

## Goal 3: Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women

### Snapshot

- The region has made substantial progress toward eliminating gender disparity at the primary level of education—almost two-thirds of the 46 reporting economies have achieved gender parity in primary education.
- Eighteen of the 46 reporting economies have gender parity indices higher than 1.03, implying higher secondary school enrollment among girls than boys.
- At the tertiary level, more than half of the reporting economies (21 of 40) had gender disparity ratios above 1.03, implying an improved tertiary enrollment among women.
- Female participation in nonagricultural wage employment in the region is gradually improving. From 1990 to 2010, more than half of the 36 reporting economies had either maintained or continued to improve female engagement in nonagricultural wage employment.
- Most economies in the region posted gains in female representation in national parliaments, including Nepal, which had the highest rate of female representation (at 33%) in the national parliament in 2012.

### Introduction

The target for Goal 3 is to *eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education no later than 2015*.

To track this target, the gender parity index (GPI) is used. The GPI refers to the ratio of the number of female students enrolled in a specific educational level to the number of male students in the same level. The index is standardized using the GPI of the gross enrollment ratios at each level to eliminate population structure effects. An economy with a GPI equal to 1.00 has achieved parity between the sexes, and a GPI less or greater than 1.00 indicates a disparity in favor of males or females, respectively (UN 2012a).

The accepted measure for gender parity in education is set at 0.97 to 1.03 (UN 2012b). However, when tracking progress, a cutoff ratio of 0.95 is considered “sufficient” (that is, a “passing grade”). In addition to gender parity at different educational levels, Goal 3 monitors gender parity in nonagricultural wage employment and women’s political empowerment.

The reference year used for gender parity in primary, secondary, or tertiary education is 2010, although the latest available data may be from 2002 to 2011. For the share of women in nonagricultural wage employment, the reference year is 2010, with the latest available data ranging from 2003 to 2010. For the proportion of seats women held in national parliaments, data for the latest year are for 2012, except that the latest data available for Fiji are for 2006. All the datasets include Australia, Japan, and New Zealand.

### Key Trends

**Substantial progress has been made in eliminating gender disparity at the primary level of education.** In 2010, almost two-thirds of the 46 reporting economies in the region achieved gender parity in primary education (Table 3.1). In Bangladesh, Kiribati, and Nauru, enrollment at the primary level favors girls more than boys while in Afghanistan, which posted the lowest GPI in 1991 and 2010, consistently more boys are enrolled in primary schools than girls.

In addition, almost 60% of the 46 reporting economies in the region posted ratios in 2010 that were higher than their ratios in 1991 or later years. This indicates continuing progress toward reducing gender disparity at the primary level. All of the economies in the region achieved ratios higher than the 0.95 cutoff, except for six developing economies: Viet Nam (0.94), the Lao PDR (0.93), Papua New Guinea (PNG) (0.89), Nepal (0.86), Pakistan (0.82), and Afghanistan (0.69). Thus, the gender gap at the primary level has narrowed considerably in most of the region’s economies.

**The number of economies in the region with more girls than boys enrolled in secondary schools has increased.**

In 2010, 18 of the 46 reporting economies had GPIs higher than 1.03, compared to 15 of 48 reporting economies in 1991, indicating higher enrollment among girls than boys in secondary schools. In addition, 17 economies achieved gender parity in secondary education.

While about 80% of the 46 reporting economies had achieved gender parity indices of 0.95 or higher, 9 developing economies had not reached the cutoff. As in the primary level, the developing economies with the lowest ratios included PNG, Pakistan, and Afghanistan which had the lowest ratio (0.51) in 2010.

**Enrollment in tertiary education among women is improving.**

In 2010, more than half of the reporting economies (21 out of 40) had ratios of 1.03 or above, including Brunei Darussalam, Palau, Sri Lanka, and Tonga (Figure 3.1). Palau's ratio, at 2.04 in 2002, shows that more than twice as many females than males were enrolled in tertiary education. Also, 30 economies posted higher GPIs than in the previous years, indicating the region's progress toward achieving gender parity in tertiary education.

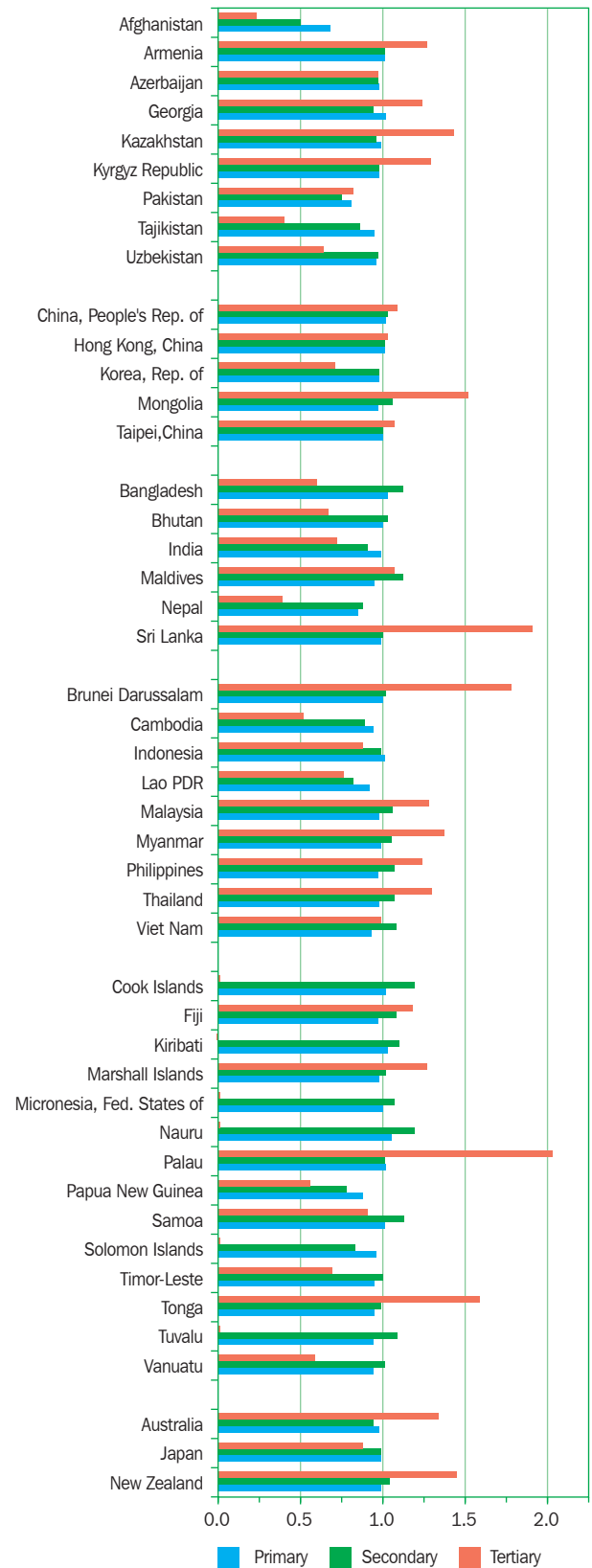
However, women in some parts of the region continue to be at a disadvantage, particularly in 17 economies where GPIs at the tertiary level are still below the 0.95 cutoff. Afghanistan, Nepal, and Tajikistan, the lowest among the 40 reporting economies, all had ratios below 0.50. Afghanistan slipped from a ratio of 0.28 in 2003 to a notably low 0.24 in 2009, which means that only 24 women were enrolled at the tertiary level for every 100 men.

The gains in gender parity in education do not necessarily translate into women having better labor market opportunities or higher economic status. This can be due to patterns of gender segregation in the labor market, where women are overrepresented in lower skilled occupations with poor pay, the informal sector, and agriculture. Even when both genders have comparable educational backgrounds, women are still likely to have more limited employment prospects (UNICEF 2009). Thus, to empower women could mean providing them equal career opportunities at all occupation levels, and access to the same wages as men with similar qualifications and experience.

**Female participation in nonagricultural wage employment in the region is gradually improving.**

From 1990 to 2010, more than half of the reporting economies with available data (19 of 36), had maintained or continued to improve the rate of female participation in nonagricultural wage employment.

Figure 3.1 Gender Parity Index in Primary, Secondary and Tertiary Education, 2010 or Latest Years



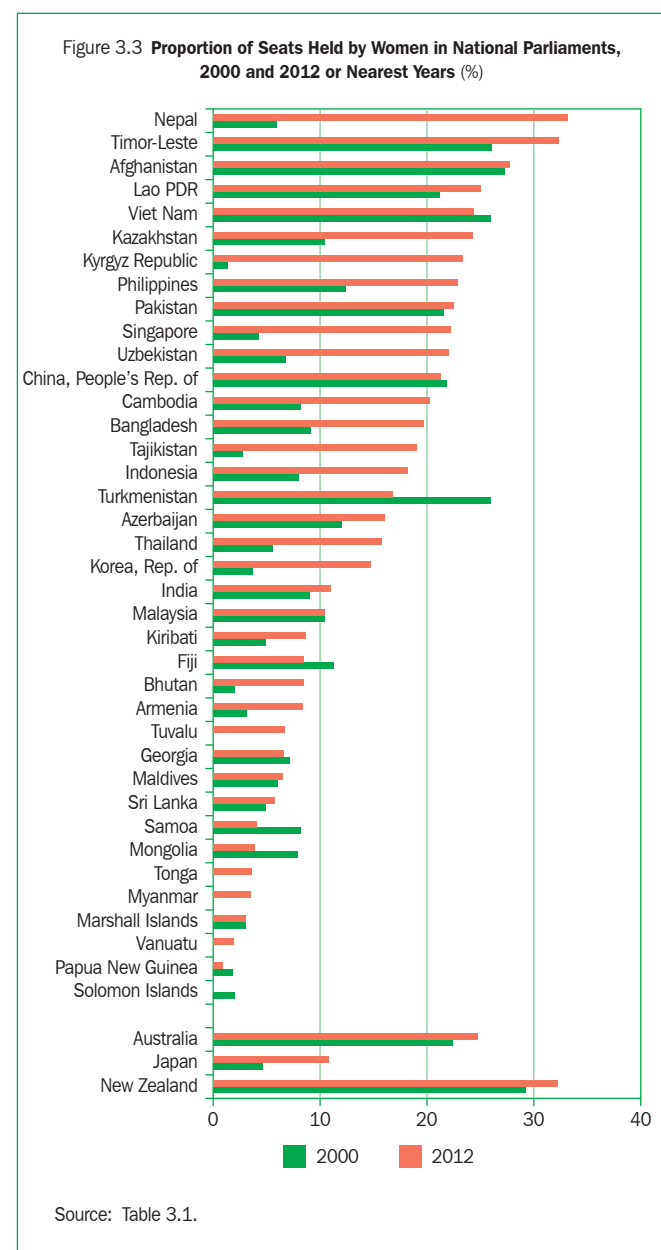
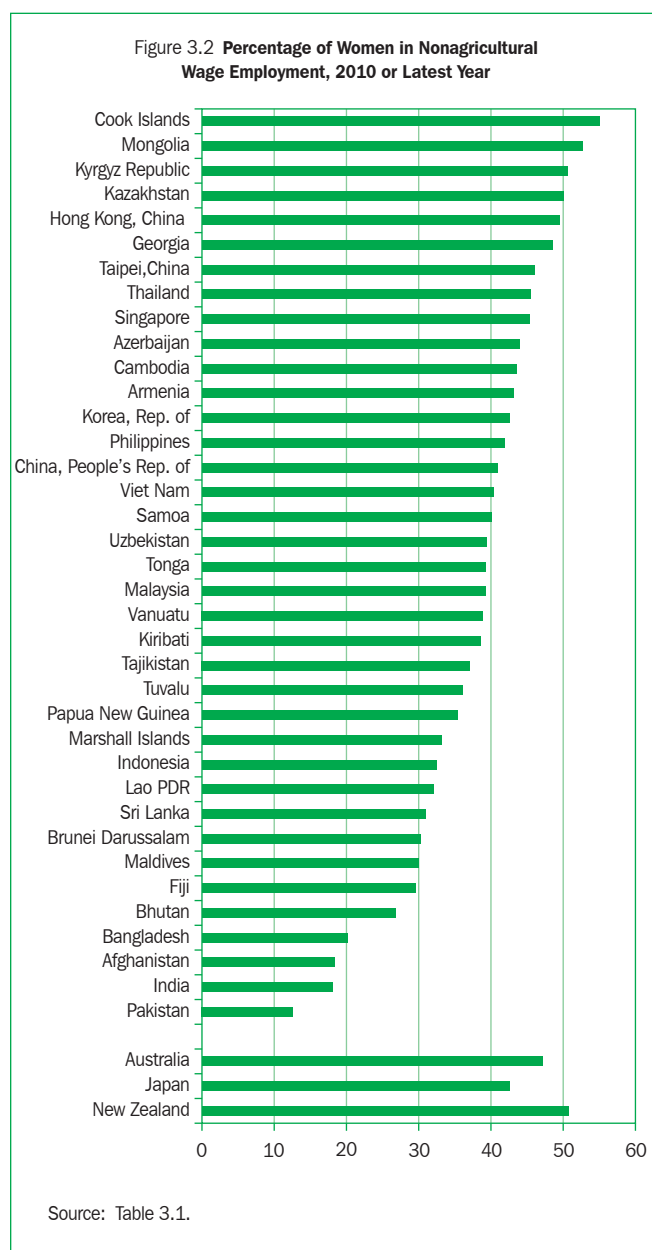
Source: Table 3.1.

Figure 3.2 shows that women achieved equal participation in the Cook Islands; Hong Kong, China; Kazakhstan; the Kyrgyz Republic; and Mongolia—where women’s employment rates in the nonagricultural sector were about 50%. Likewise, more than 40% of women were engaged in nonagricultural wage employment in some other economies. On the other hand, women’s share, at 20% or less, were lowest in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan; Pakistan had the lowest share of women (13%) employed in the nonagriculture sector.

**Most economies in the region posted gains in female representation in national parliaments.** More than 70% of the region’s 40 reporting economies had increased female representation during 2000–2012 (Figure 3.3).

The most significant gains posted were in Nepal and in three Central and Western Asian economies: the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan each posted improvements of at least 15 percentage points in 2012 over their 2000 rates. Nepal also had the highest rate of female representation in the national parliament in 2012, along with Timor-Leste and New Zealand, where almost a third of the seats were occupied by women.

Some governments have legislation to ensure that women are represented in the national parliament. Achieving higher rates of female participation in national parliamentary positions indicates that women are respected and trusted to contribute to the development of a nation, whether they are elected or appointed.



Overall, the greatest gender disparities favoring males were in Afghanistan, which consistently had the lowest GPI at all education levels. Other developing economies with relatively low GPIs at the primary level were Nepal, Pakistan, and PNG. At the secondary level, Pakistan and PNG still had low GPIs; and GPIs at the tertiary level remained low in Nepal and Tajikistan. The lowest shares of women in nonagricultural wage employment (at about 20% or less) were in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan.

## Data Issues and Comparability

Enrollment rates generally follow the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) guidelines on definitions of education levels and methods of calculation. Many small Pacific island economies do not have facilities for tertiary education, and their students receive tertiary education abroad.

The most reliable information on female employment in nonagricultural activities comes from household labor force surveys, but these are not conducted in all economies 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 economies, a more relevant measure of empowerment would be the number of women active in government at the local or community level.

Steps have been taken to improve the availability and use of statistics that capture gender gaps. One such initiative is the Evidence and Data for Gender Equality (EDGE) Initiative, which stemmed from the Busan Joint Action Plan for Gender Equality and Development. During 2012–2015, the United Nations (UN) Statistics Division and UN Women will jointly lead and manage EDGE and will be working closely with international organizations and government statistical agencies to meet the rising demand for greater support in accessing and using gender statistics—mainly by helping to build national capacity and strengthen national systems on data collection in critical areas. EDGE will also promote the work already being done to develop standards and definitions for people who gather and use statistics (UN Women 2012).

## References

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## Goal 3 Targets and Indicators

Table 3.1 **Target 3.A: Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education not later than 2015**

Regional Member	3.1 Ratio of Girls to Boys in Education Levels <sup>a</sup>					
	Primary		Secondary		Tertiary <sup>b</sup>	
	1991	2010	1991	2010	1991	2010
<b>Developing Member Economies</b>						
<b>Central and West Asia</b>						
Afghanistan	0.55	0.69	0.51	0.51	0.28 (2003)	0.24 (2009)
Armenia	1.00 (2001)	1.02	1.06 (2001)	1.02	1.09 (1999)	1.28
Azerbaijan	0.99	0.99	1.01	0.98	0.67	0.98
Georgia	1.00	1.03	0.97	0.95 (2008)	0.91	1.25
Kazakhstan	1.01 (1999)	1.00 (2011)	1.00 (1999)	0.97 (2011)	1.14 (1999)	1.44 (2011)
Kyrgyz Republic	0.99 (1999)	0.99	1.02	0.99	1.04 (1999)	1.30 (2009)
Pakistan	0.67 (2000)	0.82	0.47	0.76	0.79 (2002)	0.83 (2008)
Tajikistan	0.98	0.96	0.86 (1999)	0.87	0.34 (1999)	0.41
Turkmenistan	...	...	1.02	...	1.15	...
Uzbekistan	0.98	0.97 (2011)	0.98 (1999)	0.98 (2011)	0.82 (1999)	0.65 (2011)
<b>East Asia</b>						
China, People's Rep. of	0.91	1.03	0.75	1.04	0.83 (2003)	1.10
Hong Kong, China	0.98 (1999)	1.02	0.98 (2001)	1.02	1.00 (2003)	1.04
Korea, Rep. of	1.01	0.99	0.97	0.99	0.49	0.72
Mongolia	0.99	0.98	1.10	1.07	1.84 (1999)	1.53
Taipei, China	1.01	1.01 (2011)	1.04	1.01 (2011)	0.96	1.08 (2011)
<b>South Asia</b>						
Bangladesh	0.97 (1998)	1.04 (2009)	0.99 (1999)	1.13	0.49 (1999)	0.61 (2009)
Bhutan	0.85 (1999)	1.01 (2011)	0.80 (1999)	1.04 (2011)	0.58 (1999)	0.68 (2011)
India	0.76	1.00 (2008)	0.70 (1999)	0.92	0.54	0.73
Maldives	1.01 (1999)	0.96 (2011)	1.08 (1999)	1.13 (2004)	2.29 (2003)	1.08 (2008)
Nepal	0.63	0.86 (2002)	0.46	0.89 (2006)	0.33	0.40 (2004)
Sri Lanka	0.96	1.00	1.09	1.01 (2004)	0.48	1.92
<b>Southeast Asia</b>						
Brunei Darussalam <sup>c</sup>	0.96	1.01	1.08	1.03	1.89 (1999)	1.79
Cambodia	0.87 (1999)	0.95	0.53 (1999)	0.90	0.33 (2000)	0.53 (2008)
Indonesia	0.97	1.02	0.82	1.00	0.88 (2000)	0.89
Lao PDR	0.79	0.93	0.70 (1999)	0.83	0.49 (1999)	0.77
Malaysia	1.00	0.99 (2008)	1.05	1.07 (2009)	1.02 (1999)	1.29 (2009)
Myanmar	0.96	1.00	0.98	1.06	1.60 (1998)	1.38 (2007)
Philippines	1.00	0.98 (2009)	1.10 (1999)	1.08 (2009)	1.27 (1999)	1.25 (2008)
Singapore	0.97	...	0.93	...	0.71	...
Thailand	0.98	0.99 (2009)	0.97	1.08 (2011)	1.17 (1999)	1.31 (2011)
Viet Nam	0.93 (1999)	0.94	0.90 (1999)	1.09	0.76 (1999)	1.00
<b>The Pacific</b>						
Cook Islands	0.95 (1999)	1.03 (2011)	1.08 (1999)	1.20 (2011)	...	...
Fiji	1.00	0.98 (2009)	0.97	1.09 (2009)	1.20 (2003)	1.19 (2005)
Kiribati	1.01	1.04 (2009)	1.07	1.11 (2008)	...	...
Marshall Islands	0.99 (1999)	0.99 (2011)	1.06 (1999)	1.03 (2009)	1.28 (2001)	1.28 (2003)
Micronesia, Fed. States of	0.98 (2004)	1.01 (2007)	1.06 (2004)	1.08 (2005)	...	...
Nauru	1.33 (2000)	1.06 (2008)	1.17 (2000)	1.20 (2008)	...	...
Palau	0.93 (1999)	1.03 (2007)	1.07 (1999)	1.02 (2004)	2.35 (2000)	2.04 (2002)
Papua New Guinea	0.85	0.89 (2008)	0.67	0.79 (2003)	0.58 (1998)	0.57 (1999)
Samoa	0.98 (1999)	1.02	1.11 (1999)	1.14	1.04 (1999)	0.92 (2001)
Solomon Islands	0.87	0.97 (2007)	0.60	0.84 (2007)	...	...
Timor-Leste	0.93 (2004)	0.96	0.98 (2004)	1.01	1.24 (2002)	0.70 (2009)
Tonga	1.00	0.96 (2007)	1.02	1.00 (2006)	1.34 (1999)	1.60 (2004)
Tuvalu	1.02 (1999)	0.95 (2006)	0.88 (1998)	1.10 (2001)	...	...
Vanuatu	0.96	0.95	0.81	1.02	0.57 (2002)	0.60 (2004)
<b>Developed Member Economies</b>						
Australia	1.00	0.99	1.00 (1999)	0.95	1.19	1.35
Japan	1.00	1.00	1.02	1.00	0.65	0.89
New Zealand	0.99	1.00	1.01	1.05	1.13	1.46

continued

## Goal 3 Targets and Indicators

Table 3.1 **Target 3.A: Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education not later than 2015** (continued)

Regional Member	3.2 Share of Women in Wage Employment in the Nonagricultural Sector (%)			3.3 Proportion of Seats held by Women in National Parliament (%)		
	1990	2000	2010	1990	2000	2012
<b>Developing Member Economies</b>						
<b>Central and West Asia</b>						
Afghanistan	17.8	19.2 (2002)	18.4 (2008)	3.7	27.3 (2006)	27.7
Armenia	47.9	45.0 (2002)	43.1 (2009)	35.6	3.1	8.4
Azerbaijan	47.5 (1997)	47.6	43.9	12.0 (1997)	12.0	16.0
Georgia	49.4 (1998)	49.6 (2002)	48.5	6.8 (1997)	7.2	6.6
Kazakhstan	44.8	48.5 (2001)	50.0 (2008)	13.4 (1997)	10.4	24.3
Kyrgyz Republic	48.5 (1996)	45.8	50.6 (2009)	1.4 (1997)	1.4	23.3
Pakistan	7.7	13.0	12.6 (2008)	10.1	21.6 (2003)	22.5
Tajikistan	36.5 (1991)	40.0	37.1 (2006)	2.8 (1997)	2.8	19.0
Turkmenistan	39.9 (1995)	42.1 (2002)	...	26.0	26.0	16.8
Uzbekistan	37.0 (1991)	37.1	39.4 (2007)	6.0 (1997)	6.8	22.0
<b>East Asia</b>						
China, People's Rep. of	37.8	39.1 (1999)	40.9 (2004)	21.3	21.8	21.3
Hong Kong, China	41.2	44.8	49.5	...	...	...
Korea, Rep. of	38.1	40.1	42.6	2.0	3.7	14.7
Mongolia	48.5 (1993)	48.6	52.7	24.9	7.9	3.9
Taipei, China	42.9	44.0	46.0	...	...	...
<b>South Asia</b>						
Bangladesh	20.2 (1991)	24.7	20.1 (2005)	10.3	9.1	19.7
Bhutan	12.0	19.0 (1999)	26.8 (2009)	2.0	2.0	8.5
India	12.7	16.6	18.1 (2005)	5.0	9.0	11.0
Maldives	15.8	40.6	30.0 (2006)	6.3	6.0 (2001)	6.5
Nepal	15.1 (1999)	14.0 (2001)	...	6.1	5.9	33.2
Sri Lanka	30.2 (1997)	30.2	31.0 (2009)	4.9	4.9	5.8
<b>Southeast Asia</b>						
Brunei Darussalam <sup>c</sup>	22.5 (1991)	30.3	30.3 (2003)	...	...	...
Cambodia	53.5	41.1	43.5 (2004)	5.8 (1997)	8.2	20.3
Indonesia	29.2	31.7	32.4 (2008)	12.4	8.0 (2001)	18.2
Lao PDR	20.3	...	32.1 (2005)	6.3	21.2	25.0
Malaysia	35.3 (1991)	37.9	39.2 (2008)	5.1	10.4 (2001)	10.4
Myanmar	30.7	35.7 (1998)	...	...	...	3.5
Philippines	40.4 (1991)	40.9	41.9	9.1	12.4	22.9
Singapore	42.5 (1991)	43.6 (2001)	45.4 (2009)	4.9	4.3	22.2
Thailand	41.9	44.1	45.5 (2009)	2.8	5.6	15.8
Viet Nam	41.0 (1996)	40.7	40.4 (2004)	17.7	26.0	24.4
<b>The Pacific</b>						
Cook Islands	38.0 (1991)	46.0 (2001)	55.0 (2006)	...	...	...
Fiji	29.9	33.2	29.6 (2005)	4.3 (1997)	11.3	8.5 (2006)
Kiribati	...	36.8	38.5 (2005)	-	4.9	8.7
Marshall Islands	...	29.3 (1999)	33.2 (2005)	...	3.0 (2001)	3.0
Micronesia, Fed. States of	...	34.0	...	- (1997)	-	-
Nauru	...	42.0 (2002)	...	5.6	-	-
Palau	39.5	39.6	...	- (1997)	-	-
Papua New Guinea	27.9	32.1	35.4 (2004)	-	1.8	0.9
Samoa	31.0	36.7 (2001)	40.1 (2009)	-	8.2	4.1
Solomon Islands	30.8	30.8 (1999)	...	-	2.0	-
Timor-Leste	19.0	35.0 (2001)	...	...	26.1 (2003)	32.3
Tonga	35.7 (1996)	...	39.2 (2006)	-	- (2001)	3.6
Tuvalu	36.4 (1991)	36.0 (2002)	36.0 (2007)	7.7	-	6.7
Vanuatu	40.0 (1999)	37.5 (2004)	38.9 (2008)	4.3	-	1.9
<b>Developed Member Economies</b>						
Australia	43.7	46.3	47.1	6.1	22.4	24.7
Japan	38.0	40.0	42.6	1.4	4.6	10.8
New Zealand	47.8	49.8	50.7	14.4	29.2	32.2

... = Data not available at cutoff date, - = Magnitude equals zero.

- a The ratio is a gender parity index, measured as the ratio of female to male value of the gross enrollment ratios at primary, secondary, and tertiary levels of education.  
b There is no tertiary education in the Cook Islands, Kiribati, Nauru, the Solomon Islands, and Tuvalu. In the Maldives, tertiary education became available only recently.  
c Brunei Darussalam is a regional member of ADB, but it is not classified as a developing member.

Sources: Millennium Indicators Database Online (UN 2012c); UNESCO Institute for Statistics Data Centre (UNESCO 2012); National Minimum Development Indicator (NMDI) Database (Secretariat of the Pacific Community 2012); and for Taipei, China: Educational Statistical Indicators Online (Ministry of Education 2012).