



BRIEFING PAPER

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Women around the world: International Women's Day 2017

By Vyara Apostolova

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Contributing Authors:

Carl Baker, historic analysis

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Summary of key statistics:

This briefing gives an introduction to International Women's Day (IWD), celebrated on the 8th of March. It examines a variety of indicators for women's equality both in the UK and internationally.

This year the global theme is **Be Bold for Change**, encouraging urgent action to accelerate gender parity. The UN's IWD theme for 2017 is "[Women in the Changing World of Work: Planet 50:50 by 2030](#)" is focused on the economic empowerment of women in the globalised world. In 2015, the UN introduced the Sustainable Development Goals with a big emphasis on gender equality and social justice. Around the world, organisations, governments and women's groups come together to mark the past, present and future economic, political and social achievements of women. Hundreds of events are held worldwide throughout March, with some under themes that reflect local gender issues.

Gender gap index:

Based on the World Economic Forum Gender Gap Index, Iceland had the least disparity between men and women in 2016. The lowest ranked country on the Gender gap index was Yemen, at 144th. The UK was ranked 20th overall (a decrease from 18th last year).¹ (See Table 1, p. 6)

Out-of-school rate:

Out-of-school rate measures the proportion of children in school-age who are not enrolled in formal education. Girls are more likely than boys to be excluded from both primary and secondary education. 16% and 22% of girls of school-age worldwide are not formally enrolled in primary and secondary education, respectively (see Chart 1, p. 8).

Women in employment

UN estimates for 2015 show that the lowest percentage of women in non-agricultural wage employment is in Northern Africa (19%) followed by Southern Asia (21%) and Western Asia (21%).² In the UK 64% of women with young children are employed, compared to 62% in EU.³ (See Chart 2 p. 9 and Table 2, p. 10)

Women in Parliament and Government

The global average of women in parliament doubled between 1995 and 2015, from 11.3% in 1995 to 22.7% in 2015.⁴ Following the 2015 General Election there are 191 (29%) female MPs in the UK House of Commons. 35% of UK Cabinet Ministers are female (8 of 23) and 26% of Members of the House of Lords are women (207)⁵. (Table 3, p11)

Maternal mortality

The global average of maternal deaths per 100,000 live births was 169 in 2015, compared to 338 in 1990. It is highest in sub-Saharan Africa (where there were 546 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births)⁶. (See Table 4, p. 12)

¹ World Economic Forum, [Rankings](#)

² Ibid.

³ Eurostat - [Key European Statistics data](#), 2015

⁴ IPU, [Online Database, 2017](#) (Situation as of 1 January 2017), [Women in Parliament: 20 years in review](#), 2015

⁵ House of Commons Library Briefing Papers CBP7186 - [General Election 2015](#) and SN01250 [Women in parliament and government](#)

⁶ The World Bank Data, [World Development indicators](#), 2015

Life expectancy:

In 2015, Japan had the highest life expectancy for women, at 86.8 years, followed by Singapore (86.1 years) and South Korea (85.5 years). The lowest female life expectancy was recorded in Sierra Leone (50.8 years). The average life expectancy for women in UK is 83 years.⁷ (See Table 5, p. 12)

Gender ratio:

In 2015 United Arab Emirates and Qatar, largely due to work related male immigration, had the lowest gender ratio, with 36 and 37 women per 100 men, respectively. Latvia has the largest proportion of women for every 100 men (118), followed by Lithuania and Curacao (Both 117). There are 104 women for every 100 of men in the UK.⁸ (See Table 6, p. 13)

Fertility:

The highest fertility rate is in Niger, with average of 7.7 children born per women. On average in the UK there are 1.9 children per woman who lives through her entire child-bearing years⁹. (See Table 7, p.13)

Violence against women:

More than one-third of women (35%) in the world have experienced either physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner or non-partner sexual violence.¹⁰

Women in the UK:

In 2016, median hourly earnings (excluding overtime) for full-time female employees were £12.82 compared to £14.16 for male.¹¹ 26.8 % of FTSE 100 company directors in October 2016 were women (up from 13% in 2011); for FTSE 250 companies 21.3% of directors were women (up from 8% in 2011).¹² (See tables 8, 9 and Chart 4, pp. 16 -19)

For further information on these topics, see the following House of Commons Library publications:

Briefing Paper 1250	Women in Parliament and Government
Briefing Paper 7068	The gender pay gap
Briefing Paper 6838	Women and the economy
Briefing Paper: 5107	Women in Public life, the Professions and the Boardroom

⁷ UN's, [Human development Report](#), 2015

⁸ World Bank, [Population, female](#), 2015

⁹ World Bank, [World Development indicators](#), 2015

¹⁰ UN, [The World's Women 2015](#), Violence against women (Chapter 6), 2015

¹¹ ONS, [Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings 2015](#), 1997-2015 selected estimates table 2 & 3

¹² Boardwatch, [Tracking appointments of women directors to FTSE 100 and FTSE 250 companies](#), 2016

1. Background

1.1 Women's Day: history and background

International Women's Day (IWD), held on 8 March, marks a celebration of the economic, social, cultural and political achievements for women. The first IWD was held in central Europe in 1911. More than one million women and men attended IWD rallies campaigning for women's rights to work, vote, be trained, to hold public office and end discrimination.

Since 1911, IWD has increased in status. IWD is now an official holiday in 27 countries and organisations and governments around the world hold events in March to inspire women and celebrate achievements. The United States designates the whole month of March as 'Women's History Month'.

Although there have been large changes and attitudinal shifts in society about women's equality and emancipation, significant issues remain. Women's pay is often lower than that of their male counterparts, and women are not present in equal numbers in business or politics. There are still significant inequalities in education, health and violence.

In the UK, a range of events and exhibitions are being held for International Women's Day – a list is available on the [International Women's Day website](#). Since 2008, Parliament has held several debates to recognise IWD. Details about both the House of Commons and House of Lords debates are available on the Parliament and Commons Backbench Business Committee news pages.¹³

1.2 IWD 2017 themes

The global theme for IWD 2017 is **Be Bold for Change**, encouraging ground-breaking actions to drive the greatest change for women. Many groups select their own theme based on their local context and focus. The theme for [Manchester International Women's Day 2017](#), for example, is Our Manchester Woman¹⁴

The UN's theme for IWD 2017 is "[Women in the Changing World of Work: Planet 50-50 by 2030](#)". It addresses women's economic empowerment in the context of globalisation and the ongoing technological revolution. The key challenges, identified to women are the pay gap, unpaid care work and domestic work and the low female representation in leadership positions.



International
Women's Day

¹³ Backbench Business Committee, [MPs debate International Women's Day](#) February 2016; Parliament.uk, [Lords debates women's economic empowerment](#), 7 March 2014

¹⁴ Manchester City Council, [International Women's Day: our theme for 2016](#).

2. Women around the world: measures of equality

The World Economic Forum produces an annual Gender Gap Index, as summarised in Table 1¹⁵. This ranks countries by the extent to which women and men have equal opportunity, with a higher ranking denoting more equality. The index takes into account a broad range of indicators under four headings: economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment. The index scores in each area are reached by dividing female participation and/or achievement in each area by male participation and/or achievement, giving a score which represents female opportunity as a proportion of male opportunity.¹⁶

In 2016 the highest-ranked country was Iceland, retaining its position for eight years in a row. The lowest ranked country was Yemen. The UK was ranked 20th overall, a decrease from 18th last year, although it's absolute equality score has stayed about the same over last five years.

Rankings differed across the four specific areas. Burundi scored first for economic participation and opportunity, whereas Iceland came first for political empowerment. First places for educational achievement and health and survival were shared by several countries.

The UK's highest specific rankings were 24th for political empowerment and opportunity and 34th for educational attainment.

Among developing countries, the most equal overall were Rwanda (ranked 5) and Nicaragua (ranked 8).

The gender gap is narrowest in terms of educational attainment, followed by the health and survival gap. The gap for political empowerment remains widest, although this area has seen the most improvement since 2006.

2.1 Development Goals

The Charter of the United Nations, signed in San Francisco in 1945, was the first international agreement to proclaim gender equality as a fundamental human right. Since then, the United Nations has helped create a historic legacy of internationally agreed strategies, standards, programmes and goals to advance the status of women worldwide.

Millennium Development Goals

In September 2000, world leaders adopted the United Nations Millennium Declaration, committing their nations to a new global partnership to reduce extreme poverty and setting out a series of Millennium Development Goals, with a deadline of 2015.

Table 1: WEF Gender Gap Index 2016

Rank		Score
1	 Iceland	0.874
2	 Finland	0.845
3	 Norway	0.842
4	 Sweden	0.815
5	 Rwanda	0.800
6	 Ireland	0.797
7	 Philippines	0.786
8	 Slovenia	0.786
9	 New Zealand	0.781
8	 Nicaragua	0.780
20	 UK	0.752
135	 Lebanon	0.598
136	 Cote d'Ivoire	0.597
137	 Morocco	0.597
138	 Mali	0.591
139	 Iran	0.587
140	 Chad	0.587
141	 Saudi Arabia	0.583
142	 Syria	0.567
143	 Pakistan	0.556
144	 Yemen	0.516

[Source: World Economic Forum, Rankings](#)

¹⁵ World Economic Forum, [Rankings](#)

¹⁶ Alternative indices are available. The UN Development Program Gender Inequality Index ranks Norway, Australia and Switzerland among its top nations for gender equality, and DR Congo and Niger as the worst.

Millennium Development Goal 3 was to **promote gender equality and empower women**. There were three indicators of this:

- Ratios of girls to boys in primary, secondary and tertiary education
- Share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector
- Proportion of seats held by women in national parliament

Millennium Development Goal 5 was focused on **improving maternal health**. This includes an indicator for maternal mortality.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Sustainable Development Goals

In September 2015, world leaders have decided on new global Sustainable Development Goals. The new development agenda consists of 17 Sustainable Development Goals and 169 targets¹⁷.

Goal five aims to **achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls**. It includes six specific targets:¹⁸

- 1) End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere
- 2) Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation
- 3) Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation
- 4) Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate
- 5) Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life
- 6) Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences

¹⁷ UN (2015) '[Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#)' Sustainable development knowledge platform, September 2015

¹⁸ UN (2015) '[Sustainable Development Goals](#)' Sustainable development knowledge platform, September 2015

Out-of-school rate

By adopting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), countries have agreed to “ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education by 2030”. Eliminating gender disparity in education is also one of the targets set by the UN.¹⁹

Out-of-school rate measures the proportion of children in school-age who are not enrolled in formal education.

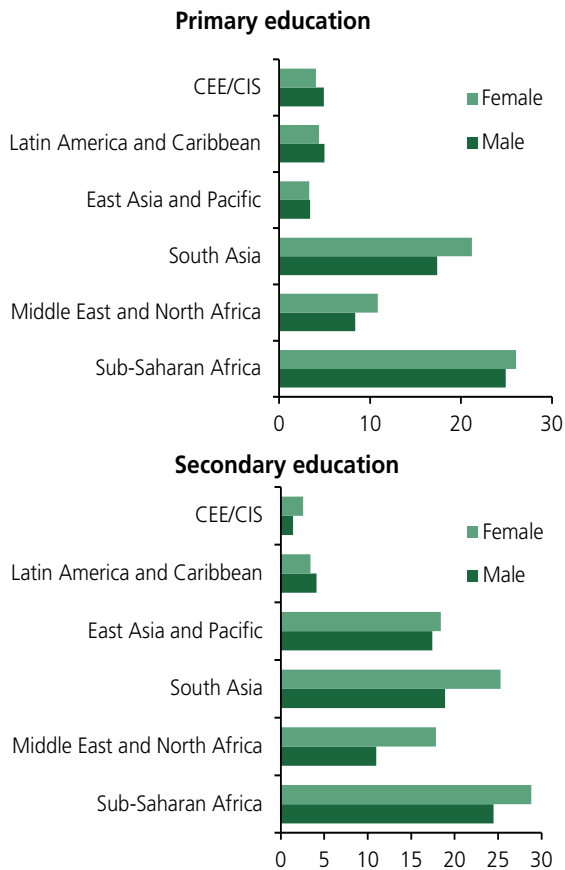
Globally about 263 million children and young people were out-of-school in 2014, including primary and secondary schools. The out-of-school rate has declined from 18% to 10% for primary schools and from 28% to 16% for lower secondary schools, with little difference between male and female. However, the global average masks gender inequalities at a regional level.

Chart 1 shows the out-of-school rate for children of primary (6–11) and lower secondary schools (12-14) age by world regions. In Sub-Saharan Africa 26% of girls were not enrolled in primary education. The biggest gender gap in school attendance was observed in South Asia where boys were 4% more likely to be enrolled in formal education than girls, followed by the Middle East and North Africa.²⁰

The out-of-school rate for children of lower secondary school age was higher among all regions, apart from Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CEE/CIS). Moreover, gender disparities in school attendance were larger in secondary education, especially in the Middle East and North Africa, where the out-of-school rate for girls was 18% compared with 11% for boys. In Sub-Saharan Africa 29% of girls were not enrolled in secondary schools compared with 25% of boys.

The UN reports that poverty is a major cause of unequal access to education, particularly among girls of secondary-school age. The requirement to spend many hours fetching water and a lack of acceptable sanitation facilities in schools are two important factors. Other obstacles include child marriage, violence against girls, and inadequate support for disability.²¹

Chart 1: Out-of-school rate for children of primary and secondary school age by world region, 2009-2015



Note: CEE/CIS = Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent states

Source: UNICEF, [Data on Primary education](#) and [Data on Secondary education](#)

¹⁹ UNICEF, [Leaving no one behind: How far on the way to universal and primary and secondary education?](#), July 2016

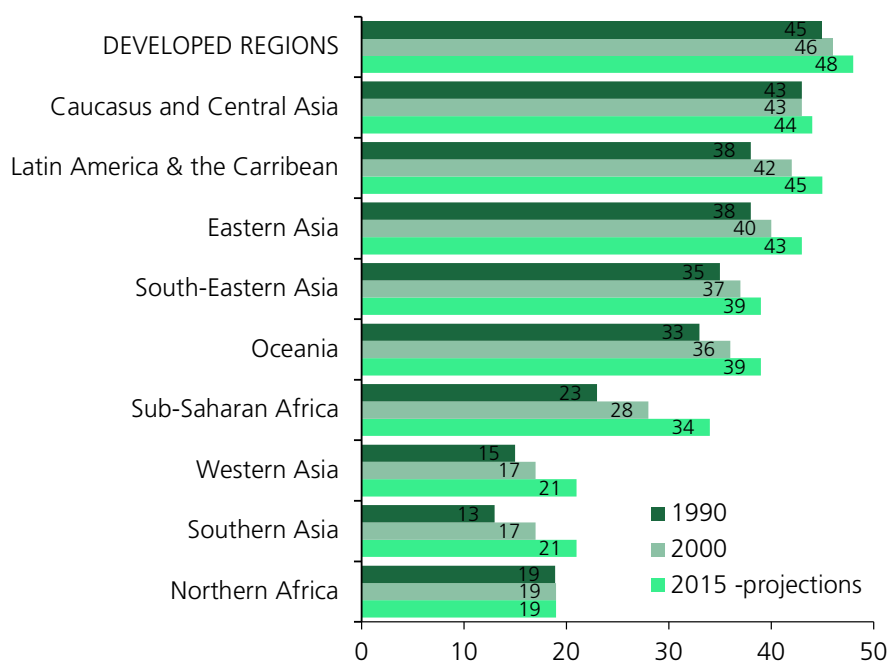
²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ UN, [Goal 3 Fact Sheet 2015](#)

Women in wage employment

Chart 3 shows the proportion of female employees outside the agricultural sectors. Based on UN estimates for 2015, the lowest percentage of women in non-agricultural wage employment is in Northern Africa (19%), followed by Southern Asia (21%) and Western Asia (21%). In developed regions the non-agricultural workforce is more evenly spread, with women making up 48% of employees.

Chart 2: Employees in non-agricultural wage employment who are women, 1990, 2000 and 2015 projections (%)



Note: 2015 figures are projections

Source: [UN Millennium Development Goals Report 2015](#), 2015

Over the last 25 years, women's employment in non-agricultural sectors has been increasing slowly. The largest increase of 11% was recorded in Sub-Saharan Africa, in contrast to Northern Africa where the share of female employees in non-agricultural sector remained at 19%. Women's share increased globally from 35% in 1990 to 41% in 2015, with increases observed in most world regions.²²

²² UN, [The Millennium Development Goals Report 2015](#), 2015

Employment of women with children across European countries

Table 2 shows European variation in the employment rate of women with two children whose youngest child is less than six years old. In 2015 the UK's employment rate for this category was 65.8%, slightly higher than the EU average of 63.5%. Among EU countries the highest rates were in Denmark (82.3%) and Sweden (81.8%) and the lowest were in Hungary (41.4%) and Slovakia (43.2%). The employment rate of men in the same category was higher among all European countries, with an EU average of 89.1%. Note that not all countries hold data for this category.

Compared to 2013, the employment rate of women with two children in the UK increased by 4.3%. The highest increase was recorded in Croatia (16.8%), followed by Slovakia (16.2%) and Spain (10.0%).

Table 2: Employment rate of women with two children (%), where youngest child is less than six years old

Rank	Country (area)	2015	Change 2013-15	Rank	Country (area)	2015	Change 2013-15
	EU	63.5	+4.4%	16	Germany	63.5	+3.1%
1	Denmark	82.3	-0.4%	17	Ireland	63.3	+3.9%
2	Sweden	81.8	+1.2%	18	Poland	63.3	+7.4%
3	Netherlands	79.1	+2.3%	19	Spain	60.2	+10.0%
4	Portugal	77.8	+7.5%	20	Romania	57.9	-0.5%
5	Slovenia	77.2	-0.6%	21	Estonia	57.4	+5.7%
6	Luxembourg	76.2	+1.6%	22	Bulgaria	55.4	+2.7%
7	Lithuania	75.7	-0.5%	23	Malta	54.7	-0.4%
8	Cyprus	74.2	+1.8%	24	Italy	52.9	+3.2%
9	Belgium	73.2	-0.4%	25	Greece	52.1	+7.9%
10	Austria	70.1	+3.3%	26	Czech Republic	46.3	+3.0%
11	France	69.6	+3.3%	27	Slovakia	43.2	+16.2%
12	Croatia	69.0	+16.8%	28	Hungary	41.4	+0.5%
13	Latvia	68.9	+7.0%	29	Macedonia	39.6	-7.8%
14	Finland	65.9	+1.5%	30	Turkey	26.6	+3.8%
15	United Kingdom	65.8	+4.3%				

Source: [Eurostat - Key European Statistics data](#), 2015

Women in Parliament

Despite growing numbers of female parliamentarians, the target of equal participation of women and men in politics remains distant. Data from Inter-Parliamentary Union's report highlights that the average share of women in parliaments increased from 11.3% in 1995 to 22.7% in 2015.²³ In the same period, women gained ground in parliaments of nearly 90% of countries for which data is available. As of January 2017, women comprised on average 23.3% of MPs, an increase of 0.7% from 2016. Furthermore, the Inter-Parliamentary Union reports high variation between world regions. Female representation in parliaments in Nordic countries is 41.7%, whereas less

²³ IPU, [Online Database, 2015](#) (Situation as of 1 December 2015), [Women in Parliament: 20 years in review](#), 2015

than a quarter of parliamentarians in Sub-Saharan Africa (23.8%), Asia (19.6%), Arab States (18.9%) and the Pacific (15%) are female.






















Table 3 (below) shows countries with the highest and lowest proportion of women in the lower or single house of their legislature.

The UK is ranked 47th with women accounting for 30% of all MPs sitting in Parliament. Rwanda and Bolivia are the only countries where women hold the majority of seats in the lower or single house of legislature.²⁴

In the period between 1995 and 2015, the number of single or lower houses of parliament where women occupy more than 40% has increased from 1 to 13, while those with more than 30% increased from 5 to 42²⁵. In January 2017 four countries did not have any women in their lower house or single chamber.

Table 3: Women in National Parliaments

(Data as of 1 January 2017)

Rank	Country	ELECTIONS*	Lower or single House		
			SEATS	WOMEN	% WOMEN
Highest					
1	Rwanda 	Sep-13	80	49	61.3%
2	Bolivia 	Oct-14	130	69	53.1%
3	Cuba 	Feb-13	612	299	48.9%
4	Iceland 	Oct-16	63	30	47.6%
5	Nicaragua 	Nov-16	92	42	45.7%
6	Sweden 	Sep-14	349	152	43.6%
7	Senegal 	Jul-12	150	64	42.7%
8	Mexico 	Jun-16	500	213	42.6%
9	Finland 	Apr-15	200	84	42.0%
9	South Africa 	May-14	398	167	42.0%
47	United Kingdom 	May-15	650	195	30.0%
Lowest					
180	Nigeria 	Mar-12	360	20	5.6%
181	Thailand 	Aug-14	247	12	4.9%
182	Tonga 	Nov-14	26	1	3.8%
183	Belize 	Mar-12	32	1	3.1%
183	Kuwait 	Nov-16	65	2	3.1%
183	Lebanon 	Jun-09	128	4	3.1%
186	Papua New Guinea 	Jun-12	111	3	2.7%
187	Haiti 	Aug-15	117	3	2.6%
188	Solomon Islands 	Nov-14	50	1	2.0%
189	Oman 	Oct-15	85	1	1.2%
190	¹				

Notes: ¹ No women in the parliaments of the following countries: Micronesia, Qatar, Vanuatu and Yemen.

Source: IPU, [IPU online database](#), January 2017

²⁴ IPU, [IPU online database](#), 2017

²⁵ IPU, [Women in Parliament: 20 years in review](#), 2015; UN, [The Millennium Development Goals Report 2015](#), 2015

Maternal mortality

Maternal mortality has declined significantly over the last two decades. Since 1990 the global average has decreased by 44% to an estimate of 216 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2015. This falls short of MDG’s target of reducing maternal mortality by 75% by 2015.²⁶ Still, the maternal mortality rate was 546 deaths per 100,000 live birth in Sub-Saharan Africa.²⁷ The new target in SDG is to reduce the maternal mortality rate to less than 70 deaths per 100,000 live births.

In 2015, around 75.4% of births globally were attended by skilled health personnel, up from 62% in 2000. However, the proportion was lower for some of the developing regions, with 51% and 63% in Sub-Saharan Africa and Southern Asia, respectively. ²⁸ Table 4 shows the countries with the highest and lowest maternal mortality across the world.²⁹ Sierra Leone had the highest maternal mortality of 1,360 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2015, followed by Central Africa Republic (882).

Table 4: Maternal mortality

(Number of women deaths during childbirth per 100 000 live births, 2015)

Highest	Average 2000-2015	2015	Lowest	Average 2000-2015	2015
Sierra Leone	1,874	1,360	Austria	4	4
Central African Rep.	1,006	882	Belarus	11	4
Chad	1,103	856	Czech Republic	5	4
Nigeria	926	814	Italy	4	4
South Sudan	1,007	789	Kuwait	5	4
Somalia	890	732	Sweden	5	4
Liberia	952	725	Finland	4	3
Burundi	834	712	Greece	3	3
Gambia	788	706	Iceland	4	3
Dem. Rep. Congo	789	693	Poland	5	3
UNITED KINGDOM	11	9			

Source: The World Bank Data, [World Development Indicators, 2015](#)

2.2 Population and fertility

Tables 5-7 show a number of statistics on population and fertility: the countries with the highest and lowest life expectancy among women; the ratio of men to women; and the total fertility rate.³⁰

Life expectancy

In 2015, Japan had the highest life expectancy for women, at 86.8 years, followed by Singapore (86.1) and South Korea (85.5).

The shortest female life expectancy was in Sierra Leone (50.8), followed by Angola (54) and the Central African Republic (54.1).

Table 5 shows the gap between life expectancy at birth for females and males by country. In general, women live longer than men – with Russia

Table 5: Life expectancy at birth and gender gap

(Life expectancy at birth and gender gap, 2015)

Highest	Female	Male	Gap (years)
Russian Federation	76.3	64.7	11.6
Belarus	78.0	66.5	11.5
Lithuania	79.1	68.1	11.0
Rwanda	71.1	60.9	10.2
Syrian Arab Republic	69.9	59.9	10.0
Ukraine	76.1	66.3	9.8
Latvia	79.2	69.6	9.6
Viet Nam	80.7	71.3	9.4
Estonia	82.0	72.7	9.3
El Salvador	77.9	68.8	9.1
UNITED KINGDOM	83.0	79.4	3.6
Lowest			
Côte d'Ivoire	54.4	52.3	2.1
Iran	76.6	74.5	2.1
Pakistan	67.5	65.5	2.0
Niger	62.8	60.9	1.9
Bahrain	77.9	76.2	1.7
Guinea	59.8	58.2	1.6
Sierra Leone	50.8	49.3	1.5
Burkina Faso	60.5	59.1	1.4
Bhutan	70.1	69.5	0.6
Mali	58.3	58.2	0.1

Source: WHO, [Global Health Observatory data repository, Life expectancy at birth 2015](#)

²⁶ Leontine Alkema, et.al, [Global, regional and national levels and trends in maternal mortality between 1900 and 2015](#), November 2015

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ UN, Economic and Social Council, [Progress towards SDGs](#), July 2016

²⁹ The World Bank Data, [World Development indicators](#), 2015

³⁰ Life expectancy statistics are taken from the UN’s, [Human development Report](#). The fertility rate and gender ratio statistics are from the World Bank’s [World Development Indicators](#).






















recording the highest gap at 11.6 years. In 2015, there were no countries where men were expected to live longer than women.

Gender ratio

Table 6 shows gender ratios in terms of the number of women per 100 men. In 2015 United Arab Emirates and Qatar had the lowest ratio, with 36 and 37 women per 100 men respectively. This striking figure is largely due to the high number of male immigrants whose families do not accompany them – immigrants make up 94% of Qatar's workforce and 70% of its total population.³¹ Latvia has the largest proportion of women for every 100 men (118), followed by Lithuania and Curacao (Both 117). These figures are largely accounted for by a large gap between male and female life expectancy: in all three countries, the ratio of females to males at age 65 or above is more than 2:1.³²

Table 6: Gender ratio

(Number of women per 100 men, 2015)

Highest	Average 2000-2015	2015	Lowest	Average 2000-2015	2015
Latvia	 118	118	Samoa	 93	94
Lithuania	 116	117	Malaysia	 95	94
Curacao	 115	117	India	 93	93
Ukraine	 116	116	Bhutan	 88	86
Russian Federation	 115	115	Kuwait	 74	78
Belarus	 114	115	Saudi Arabia	 79	77
Estonia	 115	114	Bahrain	 65	61
Hong Kong SAR, China	 110	113	Oman	 71	52
El Salvador	 110	113	Qatar	 43	37
Armenia	 103	112	United Arab Emirates	 39	36
UNITED KINGDOM	 104	103			

Source: [World Bank Data, Population, female, 2015](#)

Fertility rate






















Global fertility rate declined from an average of 4.5 children per woman in 1970-75 to 2.5 children in 2010-15 and is projected to continue to decline. The global average, however, hides big regional difference, as the fertility rate in Africa was 4.7 children per woman, compared with Europe – 1.6 children per woman.³³

Table 7 shows countries ranked by fertility rate. The highest total fertility rate is in Niger, with women having an average of 7.6 children, followed by Somalia (6.5) and Mali (6.2). The top 10 countries with the highest fertility rates are all in Africa. According to current projections of fertility rate changes, half of the world's population growth between 2013 and 2050 will be in Sub-Saharan Africa.³⁴

The lowest rate is in South Korea, with 1.2 child per woman on average. The list of countries with the lowest birth rates is dominated by Eastern European and East Asian nations. Research from the East-West Centre suggests that the causes of low fertility in East Asia

Table 7: Fertility rate

(Children per woman, 2014)

Highest	Average 2000-2014	2014
Niger	 7.7	7.6
Somalia	 7.1	6.5
Mali	 6.7	6.2
Chad	 6.8	6.2
Angola	 6.6	6.1
DR Congo	 6.6	6.0
Burundi	 6.5	5.9
Uganda	 6.4	5.8
The Gambia	 5.8	5.7
Nigeria	 5.9	5.7
UNITED KINGDOM	 1.8	1.8
Lowest		
Greece	 1.3	1.3
Poland	 1.3	1.3
Spain	 1.3	1.3
Bosnia and Herzegovina	 1.3	1.3
Moldova	 1.3	1.3
Singapore	 1.3	1.3
Macao SAR, China	 1.0	1.2
Hong Kong SAR, China	 1.1	1.2
Portugal	 1.4	1.2
Korea, Rep.	 1.2	1.2

Source: The World Bank, [Fertility rate, total](#)

³¹The Guardian 'Qatar's migrants: how have they changed the country?', 26 September 2014

³² World Bank Data, [Population, female, 2015](#)

³³ UN, [World Fertility Patterns 2015](#),

³⁴ UN, [World Population Prospects The 2015 revision](#), 2015

include the rise in education, employment and prosperity, leading women to postpone or cancel plans to have children.³⁵

2.3 Violence against women

Gender-based violence is present in every society in the world. Violence against women and girls encompasses violence by an intimate partner, sexual violence and rape, female genital mutilation, honour killings and trafficking.

Globally, more than one-third of women (35%) have experienced either physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner or non-partner sexual violence.³⁶ The most common form of violence is intimate partner violence, as 30% of women who have been in a relationship have reported such incidents. Furthermore, intimate partners are responsible for 38% of women's murders.³⁷

The World Health Organisation highlights that as well as being a violation of women's human rights, violence against women is a major public health problem. Women who have experienced violence are more likely to have babies with low birth weights, are twice as likely to experience depression and, in some regions, are 1.5 times more likely to acquire HIV.³⁸

Although limited data is available on the issue, a report by the UN "The World's Women 2015 concludes that the prevalence of violence against women was highest in Africa with almost half of the countries reporting that 40% of women have experienced violence over their lifetime.³⁹ It also suggests that the prevalence of violence in the region has been decreasing over the recent years.

Another survey from the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights shows that 22% of women in the 28 EU member states experienced violence by an intimate partner since the age of 15 in 2014.⁴⁰

³⁵ Westley, Choe and Retherford, '[Very low fertility in Asia: Is there a problem? Can it be solved?](#)' *AsiaPacific Issues*, no.94. 2010.

³⁶ UN, [The World's Women 2015](#), Violence against women (Chapter 6), 2015

³⁷ Ibid

³⁸ WHO, LSHTM, SAMRC, [Global and regional estimates of violence against women: prevalence and health effects of intimate partner violence and non-partner sexual violence](#), 2013

³⁹ UN, [The World's Women 2015](#), Violence against women (Chapter 6), 2015

⁴⁰ European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, [Violence against women: an EU-wide survey](#), 2014

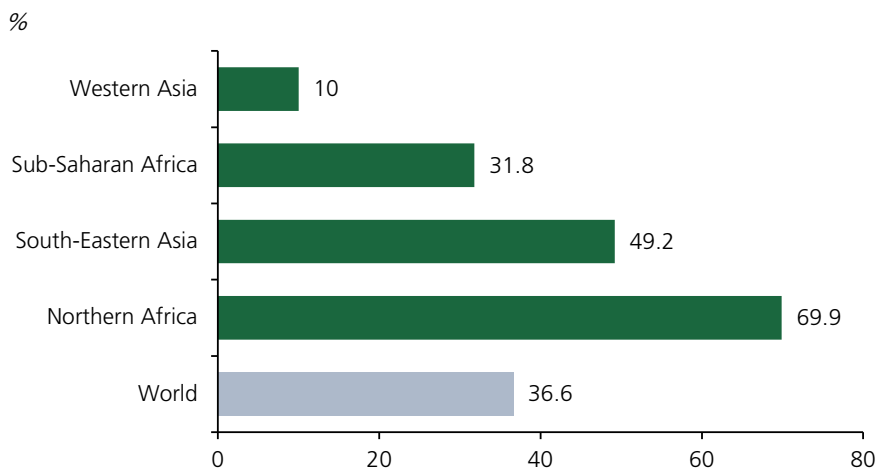
Female Genital Mutilation

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) refers to procedures that involve partial or total removal of the external female genitalia, or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons.⁴¹

It is estimated that more than 200 million girls and women alive today have undergone FGM in 30 countries in Africa and the Middle East, where the practice is concentrated.⁴² According to a UNICEF press release on female genital mutilation, girls aged 14 or younger comprise 44 million of all women who have undergone procedure. In Somalia, Guinea and Djibouti more than 90% of women and girls aged 15 to 49 have undergone some form of FGM.⁴³ FGM carries immediate and long-term health risks, including haemorrhage, infection, infertility and an increased risk of childbirth complications.⁴⁴

The proportion of girls aged 15 – 19 who have undergone Female genital mutilation in the countries where the practice is common has decreased from 46.5% in 2000 to 36.6% in 2015. However, there are big regional differences as the chart below shows:

Chart 3: Proportion of girls aged 15 – 19 who have undergone FGM by world region, 2015



Source: UNICEF, [Female genital mutilation and cutting](#)

Northern Africa was the region with the highest prevalence of FGM among girls aged 15 – 19 with nearly 70% rate, followed by South-Eastern Asia (49%). Please note that statistics on FGM only cover selected countries in each region where the practice is common.

⁴¹ World Health Organisation, [Female Genital Mutilation](#), February 2017

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ UNICEF, [New statistical report on female genital mutilation shows harmful practice is a global concern](#), 5 February 2016

⁴⁴ Ibid

3. Women in the UK: measures of equality

3.1 Pay

In 2016, median hourly earnings (excluding overtime) for full-time male employees were £14.16 compared with £12.82 for women. The pay gap is narrower than the previous year, but on average women working full-time earn 9.4% less than men, down from 10.1% in 2010. In contrast, women working part-time earn 6.0% more than men, down from 6.5% in 2015. In 2016, 11% of male employees worked part-time compared to 41% of female employees⁴⁵.

Table 8 and chart 6 compare full-time and part-time median hourly earnings between men and women between 2011 and 2016. The Library briefing paper on the [gender pay gap](#) in the UK also examines variation in the pay gap by age, region, occupation and industry sector.

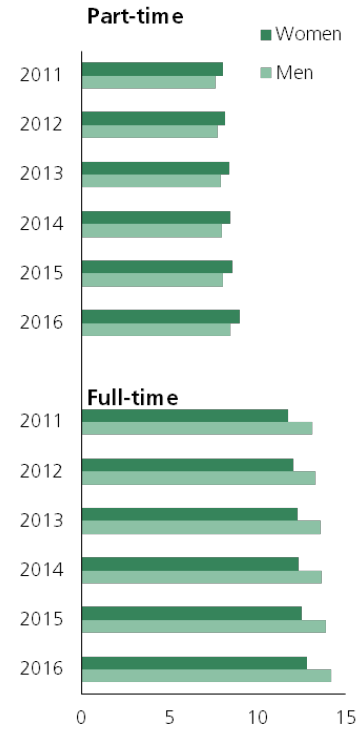
Table 8: Median hourly earnings by gender

	Men		Women		% pay difference (man compared to women)	
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time	Part-time
	2011	13.12	7.64	11.75	8.03	+10.4%
2012	13.27	7.72	12.01	8.14	+9.5%	-5.4%
2013	13.60	7.91	12.24	8.37	+10.0%	-5.8%
2014	13.61	8.00	12.30	8.44	+9.6%	-5.5%
2015	13.85	8.01	12.51	8.55	+9.7%	-6.7%
2016	14.16	8.48	12.82	8.99	+9.5%	-6.0%

Source: ONS, [Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings 2016](#), 1997-2016 selected estimates table 2 & 3

Note: Data for 2016 is provisional and data for 2015 was revised.

Chart 4: Median hourly earnings by gender, 2011-2016 (£)



3.2 Women in business and the boardroom

The most recent data from Boardwatch suggests that in October 2016 26.8% of FTSE 100 company directors and 21.3% of FTSE 250 company directors were women.⁴⁶ This is a slight increase compared to The Female FTSE Board Report 2016 which reported that women comprised 26% of FTSE 100 directors and 20.4% of FTSE 2050 directors in June 2016.⁴⁷

In October 2016 there were no all-male boards in FTSE 100 and only 5% of the FTSE 250 did not have any women on boards. In 2010 21% of FTSE 100 and 52% of FTSE 250 boards were all male. Considering the new Government target for women to make up 33% of FTSE 350 directors by 2020, 20% of FTSE companies managed to meet this target in October 2016.

⁴⁵ ONS, [Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings 2016](#), 1997-2015 selected estimates table 2 & 3

⁴⁶ Boardwatch, [Tracking appointments of women directors to FTSE 100 and FTSE 250 companies](#), October 2016

⁴⁷ Vinnicombe et al., [The Female FTSE Board Report 2016](#)

3.3 Women in elected bodies and public life

Parliaments

191 female MPs were elected at the 2015 General Election. This is 29% of the total, compared with 3% in 1951 and is the highest ever recorded number.

Until recently the number of male MPs in the current Parliament was higher than female MPs ever elected. Following two by-elections in Sleaford and North Hykeham and Copeland, the number of women ever elected to Parliament increased to 456, surpassing the number of male MPs currently elected to Parliament for the first time.

35% of Cabinet Ministers are female (8 of 23) and 26% of members of the House of Lords are women (207 of 805).

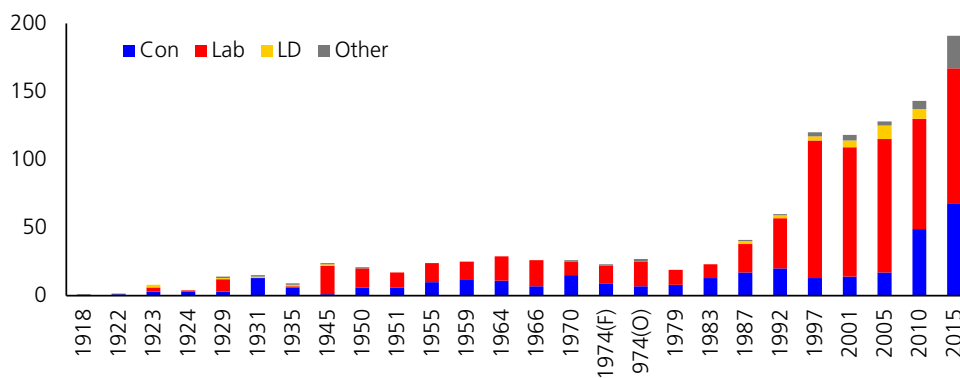
Furthermore, women comprise 35% of the Scottish Parliament, 42% of the National Assembly of Wales and 28% of the Northern Ireland Assembly.⁴⁸

Chart 7 shows the number of women elected at General Elections since 1918 by party. There was little change in the number of female MPs elected between 1918 and 1983, as they comprised under 5% at all General Elections. The proportion of women significantly increased in 1997, where 120 female MPs got elected, 101 of which were Labour. At the last General Election, the majority of female MPs elected were from the Labour party (51.8%), followed by the Conservative (35.6%).

The Library's briefing paper on [Women in Parliament and Government](#) set out key statistics on women's participation in Parliament and other elected bodies in the UK.

Table 9 provides information about women in the House Commons and other UK elected bodies as of May 2015.

Chart 5: Women MPs by party, 1918 – 2015



Source: Rallings and Thrasher, British Electoral Facts 1832-2006; House of Commons Library, CBP 7186 General Election 2015; House of Commons Library, SN01250 Women in Parliament and Government

⁴⁸ House of Commons Library Briefing Papers CBP7186 - [General Election 2015](#) and SN01250 [Women in parliament and government](#)

Public appointments

In 2015-16, women made up 45.2% of public appointments and reappointments. This is up from 42% last year, and is the highest figure since the data series began in 2010. However, the proportion of chair appointments made to women declined to 23%, compared with 36% for the previous year.⁴⁹

At 31 March 2016, women comprised 40% of the Senior Civil Service and 54% of civil servants as a whole, up from 33% in 1950.⁵⁰

The first female judge was appointed in England and Wales in 1945. The proportion of female judges increased from 14% in 2001 to 27.5% in April 2016.⁵¹

32% of local councillors in England were women in 2013, compared with 28% in 1997.⁵²

The Library’s briefing on [Women in Public life, the Professions and the Boardroom](#) examines how the proportion of women in public appointments, judiciary, the NHS, education and the private sector has changed throughout the years.

Table 9: Women in parliament and devolved legislatures, February 2017

	Con	Lab	LD	SNP	Other	Total
Male						
House of Commons	260	128	8	36	21	453
House of Lords	190	137	68	-	203	598
National Assembly for Wales	8	14	-	-	13	35
Scottish Parliament	25	13	5	36	5	84
Northern Ireland Assembly					78	78
London Assembly	7	6	0	-	2	15
European Parliament (UK Members)	14	9	0	2	19	44
Female						
House of Commons	70	101	1	18	6	196
House of Lords	62	65	34	-	46	207
National Assembly for Wales	3	15	1	-	6	25
Scottish Parliament	6	11	0	27	1	45
Northern Ireland Assembly					30	30
London Assembly	1	6	1	-	2	10
European Parliament (UK Members)	6	11	1	-	11	29
% female						
House of Commons	21%	44%	11%	33%	22%	30%
House of Lords	25%	32%	33%		18%	26%
National Assembly for Wales	27%	52%	20%		32%	42%
Scottish Parliament	19%	46%	0%	43%	17%	35%
Northern Ireland Assembly					28%	28%
London Assembly	13%	50%	100%		50%	40%
European Parliament (UK Members)	30%	55%	100%	0%	37%	40%

⁴⁹ Commissioner for Public Appointments, [Annual report 2014-15](#), October 2015

⁵⁰ ONS, [Civil service statistics 2015](#)

⁵¹ Courts and Tribunals Judiciary, [Judicial Diversity Statistics 2015](#)

⁵² Local Government Association, [Census of Local Authority Councillors 2013](#), May 2014

Firsts for women in UK public life

The last 100 years have seen various firsts for women in public life:^{53, 54, 55, 56}

- 1907 **Elected Mayor in England** (Elizabeth Garrett Anderson) office in Aldeburgh in Suffolk
- 1913 **Britain's first official female professor** at London University (Caroline Spurgeon)
- 1919 **Member of Parliament** to take seat in House of Commons (Nancy Astor)
- 1929 **Cabinet Minister** (Margaret Bondfield)
- 1943 **President of the Trades Union Congress** (Anne Loughlin)
- 1945 **Prison Governor** (Charity Taylor)
- 1945 **Stipendiary magistrate** (Sybil Campbell)
- 1948 **University Vice Chancellor** (Prof Lillian Penson)
- 1949 **King's Counsel** (Rose Heilbron and Helena Normanton)
- 1955 **Civil Service Permanent Secretary** (Dame Evelyn Sharp)
- 1958 **Life Peer** (Baroness Wootton of Abinger)
- 1963 **Hereditary Peer** to take seat in House of Lords (Baroness Strange of Knockin)
- 1964 **Parliamentary Whip** (Commons) (Harriet Slater)
- 1965 **High Court Judge** (Dame Elizabeth Lane)
- 1970 **Deputy Speaker** (Betty Harvie Anderson)
- 1973 **Director of a national museum** (the Science Museum) (Dame Margaret Weston)
- 1973 **Head of Mission** in the British Diplomatic Service (Eleanor Emery)
- 1975 **Leader of the Opposition** (Margaret Thatcher)
- 1979 **Prime Minister** (Margaret Thatcher)
- 1981 **Leader of the House of Lords** (Baroness Young)
- 1984 **TUC General Secretary** (Brenda Dean)
- 1987 **Court of Appeal Judge** (Dame Elizabeth Butler-Sloss)
- 1991 **Head of MI5** (Stella Rimington)
- 1992 **Speaker of the House of Commons** (Betty Boothroyd)
- 1992 **Minister with special responsibility for women's issues** (Gillian Shephard)
- 1994 **Church of England priest** ordained (Angela Berners-Wilson)
- 1995 **Chief constable** (Pauline Clare)
- 1997 **Minister for Women** (Joan Ruddock)
- 1997 **Secretary of State for Northern Ireland** (Mo Mowlam)
- 1998 **Chief Whip** (Ann Taylor)
- 2001 **Secretary of State for Scotland** (Helen Liddell)
- 2004 **Lord of Appeal in Ordinary** (Dame Brenda Hale)
- 2005 **National Statistician & Registrar General** for England & Wales (Karen Dunnell)
- 2006 **Foreign Secretary** (Rt Hon Margaret Beckett)
- 2006 **House of Lords' Lord Speaker** (Baroness Hayman)
- 2007 **Home Secretary** (Jacqui Smith)
- 2007 **Attorney-General** (Baroness Scotland)
- 2008 **Chief Secretary to the Treasury** (Yvette Cooper)
- 2009 **EU High Representative** for Foreign Affairs & Security Policy (Baroness Ashton)
- 2009 **Poet Laureate** (Carol Ann Duffy)
- 2010 **Secretary of State for Wales** (Cheryl Gillan)
- 2011 **Chief Medical Officer** for England (Professor Dame Sally Davies)
- 2011 **Royal Navy Warship Commander** (Lieutenant Commander Sarah West)
- 2013 **RAF Air Vice-Marshal** (Elaine West)
- 2014 **First Minister of Scotland** (Nicola Sturgeon)
- 2015 **Church of England Bishop** (The Right Reverend Libby Lane)
- 2016 **Lord Chancellor** (Liz Truss)
- 2017 **First Metropolitan Police Commissioner** (Cressida Dick)

53COI *Women in Britain* 2nd edition 1996

54 Queen's University of Belfast, [Centre for Advancement of Women in Politics](#)

55 Foreign and Commonwealth Office, [Women In Diplomacy: The FCO, 1782-1999](#), 1999

56 BBC Radio 4, [Women's history timeline](#)

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