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Global Gender Gap Report 2020

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Take-Aways

- Although the global gender gap has been narrowing, considerable obstacles to closing it persist.
- Gender disparities vary across four crucial dimensions: “economic participation, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment.”
- New skill sets will help decrease the gender gap in the labor market.

Recommendation

Gender inequality remains an obstacle to improved overall well-being and economic prosperity around the globe. Yet, in an increasingly interconnected world whose younger citizens particularly value equal opportunity, change is coming. The World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report 2020 offers policy makers and business leaders an authoritative guide to understanding current disparities and possible solutions. As this comprehensive, country-by-country study explains, raising inclusion will lead to a better quality of life for everyone.

Summary

Although the global gender gap has been narrowing, considerable obstacles to closing it persist.

The Global Gender Gap Index has raised awareness among industry and political leaders around the world of the challenges of narrowing gender inequalities, but no country has yet attained complete parity.

“All the top five countries have closed at least 80% of their gaps, and the best performer (Iceland) has closed 82% of its gap so far.”

Overall, the 2020 report's population-weighted average score sits at 68.6%, signifying that gender disparity is about two-thirds of the way resolved among the 153 countries included in the index. Progress expanded from 2019 to 2020: About 101 countries in both year's studies have shown improvements in equity, while 48 others have either not exhibited any changes or have in fact shown declines. At the current rate of progress, the all-inclusive global gender gap would completely disappear in 99.5 years.

Gender disparities vary across four crucial dimensions: “economic participation, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment.”

Access to health and education has seen the best results in terms of narrowed differences. At 95.7% closure, most nations have effectively eliminated the global health gap. A few large countries, like Pakistan, India, Vietnam and China, lag, but by only single-digit percentages. Some 35 countries have reached full equality in education, though differences remain by level. Wider attainment disparities are evident for those on the lower rungs of literacy than for those with higher levels of education.

“Political empowerment is the area where women are severely underrepresented.”

The best improvement occurred in what is still the worst-performing dimension of the index: political empowerment. Some 75% of the gap remains, as women's presence in politics at a global level is severely limited. Economic participation registers a gap closure of 58%. But this outcome reflects a decline from the previous year. Researchers attribute the stubborn lack of progress to the disproportionately low presence of women in the labor market. And the divergence rises in tandem with the level of seniority – only 36% of senior executives in the private and public sectors are female. Worldwide, women head just 18.2% of firms; that percentage is significantly less in emerging market economies.

New skill sets will help decrease the gender gap in the labor market.

To advance economic participation, countries need to prepare future generations for a job market that will demand expertise in new competencies; this is particularly true for opportunities arising from the Fourth Industrial Revolution. Work skills will have to dovetail with the development of fields like artificial intelligence, robotics and genetic engineering.

“Fortunately, the pathways to accelerating gender parity have also become more evident. Companies must treat people with dignity and respect and offer equal opportunities to all members of the society, leveraging gender diversity and investing in all of their talent through ongoing upskilling and reskilling.”

Continuing divergence in economic opportunity should be a wake-up call to policy makers that gender parity must be a priority if countries wish to achieve competitive advantage and greater inclusion. Public and private sector cooperation is essential to this endeavor.

About the Author

The World Economic Forum is an independent global organization that engages leaders of business, politics, academia and society to improve the state of the world.



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