



Women & labour

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What is gender?



- Gender is a social construction based on biological sex traits

“One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman.” (Beauvoir (1953) *Second Sex*, p. 273)

- Intersectionality: Gender intersects with other social categories, such as ethnicity/“race”, class, (dis)ability, age, sexual orientation, etc

Gender system

Two principles:

- Separation of gender: men & women do separate activities
- Male superiority & hierarchy: activities by men are considered as the “norm” and have higher values

(Hirdman (1988) “Genussystemet”)

Gender construction mechanisms

- **Socialisation:** social practices introducing different treatments, preferences, aspirations & interests between sexes since early age
- **Institutionalisation:** justification of gendered social practices through (un)written regulations, decisions & organisation

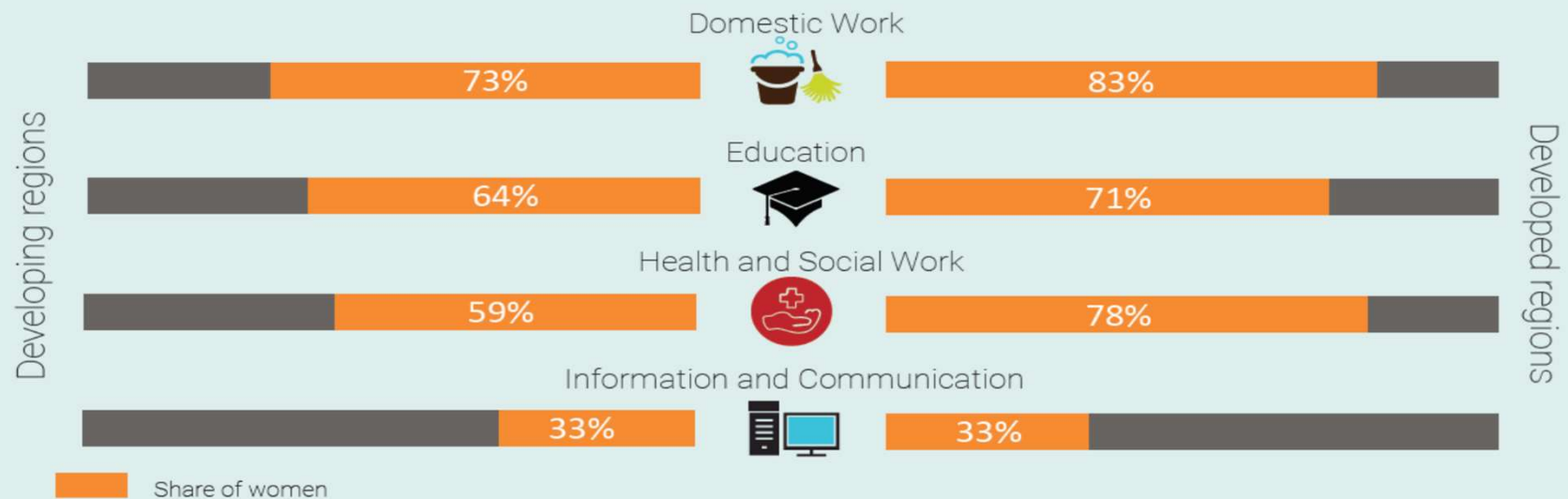


Women in labour market

Globally, about 75% of all men and 50% of all women participate in the labour force



The occupational segregation of women and men is deeply embedded in all regions



For every dollar earned by men, women earn between 70 and 90 cents



(UN, *The World's Women 2015*)

Traditional economic theories

- Supply & demand theory: higher education, birth control & alternative to childcare and housework create a supply of women as workers; plus, demand for “women’s work”
- Human capital theory, family as unit of analysis: men have higher education thus receive higher remuneration; women take up part-time job & work near home due to domestic responsibilities
- Dual/segregated labour market theory, discriminatory institutional structure: primary & secondary labour market
- Marxist theory on reserve army of labour: domestic work is women’s main responsibility, so they are flexible, disposable & low-paid workforce

Gender division of labour

- Separation between paid (productive) and unpaid (reproductive) work
- Horizontal segregation: women are concentrated in certain sectors and occupations
- Vertical segregation: women at the bottom of occupational hierarchy



“Gender neutral” worker



The ideal worker: no body, no obligations outside the work

- Seemingly gender-neutral, but men have the advantage for conforming to the ideal

Embodied labour

- Women enter labour market with their gender attributes in place, part of the market exchange
- (Formal & informal) rules about who is to be hired and for which position

(e.g. McDowell (2009) *Working Bodies*)



Horizontal job segregation



Increasing women's participation, but segregated in specific (low-remunerated) jobs and often part-time

- As a result of gender socialisation, women & men choose different jobs
- Cultural & statistical discrimination influence the employer's hiring decision

Vertical job segregation

Women are underrepresented in senior officials & managers, especially in private sectors

Women earn about 70-90% of what men earn

- Cultural (male superiority) & institutional devaluation of women's work
- Childrearing responsibility costs work experience gap for women
- Discrimination creates high-supply of women, which leads to lower wage

(England (2005) "Gender Inequality in Labor Markets")



Gendered organisations

Gendered substructure: often-invisible everyday processes in organisations which reproduce and perpetuate gender stereotypes and inequalities

- Organising processes, e.g. job design, wage determination, decision-making, physical work space
- Organising culture, e.g. beliefs, behaviours & values about gender differences
- Interactions on the job, e.g. p2p, in group, formal & informal
- Gendered identities, e.g. “managing like a man”, “feminine management model”

Gendered subtext: texts which shape the gendered processes and structures in organisations

(Acker (2012) “Gendered Organizations and Intersectionality”)



Informal economy

More than 50% of all economic production in the global South & about 25% in the global North, and women are over-represented in informal economy

- **Informal sector:** income-earning activities that fall outside the official, regulated labor market
- Categories:
 - (1) self-employed informal (nonregulated) enterprises: community- & family-centered
 - (2) seasonal/temporary wage workers: absence of contracts, instability, part-time & low-paid

(Bergeron (2016) "Formal, Informal & Care Economies")

Global gender division of labour

- Global assembly line: factories in global South employ marginalised workers to produce inexpensive commodities for consumers in global North
- Global care chain (e.g. Yeates 2012): the paid and unpaid care “chain” across political and geographical borders
- Gender hierarchy along with other inequalities position some population as cheap labour for the global capital – (global) capital accumulation
- “Nimble fingers” (Elson & Pearson 1981); “disposable women” (Wright 2006)
- Remnants of early capitalism & colonialism
- Often overlooked: Articulation of worker’s needs & aspirations

(e.g. Mills (2016) “Gendered Division of Labour”)

Female migrant workers

Globally, 164 million migrant workers ($\pm 58\%$ men & 41% women) (ILO 2018)

Segregated jobs: 71.1% in service sector; 17.8% in manufacturing & construction industry; 11.1% in agriculture (ILO 2015)

➤ Feminisation of survival:

“[n]ot only are households, indeed whole communities, increasingly dependent on women for their survival, but so too are governments, along with enterprises that function on the margins of the legal economy” (Sassen (2002) “Global Cities and Survival Circuits”, p. 265)

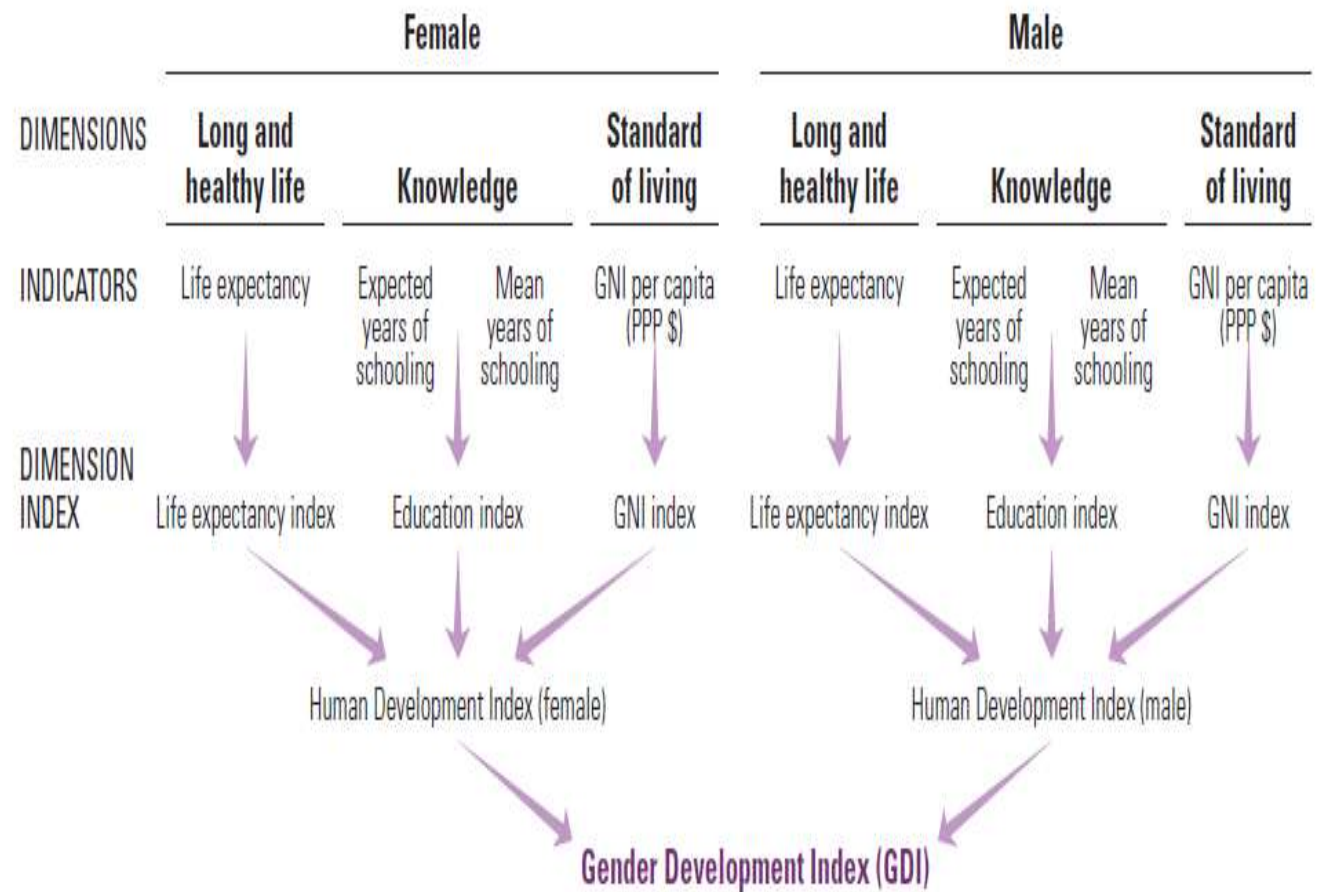
SDGs & women's economic empowerment

- Goal 5: to achieve gender equality
- Goal 8: to promote full and productive employment and decent work for all
- Goal 1: ending poverty
- Goal 2: on food security
- Goal 3: on ensuring health
- Goal 10: reducing inequalities



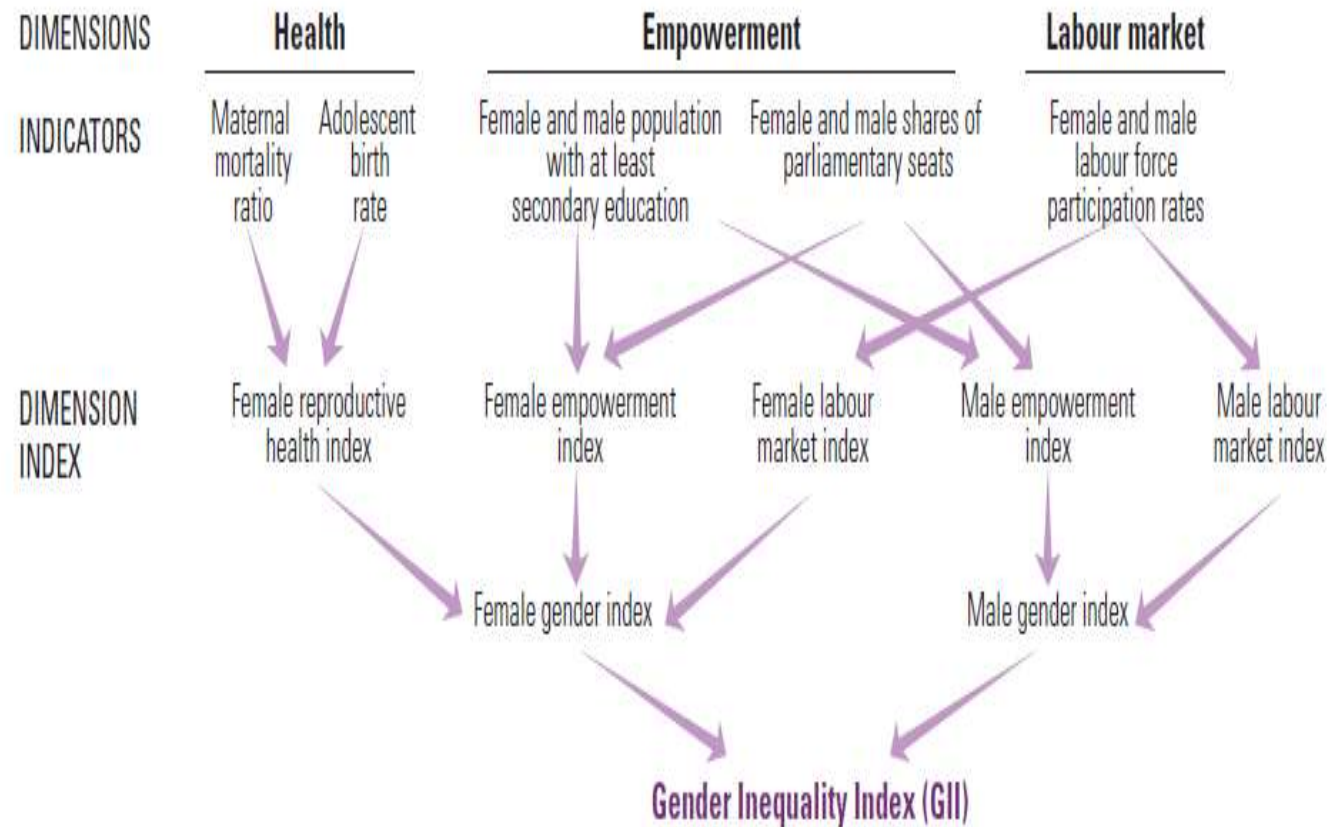
Gender development index (GDI)

Gender Development Index (GDI)



Gender inequality index (GII)

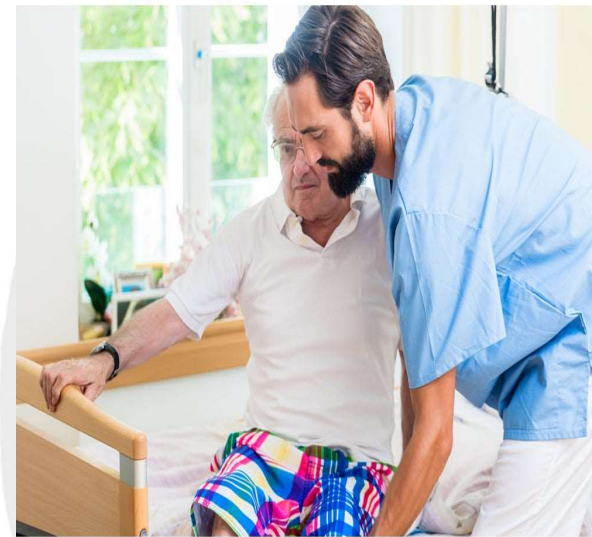
Gender Inequality Index (GII)



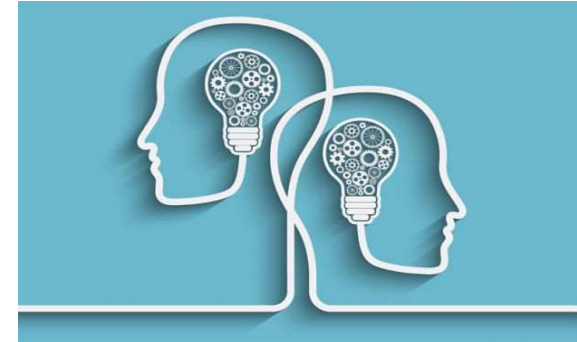
Feminisation of work

“Work is being redefined as both literally female and feminized, whether performed by men or women. To be feminized means to be made extremely vulnerable; able to be disassembled, reassembled, and exploited as a reserve labor force; seen less as workers than as servers; subjected to arrangements on and off the paid job that make a mockery of the limited workday.”

(Haraway (1991) *Simians, Cyborgs and Women*, p. 151)



Food for thought



- With the increase of service & knowledge-based economy, which groups of worker in the labour force are affected most by changes in labour market? How and why?
- What are the consequences of the rise of temporary employment relationships?
- Which roles do states, business sectors and universities can play to improve economic sustainability for women and other marginalised groups?

Feminist scholarship of work: Some take-away points

- Reconceptualising “work” & “workplace” to include both paid & unpaid, formal & informal work
- Identifying that work is gendered: cultural (socialisation, norms), institutional (gender-in-organisation) & structural (structural economic inequalities)
- Identifying different axes of inequalities (gender intersecting with other social & economic categories)
- Recognising the agency of women: to negotiate a greater control of their lives