

WHO ARE THE “BOTTOM BILLION”?

WOMEN AND GIRLS

INTRODUCTION

There is strong global evidence that women and girls are more likely to live in poor households (defined as those households living under the \$1.90 poverty line) than men and boys. In addition, data shows significant gender disparities in access to services, and participation in economic and social life. This profileⁱ summarises the data and evidence on poverty amongst women and girls to highlight how they are disproportionately impacted by poverty.

The data and evidence presented here largely pre-dates the COVID-19 pandemic. UN modelling shows the gender poverty gap is likely to increase as a result of COVID-19 and further increase by 2030 with 121 poor women for every 100 men aged 25-34.ⁱⁱ

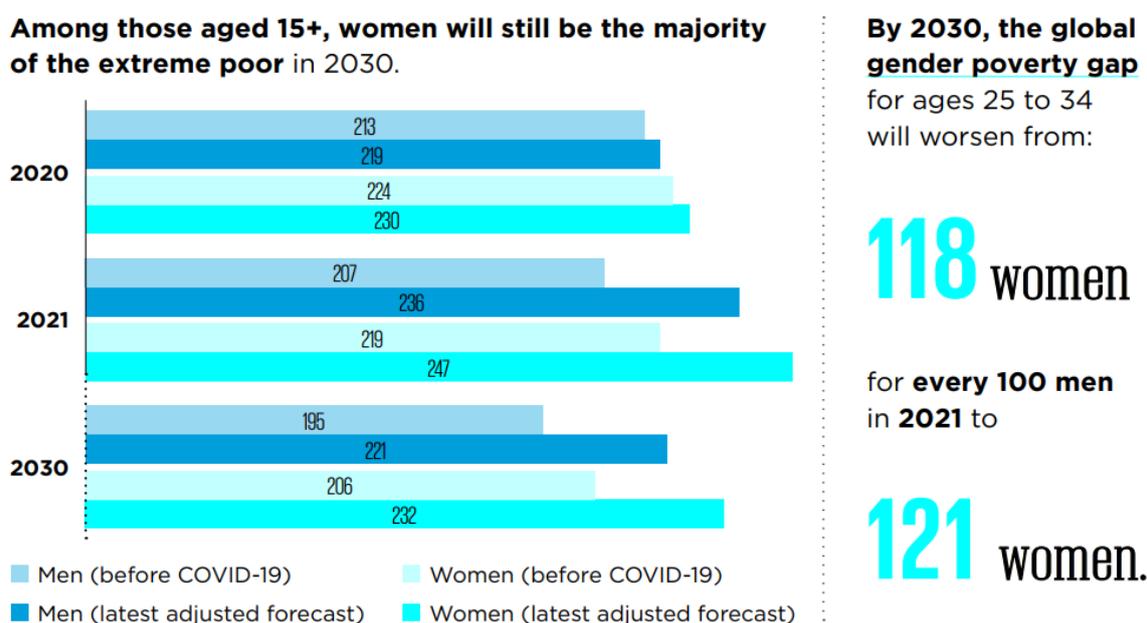
EVIDENCE ON POVERTY AND EXCLUSION

Income poverty: Global data sets show women are more likely to be poor using income-based measures than men in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), with the gender poverty gap widening due to COVID-19 and widening further by 2030.^{iii,iv} There are two important caveats to the data below: firstly, income-based poverty data is collected and analysed at the household level, likely underestimating the gender dimensions of poverty.^v Secondly, poverty estimates related the COVID crisis and projections to 2030 are affected by male-biased population sex ratios, where men and boys outnumber women and girls by 66 million, again underestimating the gender dimensions.^{vi}

- Pre-COVID World Bank analysis across 89 countries found that there are 104 women for every 100 men living in poor households using the \$1.90 poverty line.^{vii} The biggest difference is in South Asia where there are 109 women in poor households for every 100 men, though 46% of poor women globally live in sub-Saharan Africa. Girls have the highest poverty rates with 21% girls under the age of 15 living in poor households compared with 20% for boys and the global poverty rate of 12.5%. The largest gender poverty gap is between the ages of 20 to 34, coinciding with peak productive and reproductive periods in the life cycle. In contrast, gender differences in poverty tend to disappear in older people over the age of 50, with women slightly less likely to live in poor households as men.^{viii}
- Modelling the impact of the pandemic using data from 129 countries accounting for 89% of the global population, UN analysis suggests that 47 million women and girls will be pushed into extreme monetary poverty by 2021, with the total number of women and girls living in extreme poverty at 435 million in comparison to 430 million men and boys. The male-female poverty gap in the 25-34 year range will widen to around 118 women in extreme poverty for every 100 men aged 25–34, with particularly large gaps in south Asia.^{ix, x}

- The gender poverty gap is set to increase by 2030, with 121 women aged 25-34 for every 100 men living in extreme poverty (see figure below for more info).^{xi}

Figure: gender poverty gaps will worsen by 2030 (taken from UN Women, 2020)



Health and education: Despite progress in education over the last 20 years, gender discrepancies remain in access and outcomes. Girls are likely to be worse affected by school closures related to COVID-19, with a recent estimate suggesting 10 million girls may not return to school.^{xii} Limited progress on sexual and reproductive health has been made, and food insecurity is more likely to affect women. Earlier this year, UNFPA predicted that more than 47 million women could lose access to contraception resulting in 7 million unintended pregnancies.^{xiii}

- Globally, girls of primary school age are 29% more likely than boys to be out of school, and 11% more likely than boys to be out of secondary school.^{xiv} Countries where girls are most disadvantaged in primary enrolment include Chad, Guinea, Niger, Central African Republic, South Sudan, Yemen and Pakistan.^{xv}
- 295,000 women died during or in the month after childbirth in 2017, with 98% of these deaths occurring in LMICs, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.^{xvi}
- Women are more likely to be affected by food insecurity (9.8% of women globally in comparison to 8.9% of men) and women tend to be household “shock absorbers” where they eat less nutritional food in response to price rises or crises.^{xvii}
- 10% of women who want to avoid pregnancy, or 190 million women globally, have unmet contraceptive needs, a percentage unchanged for twenty years.^{xviii}

Broader aspects of exclusion: Global data tells us that women are less likely to be employed in safe and secure jobs than men, they face high rates of violence by intimate partners and non-partners, and that gender inequitable attitudes are common across the globe. COVID-19

will mean compounded impacts for women and girls, including through increasing unpaid care work and violence against women and girls (VAWG).^{xix, xx}

- **Employment:** the global labour force participation rate is 49% for women in contrast to 75% for men. Women are more likely to work in low-wage, insecure jobs, including more likely to work in the informal sector, though the difference between men and women in vulnerable work has narrowed since the 1990s.^{xxi} Analysis of time use data from 64 countries shows that women do 76% of unpaid care work, almost three times as much as men.^{xxii}
- **VAWG:** 35% of women globally have experienced physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence, with significant health, economic and social costs including poorer mental and physical health, reduced earnings, productivity and increased household costs, and intergenerational impacts on children such as missed school and greater risk of experiencing or perpetrating violence as adults.^{xxiii, xxiv, xxv}
- **Gender inequitable attitudes:** a 2016 ILO/Gallup survey of 149,000 adults in 142 countries found that 20% of men and 14% of women globally believe it is unacceptable for women to have a paid job outside the home.^{xxvi} Analysis of DHS data from 49 countries shows that globally 36% people believe domestic violence is justified in some circumstances.^{xxvii, xxviii}

HOW GENDER AND POVERTY INTERACT WITH OTHER IDENTITIES

- **Women and girls with disabilities:** data shows women with disabilities are more likely to be poor, unemployed, live in food-insecure households and have lower levels of education than men with disabilities. In analysis of data across six regions, women with disabilities were more likely to be unemployed than men with disabilities and women without disabilities in all regions.^{xxix} In Uganda, 96% of women with severe functional difficulties are multidimensionally poor compared with 52% of men with no functional difficulty.^{xxx} Data from 51 countries shows girls with disabilities are less likely to complete primary school than boys with disabilities, with 33% of women with disabilities aged 18 and over completing primary school compared with 46% of men with disabilities.^{xxxi} Women with disabilities are between 2 and 4 times as likely to experience intimate partner violence as women without disabilities, with women with the most severe disabilities most at risk.^{xxxii}
- **Women from indigenous, minority racial and ethnic groups:** According to the Global Partnership for Education, girls from ethnic minority groups are disadvantaged when it comes to education.^{xxxiii} Indigenous women and girls are at high risk of trafficking, economic and sexual exploitation as a result of displacement and loss of livelihoods.^{xxxiv} There is evidence suggesting indigenous girls tend to be more disadvantaged than indigenous boys.^{xxxv}
- **LBT+ women and girls:** According to the World Bank, lesbian, gay and trans women face double or triple discrimination associated with patriarchal and homophobic structures and are at a high risk of violence.^{xxxvi}

WOMEN AND GIRLS, POVERTY AND GEOGRAPHY

Women and girls' experiences of poverty vary by location and contextual factors such as conflict, living in an urban or rural area, policy and legislation and other geo-political or economic factors.

- **Conflict and humanitarian settings:** 60% of preventable maternal deaths and 53% preventable under 5 deaths occur in conflict, humanitarian settings and disasters.^{xxxvii} In conflict settings, girls are 13% more likely than boys to be out of primary school and 40% more likely than boys to be out of secondary school.^{xxxviii} VAWG increases in crisis situations, for example 21% of women in districts in eastern DRC have been raped by a non-partner in the previous 12 months.^{xxxix}
- **Rural/urban divide:** Almost 80% of women living under the \$1.90 poverty line live in rural areas, however women are slightly more likely to be poor than men in urban areas.^{xl} Rural girls are twice as likely to be out of school than urban girls, with only 39% attending secondary school.^{xli}
- **Policy and legislation:** data from 50 years of the World Bank's Women, Business and the Law programme shows a correlation between legal reform and a reduction of the gender wage gap.^{xlii}

MEASUREMENT AND DATA

Sex-disaggregated data is used to measure poverty rates of women and girls, both in income/consumption terms commonly using the World Bank's \$1.90 extreme poverty line, and using multidimensional poverty indices, often UNDP's Global Multidimensional Poverty Index. Key data sources include:

- the World Bank Global Monitoring Database (GMD), a collection of harmonised national household surveys used for global poverty monitoring that contains data on expenditures per capita, household and household head demographics, housing conditions and location.
- UNDP's annual Human Development Reports.

\$1.90 extreme poverty is usually measured at the household level, with women and men, girls and boys considered poor if they live in poor households. Data on the differing experiences of poverty amongst women and men at the household level is not available, and it is thought that the gender dimensions of poverty are therefore underestimated.^{xliii} To respond to this challenge, the World Bank has developed an approach to measuring intra-household multidimensional poverty, as outlined in their 2018 Shared Prosperity Report.^{xliiv} The approach uses health, education and nutrition data to give poverty rates for individuals within households. Analysis shows greater gender gaps in education than using household measures but more gender equal estimates in nutrition.^{xliiv}

KEY RESOURCES:

- Boudet, M., Buitrago, A. M., Leroy De La Briere, P., Newhouse, B., Locke, D., Matulevich, R., Carolina, E., Scott, K., and P. Suarez Becerra (2018) *Gender differences in poverty and household composition through the life-cycle: a global perspective* (English). Policy Research working paper; no. WPS 8360. Washington, D.C.: World Bank Group. Recent global analysis of gender and poverty data across age groups from 89 countries.
- UN Women (2020) *From Insights to Action: Gender Equality in the Wake of COVID-19*. New York: UN Women. Presents global estimates on the gendered impact of COVID-19 on poverty, by 2021, and data on the likely gender poverty gap in 2030.
- UN Women (2019) *Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: The Gender Snapshot 2019*. New York: UN Women. Useful overview of data and analysis in infographics on gender and the SDGs.

This profile was produced by the **Disability Inclusion Helpdesk**, managed by **Social Development Direct** (SDDirect). SDDirect is a leading provider of high-quality, innovative and expert social development assistance and research services. We work to build inclusive societies in which people in all of their diversity are valued and empowered to make choices about their own development.”

The Disability Inclusion Helpdesk provides research and advice to the **Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO)** and other UK government departments on disability inclusion in policy and programming. We are a team of experienced in-house helpdesk researchers working alongside over 80 senior disability inclusion experts with experience across different themes, sectors and geographies. We can advise on disability inclusion in development, FCAS and humanitarian settings.

The Helpdesk is part of **FCDO's Disability Inclusive Development (DID) Programme** under the banner of **Inclusive Futures**, led by **Sightsavers**, which brings together 16 international development organisations, disabled people's organisations and country partners to ensure no one is left behind.

These factsheets were produced for FCDO to enhance knowledge and understanding of how different identities are impacted by poverty. The research was conducted using primarily pre-Covid sources, although the factsheets have sought to summarise the impact of COVID-19 where information is available. The authors of this profile are Harri Lee and Erika Fraser.

-
- ⁱ The profile is part of a package of profiles focusing on women and girls, LGBT+ people, race and ethnicity, mental health, older people, youth and religious minorities. This profile was written by Harri Lee and Erika Fraser at Social Development Direct, under the Disability Inclusion Helpdesk.
- ⁱⁱ UN Women (2020) *From Insights to Action: Gender Equality in the Wake of COVID-19*. New York: UN Women.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Boudet, M., Buitrago, A. M., Leroy De La Briere, P., Newhouse, B., Locke, D., Matulevich, R., Carolina, E., Scott, K., and P. Suarez Becerra (2018) *Gender differences in poverty and household composition through the life-cycle: a global perspective* (English). Policy Research working paper; no. WPS 8360. Washington, D.C. : World Bank Group.
- ^{iv} UN Women, 2020
- ^v Boudet et al., 2018
- ^{vi} UN Women (2020c) *Estimates and forecasts of extreme poverty by sex and age using the International Futures Model Technical Note*. Available at: <https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2020/gender-equality-in-the-wake-of-covid-19-technical-note-en.pdf?la=en&vs=2156>
- ^{vii} Boudet et al., 2018
- ^{viii} Ibid;
- ^{ix} UN Women (2020b) *Gender Equality in the wake of COVID-19: Poverty Pull-Out*. Available at: <https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2020/gender-equality-in-the-wake-of-covid-19-poverty-pullout-en.pdf?la=en&vs=2155>
- ^x UN Women, 2020c
- ^{xi} UN Women, 2020b
- ^{xii} Malala Fund (2020) *Girls education and COVID-19: what past shocks can teach us about mitigating the impacts of pandemics*. Available at: <https://malala.org/newsroom/archive/malala-fund-releases-report-girls-education-covid-19>
- ^{xiii} Based on research by UNFPA, with contributions from Avenir Health, Johns Hopkins University (USA) and Victoria University (Australia). See UNFPA website: <https://www.unfpa.org/press/new-unfpa-projections-predict-calamitous-impact-womens-health-covid-19-pandemic-continues>
- ^{xiv} Global Partnership for Education (GPE) (2020) *Global Results Report 2020*. Available at: <https://www.globalpartnership.org/sites/default/files/docs/results-report-2020/2020-09-GPE-Results-Report-2020.pdf>
- ^{xv} Based on UNESCO Institute for Statistics global databases, September 2019, based on administrative data for the most recent year available during the period 2012-2018. Please note there is no comparable data available for countries including a number of countries including DRC, Nigeria, Somalia and Afghanistan. <https://data.unicef.org/topic/gender/gender-disparities-in-education/>
- ^{xvi} WHO (2019) *Trends in maternal mortality 2000 to 2017: estimates by WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA, World Bank Group and the United Nations Population Division*. Geneva: WHO. Available at: <https://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/publications/maternal-mortality-2000-2017/en/>
- ^{xvii} UN Women (2019) *Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: The Gender Snapshot 2019*. New York: UN Women. Available at: <https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2019/progress-on-the-sdgs-the-gender-snapshot-2019-two-page-spreads-en.pdf?la=en&vs=5814>
- ^{xviii} UNDESA (2019) *Family Planning and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: Data Booklet*. Available at: https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/publications/pdf/family/familyPlanning_DataBooklet_2019.pdf
- ^{xix} United Nations (2020) *Policy Brief: The impact of COVID-19 on women*. Available at: <https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2020/policy-brief-the-impact-of-covid-19-on-women-en.pdf?la=en&vs=1406>

-
- ^{xx} Fraser, E. (2020) Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Violence against Women and Girls, VAWG Helpdesk Research Report No. 284. London, UK: VAWG Helpdesk. Available at: <http://www.sddirect.org.uk/media/1881/vawg-helpdesk-284-covid-19-and-vawg.pdf>
- ^{xxi} ILO (2017) *World Employment Social Outlook: Trends for Women*. Geneva: ILO. Available at: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---inst/documents/publication/wcms_557245.pdf
- ^{xxii} ILO (2018) *Care work and care jobs: for the future of decent work*. Geneva: ILO. Available at: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_633135.pdf
- ^{xxiii} García Moreno, C. and C. Pallitto (2013) *Global and Regional Estimates of Violence Against Women: prevalence and health effects of intimate partner violence and non-partner sexual violence* WHO: Geneva. https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/85239/9789241564625_eng.pdf?sequence=1
- ^{xxiv} What Works (2020) *Economic and Social Costs of VAWG: Evidence Brief March 2020*. Pretoria: What Works. Available at: <https://www.whatworks.co.za/documents/publications/378-10912-nuig-gillian-8pg-vagw-web-10032020/file>
- ^{xxv} Guedes et al (2016) 'Bridging the gaps: a global review of intersections of violence against women and violence against children'. *Glob Health Action*. 2016 Jun 20;9:31516.
- ^{xxvi} ILO (2017b) *Towards a better future for women and work: Voices of women and men*. Geneva: ILO. Available at: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_546256.pdf
- ^{xxvii} Sardinha, L. M., and H. E. Nájera Catalán (2018) "Attitudes towards domestic violence in 49 low- and middle-income countries: A gendered analysis of prevalence and country-level correlates" in *PLOS ONE*, vol. 13, no.10: e0206101 DOI: [10.1371/journal.pone.0206101](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0206101)
- ^{xxviii} Respondents were asked if a husband is justified in hitting or beating his wife if: "she burns the food," "she argues with the husband," "she goes out without informing the husband," "she neglects the children," and "she refuses to have sex with the husband".
- ^{xxix} UNDESA (2018) *Disability and Development Report: Realizing the Sustainable Development Goals by, for and with persons with disabilities*. New York: United Nations. Presents the evidence on how people with disabilities are doing in relation to the SDGs.
- ^{xxx} Mitra (2018) *Disability, health and human development*. Available at: <https://www.econstor.eu/bitstream/10419/181950/1/978-1-137-53638-9.pdf>
- ^{xxxi} World Health Organization (WHO) (2011) *World Report on Disability*. Geneva: World Health Organization. https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/70670/WHO_NMH_VIP_11.01_eng.pdf;jsessionid=6E3BCFAAA9D465CADF814DDC4D143ECB?sequence=1
- ^{xxxii} Dunkle, K., van der Heijden, I., Stern, E., and E. Chirwa (2018) *Disability and Violence against Women and Girls: Emerging Evidence from the What Works to Prevent Violence against Women and Girls Global Programme*, Pretoria: What Works.
- ^{xxxiii} <https://www.globalpartnership.org/blog/no-girl-left-behind-education-africa>
- ^{xxxiv} UNIASG (United Nations Inter-Agency Support Group on Indigenous Peoples' Issues) (2014). Elimination and responses to violence, exploitation and abuse of indigenous girls, adolescents and young women. https://www.un.org/en/ga/69/meetings/indigenous/pdf/IASG%20Thematic%20Paper_%20Violence%20against%20Girls%20and%20Women%20-%20rev1.pdf
- ^{xxxv} UNDESA (2009). State of the world's indigenous peoples. https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/SOWIP/en/SOWIP_web.pdf
- ^{xxxvi} World Bank (2015) *Violence against Women and Girls Resource Guide: Brief on Sexual and Gender Minority Women*, Violence against women and girls Resource Guide, The World Bank, http://www.vawgresourceguide.org/sites/vawg/files/briefs/vawg_resource_guide_sexual_and_gender_minority_women_final.pdf

^{xxxvii} WHO statistics:

https://www.who.int/hac/crises/ssd/releases/who_sustainable_development_goals/en/

^{xxxviii} GPE, 2020

^{xxxix} Palm, S., Le Roux, E., Bezzolato, E., Deepan, P., Corboz, J. Lele, U., O’Sullivan, V & Jewkes, R. (2018) *Rethinking Relationships: Moving from Violence to Equality*. What works to prevent violence against women and girls in the DRC.

^{xl} Boudet et al., 2018

^{xli} United Nations (undated) *Rural Women and the Millennium Development Goals*.

<https://www.un.org/womenwatch/feature/ruralwomen/documents/En-Rural-Women-MDGs-web.pdf>

^{xlii} World Bank (2020) *Women, Business and the Law*. Washington: World Bank.

<https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/32639/9781464815324.pdf>

^{xliii} Boudet et al., 2018

^{xliv} World Bank (2018) *Global Poverty and Shared Prosperity Report*. Washington: World Bank.

<https://www.worldbank.org/en/publication/poverty-and-shared-prosperity>

^{xlv} Note the World Bank believes that given data limitations the new data based on multidimensional poverty at the individual level continues to underestimate the gender dimensions of poverty.