

## Goal 3: Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women

**Gender equality** in primary school enrollment is high, with most economies having ratios of 0.95 or more. This is also the case for gender equality in secondary school enrollment, but not so for tertiary education. When women do enroll in school, they tend to study longer than men. In 10 developing economies of the region, women make up 45% or more of the **non-agricultural workforce**. These ratios are typical of developed economies.

### Introduction

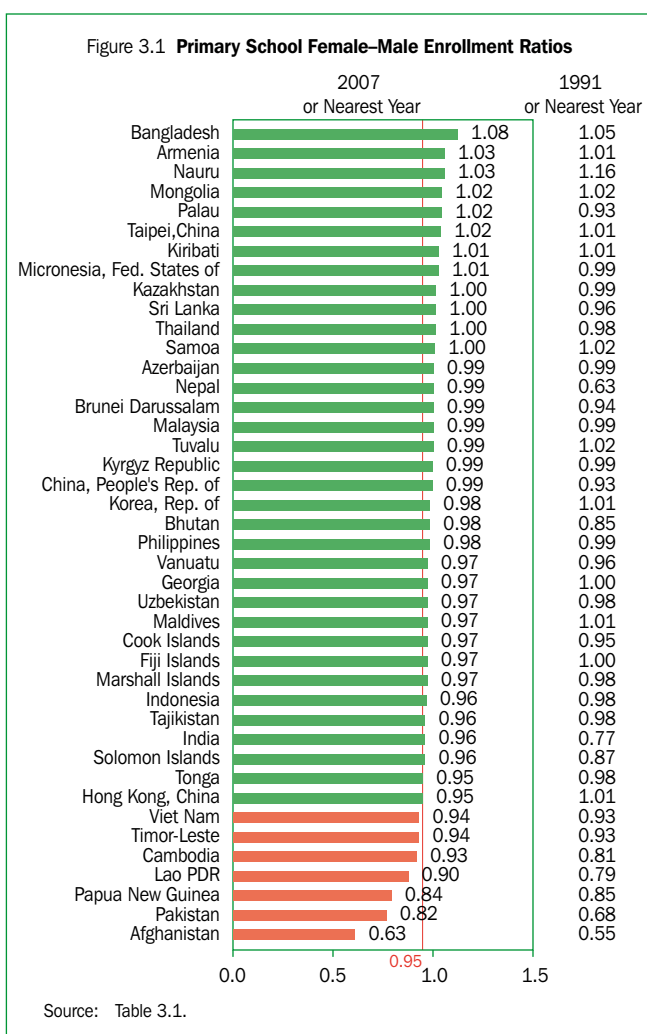
The target for **Goal 3** is to obtain equality of males and females in primary, secondary, and tertiary education enrollment. Equality is measured by dividing the percentage of females of the relevant age group enrolled in each educational level by the corresponding percentage of males. A ratio of 1.0 means that equal percentages of both genders are enrolled. Ratios below (above) 1.0 mean that a higher percentage of males (females) are enrolled.

While in theory the target is complete equality (i.e., ratios of 1.0), in practice ratios of 0.95 and above are accepted as sufficient approximations. Note that this leads to a gender bias in favor of females since ratios above 1.0 are always considered to meet the target. For secondary and, particularly, tertiary education, many economies report ratios well above 1.0, but these high ratios in favor of females are not interpreted as gender bias to the detriment of males.

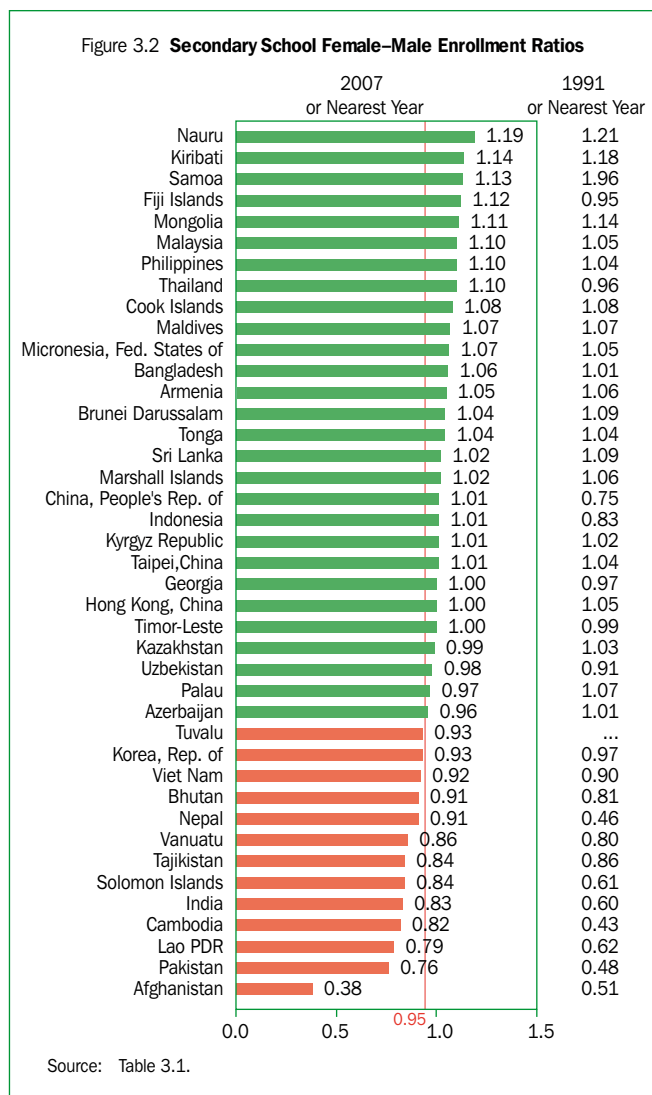
For primary and secondary education, the preferred target date was 2005, while for tertiary education 2015 is targeted.

### Key Trends

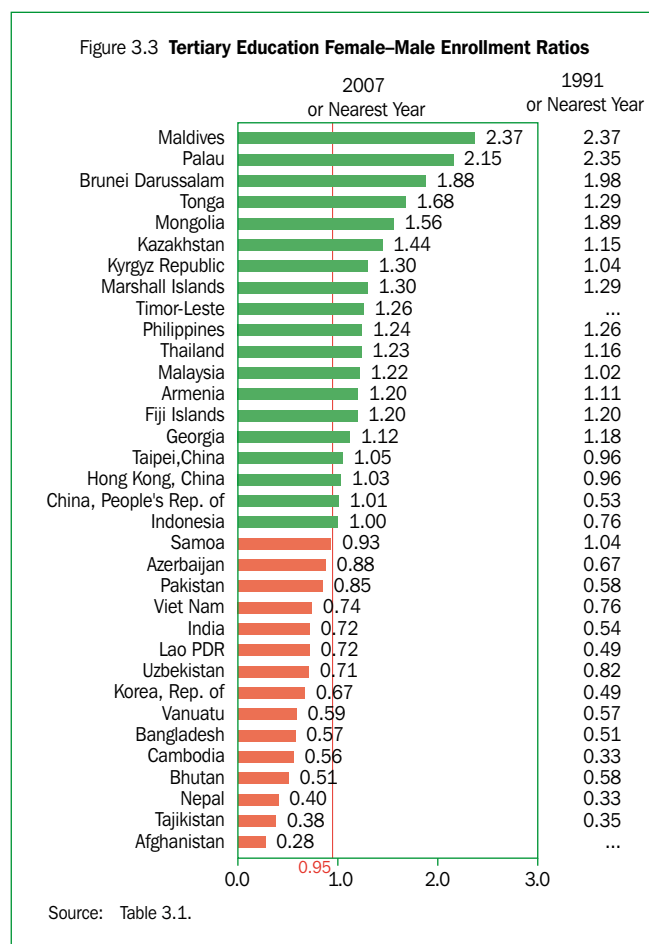
**Gender equality at the primary level is high.** Figure 3.1 shows the girl-boy ratios in primary education for 42 economies. The overall picture is good with 35 economies (denoted by green bars) having achieved ratios of 0.95 or higher in 2007. These include four of the most populous economies—Bangladesh, People's Republic of China (PRC), India, and Indonesia. Pakistan's ratio is 0.82.



**Gender equality at the secondary level is likewise high.** Figure 3.2 shows progress towards gender equality in secondary education. The overall picture is again encouraging. Of the 41 economies shown, 28 (denoted by the green bars) had achieved ratios of 0.95 or higher in 2007. Bangladesh, PRC, and Indonesia are in this group but India now joins Pakistan in a group of 13 economies with ratios below 0.95. Three of these 13 economies (Afghanistan, Republic of Korea, and Tajikistan) have recorded a fall in their ratios. The fall for Afghanistan was quite steep.



**Gender equality needs to be improved at the tertiary level.** Figure 3.3 shows that the picture is less good for tertiary education. Of the 34 economies in the figure, only 19 (denoted by the green bars), including PRC and Indonesia, had achieved ratios of at least 0.95 in 2007. Maldives and Palau had ratios of above 2. But 15 other economies (denoted by the red bars) had ratios below 0.95. These include Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan. Bhutan, Samoa, Uzbekistan, and Viet Nam have experienced falls in their ratios.



**Asian women study longer than Asian men.** Figures 3.1 to 3.3 show that ratios in excess of one—meaning more females enrolled than males—become more frequent at higher levels of education. Ratios over one were reported by about a fifth of developing member countries for which data were available for primary education. This rises to slightly over one-half for secondary and tertiary education. It seems that in many of the economies in the Asia and Pacific region, females tend to study longer than males.

### There are other aspects of women's empowerment.

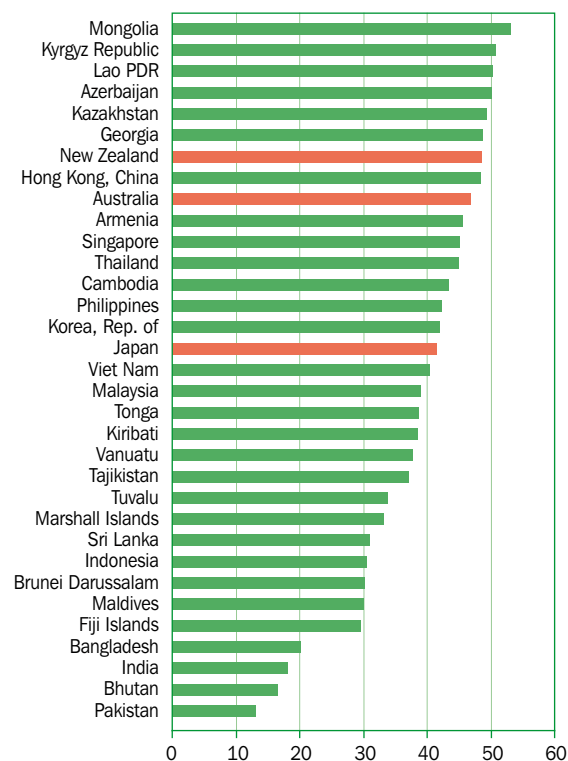
Table 3.1 contains two other indicators of women's empowerment. The first is the share of female workers in non-agricultural activities and these are shown in Figure 3.4.

For comparison purposes, Figure 3.4 includes the percentages for the three developed member economies in the region and these are shown by red bars. Ten developing member economies have ratios of at least 45%. These are five former Soviet Union republics where female employment ratios have traditionally been high, and Hong Kong, China; Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR); Mongolia; Singapore; and Thailand.

The other "empowerment" indicator in Table 3.1 shows the percentage of national parliamentary seats held by women. Its value as an empowerment indicator depends in part on the genuine power that the parliaments have to influence government policy. This is not the same in all economies.

In 2009, women hold 25% or more of the national parliamentary seats in Afghanistan, Kyrgyz Republic, Lao PDR, Nepal, Timor-Leste, and Viet Nam and over 20% in PRC, Pakistan, Philippines, and Singapore. Shares are between 10% and 20% in most of the economies of the former Soviet Union but are under 10% in most Pacific island economies.

Figure 3.4 Percentage of Women in Non-Agricultural Employment, Latest Year



Source: Table 3.1.

### Data Issues and Comparability

Enrollment rates generally follow the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) guidelines on definitions of different levels of education and methods of calculation. Many small Pacific countries do not have facilities for tertiary education, and students from these countries receive their tertiary education abroad. For these countries, the tertiary gender parity index is not computed.

The most reliable information on female employment in non-agricultural activities comes from household labor force surveys, but these are not conducted in all countries in the region. Alternative sources include enterprise employment surveys, population censuses, and household demographic surveys.

The percentage of women in parliament refers only to national parliaments. In some countries, a more relevant measure of empowerment would refer to the numbers of women active in government at the local or community level.