



Brand South Africa

Research - Internal Analysis

South Africa's Performance in the 2021 Global Gender Gap Index

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Table of Contents

1. Background
2. WEF GGG Methodology
3. Global Findings
4. Findings on South Africa

1. Background

The WEF Global Gender Gap (GGG) Report currently measures gender disparities in 156 countries and tracks their progress overtime, with specific focus on the relative gaps between women and men across four key areas: economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment.

This year's edition, published a year after the COVID-19 pandemic, indicates that the average time to gender parity has increased- it will now take 135.6 years to close the global gender gap. While gaps in educational attainment and health and survival are nearly closed, progress on gaps in economic participation and opportunity and political empowerment continues to lag.

The report also highlights early figures indicating the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on women in the workforce - more women lost their jobs and fewer women were hired into leadership.

South Africa's ranks 18/156 countries in the 2021 Global Gender Gap report, dropping one point down from 153 countries in the 2020 report. Additionally, the country's regional ranking in the Sub-Saharan Africa remained at a 3rd ranking in 2021, similar to the findings made in the 2020 report, making it part of the top 3 Sub-Saharan Africa regional countries.

2. WEF GGG Methodology

The Global Gender Index benchmarks global gender parity gaps among for key areas: Economic Participation and Opportunity, Educational Attainment, Health and Survival, and Political Empowerment.

The methodology of the Index has remained consistent and stable since 2006, providing a unique approach towards robust cross-country and time series analysis- measuring scores on a 0 to 100 scale. The scores can be interpreted as a distance to parity i.e the percentage of the gender gap that has been closed.

Economic Participation and Opportunity

This indicator contains three concepts which are:

- The participation gap - captured through a hard data indicator (ratio of estimated female-to-male earned income).
- The remuneration gap - qualitative indicator gathered through the World Economic Forum's annual Opinion Survey (wage equality for similar work).
- The advancement gap - the gap between the advancement of women and men which is captured through two hard data statistics (the ratio of women to men working among legislators, senior officials and managers and the ratio of women to men among technical and professional workers).

Educational Attainment

The indicator measures the gap between both women and men's current access to education through ratios of women to men in primary, secondary and tertiary level education. This includes the longer view of the country's ability to educate both genders in equal numbers - captured through the ratio of the female literacy rate to the male literacy rate.

Health and Survival

This indicator provides an overview of the differences between women's and men's health through the use of two sub-indicators which are:

- The sex ratio at birth, which aims specifically to capture the phenomenon of "missing women", prevalent in many countries with a strong son preference.
- The gap between women's and men's healthy life expectancy - with the measure providing an estimate of the number of years that women and men can expect to live in good health by taking into account the years lost to violence, disease, malnutrition and other relevant factors.

Political Empowerment

This indicator measures the gap between men and women at the highest level of political decision-making through the ratio of women to men in ministerial positions and the ratio of women to men in parliamentary positions.

In addition, the ratio of women to men in terms of years in executive (prime minister or president) for the last 50 years has been included. However, a clear drawback in this category is the absence of any indicators capturing differences between the participation of women and men at local levels of government.

3. Global Findings

Compared to the 2020 report, this year's global findings indicate that the score based on the population weighted average for each of the 156 countries is 67.7%, whereas in the previous year it was 68.6% (when considering only the 107 countries covered continuously from 2006 to 2021- rounding up to 60.8%). Changes in the remaining gap to close stands at 323% in 2021, whereas it sat at 31.4% in 2020. Therefore, on an average, the gap has widened by almost 0.6 percentage points compared to the previous edition of the index.

The overall widening of the global gender gap puts a reflection on the fact that the number of countries registering at least a marginal improvement is similar that the number of 153 countries and economics covered in the 2021 and 2020 report, 98 have improved their score while 55 have declined or remained in the same position.

Rank	Country
1	Iceland
2	Finland
3	Norway
4	New Zealand
5	Sweden
6	Namibia
7	Rwanda
8	Lithuania
9	Ireland
10	Switzerland

- The global top 10 countries continue to be dominated by Nordic countries with Iceland occupying the 1st ranking, Finland (2nd), Norway (3rd) and Sweden (5th) - in the top five. Although no country has achieved full gender parity, Iceland and Finland have closed at least 85% of their gap;
- New Zealand ranks 4th, being the only country from Asia Pacific;
- The African continent is represented by two Sub-Saharan Africa countries- Namibia (6) and Rwanda (7);
- Lithuania joins the top 10 in 2021 occupying the 8th ranking;
- Ireland follows at the 9th ranking and Switzerland 10th, being in the top 10 for the first time.

Additionally, Lithuania, Namibia, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, Rwanda and Ireland have closed at least 80% of their gap.

It is evident through the report’s global findings that the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the inequalities that have been existing prior the emergence of the virus with women being more affected as opposed to men- highlighting disproportionate levels gender parity in countries.

4. Findings on South Africa

Since the inception of the WEF Global Gender Gap annual report in 2006, South Africa has remained in the top 20 countries globally. It was only in 2008 where the country dropped to 22/130 countries, but redeemed its ranking in 2009 to 6/134 nation- being the highest ranking the country has achieved in the index over the years.

In this year’s report, the country is shown to have dropped one point down compared to the previous report’s findings.

The table below presents South Africa’s performance and the four main indicators in the 2020 and 2021 WEF Gender Gap Report:

South Africa’s overall performance and indicators in the 2020 and 2021 WEF Gender Gap Report		
Categories	Year 2021	Year 2020
Overall Ranking	18/ 156	17/153
1. Economic Participation and Opportunity	92/156	92/153
2. Education Attainment	69/156	67/153
3. Health and Survival	37/156	1/153
4. Political Empowerment	14/156	10/153

Source: http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2021.pdf
http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2020.pdf

As presented in the table above, South Africa ranks 18/156 nations in the 2021 WEF Global Gender Gap Report, dropping one point down compared to the 17/153 ranking in 2020. The report further indicates that South Africa closed 78.1% of its gender gap.

Additionally, South Africa ranks 31/35 nations in the Sub-Saharan African region in the 2021 report, maintaining the ranking achieved in 2020 . The coutry is led by Namibia (1) and Rwanda (2).

The snapshot below presents South Africa’s performance in the four main categories and sub-indicators for the year’s 2020 and 2021:

SOUTH AFRICA'S PERFORMANCE IN THE FOUR MAIN CATEGORIES & SUB-INDICATORS - 2020 AND 2021		
Categories & Sub-Indicators	2021 Ranking	2020 Ranking
Economic Participation and opportunity	92	92
Labour force participation rate, %	80	82
Wage equality for similar work, 1-7 (best)	131	121
Estimated earned income, int'l \$ 1,00	45	81
Legislators, senior officials and managers %	89	84
Professionals and technical workers, %	1	1
Educational attainment	69	67
Literacy rate, %	79	77
Enrolment in primary education, %	107	106
Enrolment in secondary education, %	1	1
Enrolment in tertiary education, %	1	1
Health and survival	37	1
Sex ratio at birth, %	1	1
Healthy life expectancy, years	48	1
Political empowerment	14	10
Women in parliament, %	10	9
Women in ministerial positions, %	12	10
Years with female/male head of state (last 50)	75	72

Source: http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2021.pdf
http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2020.pdf

As presented in the table above, South Africa's ranking's in Educational Attainment, Health and Survival and Political Empowerment dropped in 2021 compared to 2020. The Economic Participation and Opportunity category remained the same in both years.

The best performing sub-indicators in each of the four main categories are as follows:

- Professionals and technical workers (%), is the best performing sub-indicator in the Economic Participation and Opportunity category- ranking 1st in both years;
- Enrolment in both secondary education and tertiary education (%) remained at the 1st ranking in both years- within the Educational Attainment category;
- Sex ratio at birth (%), ranked 1st in both 2020 and 2021 within the Health and Survival category; and
- Women in parliament (%) is the highest performing sub-indicator, however, dropping one point down from the 9th ranking in 2020 to 10th in 2021 within the Political Empowerment category.

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