gender-specific SDG indicators have either: (a) a conceptually clear, well-established methodology and available standards, but data are not regularly produced by countries; or (b) no conceptually clear, well-established methodology or available standards, and data are not regularly produced by countries.

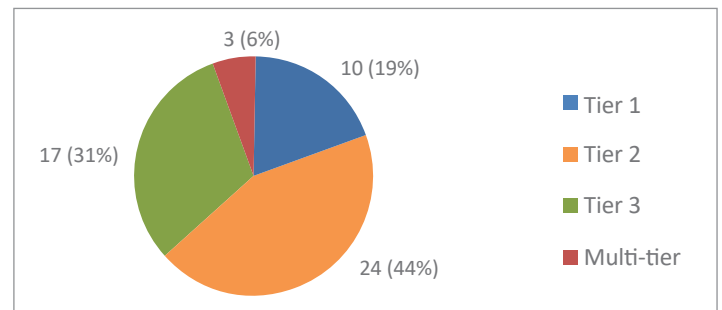
Developing, testing and establishing a solid methodology and standards for gender-specific SDG indicators will help fill significant gaps and contribute substantially to the improvement of the status of the GIF for the SDGs.

Figure 1
SDGs and gender-specific indicators



Source: United Nations (2019) and UN Women (2019).

Figure 2
Gender-specific SDG indicators, by tier



Source: UN Women (2019).

This calls for a dual-track approach. First, at the international level, prioritising the development, testing and establishment of a methodology/standards for gender-specific indicators. Second, at the national level, accelerating the production and dissemination of gender statistics. Fortunately, several countries have launched new, forward-looking national statistics strategies aligned with the 2030 Agenda, and national statistical offices are making significant efforts to identify gender data and statistics in their national contexts.

Sharing experiences is crucial to the success of ongoing efforts in gender statistics worldwide.

References:

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