

Mapping gender data gaps

Gender data are data that measure the status and condition of women and girls. They may be data for the whole population disaggregated by sex, such as under-five mortality rates or unemployment rates; data specifically about women and girls because of their biology, such as maternal mortality rates or incidence of ovarian cancer; or data on topics that disproportionately affect women, such as gender-based violence or unpaid work.

In 2014 Data2X published *Mapping Gender Data Gaps*¹, the first independent study to systematically examine the availability of gender data in international databases. The report reviewed indicators selected from the UN Women's Minimum Set of Gender Indicators², their 2013 stand-alone gender equity goal³, and other sources. Gender data gaps were documented in five domains of women's welfare: Health, Education, Economic Opportunities, Political Participation, and Human Security. Some of the gaps were severe: for example, there were no internationally comparable data on women's unpaid work and no way to reliably measure the gender gap in wages across countries. Additionally, one-third of countries lacked data on girls' enrollment in primary school and no countries published sex-disaggregated data on adult mortality by cause of death.

Expanding the evidence: The next phase of research

Following the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Data2X and Open Data Watch set out to extend our previous work by mapping the availability of gender data in 15 Sub-Saharan African countries in parallel with a review of international databases. While the original mapping was based on a desk study and interviews at the global level, this mapping exercise digs deeper and expands the work in three ways: it studies the gender indicators of the SDG framework in addition to those from the Minimum Set; it orients the gap analysis toward country-level availability of data and examines gaps in the underlying sources of microdata; and it provides information to guide where resources and increased investments can best be spent to fill gender data gaps.

The study includes 104 indicators in international and national databases that can or should be disaggregated by sex, comprised of the 31 SDG indicators requiring sex disaggregation; 33 more SDG indicators identified by Open Data Watch that can be disaggregated by sex; 36 indicators from UN Women's Minimum Set; and 9 supplemental indicators suggested by UN Women in their 2018 report, *Turning Promises into Action*. Indicators classified as Tier III, which are those that lack an agreed methodology, were excluded. In addition to the five domains of women's welfare included in the 2014 mapping, a sixth domain, Environment and Sustainability, was added to reflect the larger scope of the SDGs.

A Typology of Gaps

The study documents gaps in four dimensions:

1. Availability—Does the indicator exist in any form?
2. Granularity—Is the indicator disaggregated by sex and other relevant characteristics?
3. Timeliness—How often is the indicator produced?
4. Adherence to standards—Is there accompanying metadata?

¹ Mayra Buvinic et. al. *Mapping Gender Data Gaps*. Data2X, 2014. https://www.data2x.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Data2X_MappingGenderDataGaps_FullReport.pdf

² United Nations Statistics Division, *Minimum Set of Gender Indicators*. <https://genderstats.un.org/#/home>

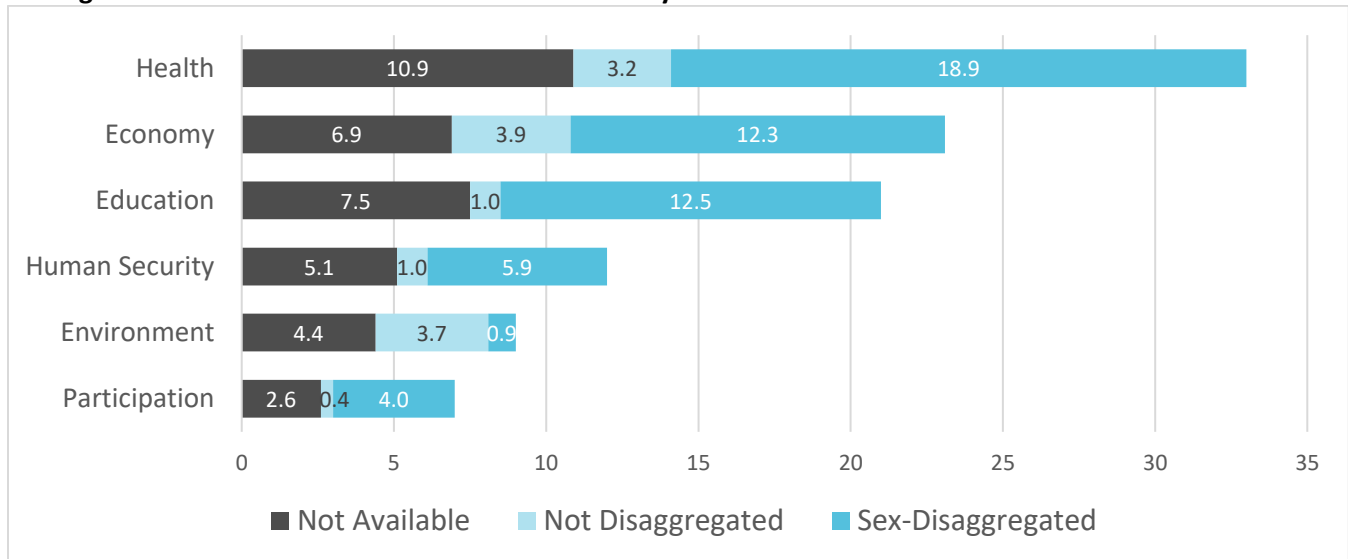
³ UN Women. (2013). A Transformative Stand-Alone Goal on Achieving Gender Equality, Women's Rights and Women's Empowerment: Imperatives and Key Components (Rep.). New York, NY: UN Women. <http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/~media/AC04A69BF6AE48C1A23DECAEED24A452.ashx>



What have we learned so far?

The gaps are formidable and widespread. In the national databases of the 15 study countries, 48 percent of all gender indicators are missing. The gap is proportionately greatest in the Environment and Sustainability domain, where only 10 percent of the indicators are sex-disaggregated. The Health domain, which has the greatest number of gender related indicators (32), also has the most complete coverage; still, only 58 percent of the indicators in the health domain are available with sex-disaggregation at the national level.

Average number of indicators in national databases by domain



The databases maintained by international organizations do no better: 50 percent (52) of gender indicators are missing. Thirty of the total 104 indicators are not sex disaggregated in any country. Of these, 9 have no data whatsoever. On a more positive note, 6 indicators are available with complete disaggregation by sex and other specified categories in all countries.

Meeting the challenge and filling the gaps

This document provides a progress report highlighting our current findings to date. Over the next year we will continue to explore and develop this work. The next step will be to examine the gaps in microdata sources and publish an inventory of available microdata in each country, along with recommendations for filling gaps at both the indicator and microdata levels and estimates of the resources needed to fill the gaps.

The study results will be made available for review, and the analysis and methodology will be shared so assessments can be made of other countries and progress can be monitored. In addition, it is envisioned that national statistical offices may use it for self-assessments.

A full report will be released in the first quarter of 2019.